

Exporters caught off guard by India's import curbs

Goods-laden trucks turned away, stuck at land ports

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Hundreds of trucks carrying India-bound goods were either stuck or forced to leave without offloading goods at several Bangladeshi land ports yesterday.

It happened a day after New Delhi abruptly restricted imports of key products – most notably garments – through all but two designated sea ports.

The move, announced by India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade, limits the entry of Bangladeshi garment, processed food, plastic goods, and more through land routes into Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, and parts of West Bengal. Exporters, caught off guard, now face heavy losses and logistical chaos as their shipments sit idle at ports like Benapole, Burimari, and Banglabandha.

- 1 Bangladesh exported garments worth \$563.81m to India during July-April this fiscal year
- 2 It was an 18.85% rise from the same period last year
- 3 Total exports to India stood at \$1.56b in FY24, against \$9b in imports

"This sudden decision could severely disrupt bilateral trade," said Emdadul Haque, general secretary of the Benapole C&F Agents Association. At Benapole, at least 36 trucks carrying ready-made garments were stranded yesterday evening.

The port's cargo yard had no work yesterday afternoon.

In Panchagarh, a truck transporting plastic doors from RFL Group was turned away at Banglabandha-Phulbari Land Port. "The Indian authorities informed us that the goods were no longer admissible. We had to recall the truck," said Shubho Kumar Saha, export manager at Pran RFL Group.

The company currently has 17 trucks laden with processed food worth over \$1,00,000 stuck at multiple ports, said Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director of Pran-RFL Group.

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Leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal block the Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon, demanding justice for the murder of fellow Chhatra Dal leader and Dhaka University student Shahriar Alam Shammao.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Make procurement rules more inclusive

At Star roundtable, local manufacturers urge the government to eliminate implicit biases that favour foreign suppliers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's leading manufacturers have called for changes to the public procurement system, arguing that discriminatory rules are locking out capable local companies from a \$30 billion government spending pool.

At a roundtable titled "Budget 2025-26: Time to Make Public Procurement Work for Bangladeshi



Procurement methods need improvement. Open tendering is supposed to be fair, but collusion happens – bidders sometimes fix prices among themselves."

SALEHUDDIN AHMED Finance Adviser

Manufacturers", organised by experts, and government officials The Daily Star yesterday, top gathered to highlight how the procurement

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Family members say goodbye to their beloved boy at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis of Gaza yesterday. The boy is among hundreds of Palestinians who have been killed in Israeli strikes over the last couple of days. Yesterday alone, 130 people were killed. Story on page 12

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nagar Bhaban sealed for 2nd day by Ishraque supporters

Blockade announced, protest to continue till he's appointed mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supporters of BNP leader Ishraque Hossain kept all gates of Nagar Bhaban – the headquarters of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) – padlocked for the second consecutive day yesterday, halting all service-related activities.

The protest, which began on May 14, was launched in response to what demonstrators claim is the government's delay in appointing Ishraque as mayor, despite a court verdict and official gazette recognising him as the DSCC mayor.

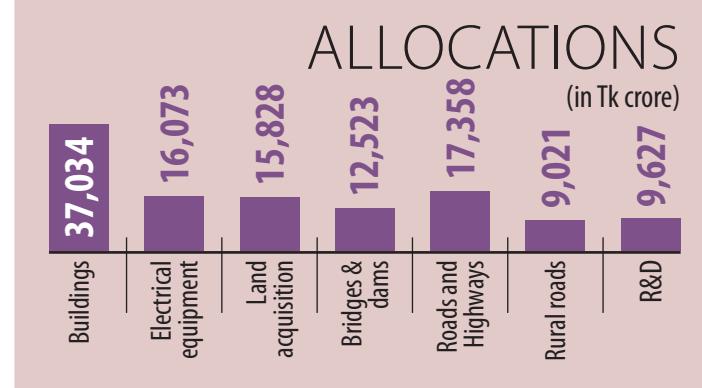
Operating under the banner of Dhakabashi, the protesters locked all entry points to Nagar Bhaban and staged demonstrations, demanding that Ishraque be allowed to assume office immediately.

No DSCC officials reported for duty yesterday. A group of them instead joined the protest and held a sit-in at the base of the building, chanting slogans such as "No office without the mayor!"

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10 segments to get 52% of ADP

Govt introducing digital budget planning system



REJAU KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

As much as 52 percent of the Tk 2,30,000 crore annual development programme (ADP) for the upcoming fiscal year will be spent on just 10 key segments, including government buildings, electrification, land acquisition and infrastructure.

For the first time, the planning ministry has used a digital budget planning system to categorise spending based on economic codes, allowing for more transparent tracking of fund utilisation, according to a presentation made by the planning ministry during yesterday's National Economic Council meeting. The development

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SHAMMO MURDER DU students, teachers ramp up protests

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University campus witnessed waves of protests yesterday as demonstrations continued for the fifth consecutive day, demanding the arrest of the killers of university student Shahriar Alam Shammao.

Students, teachers, and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) held separate programmes on the campus.

Shammo, a student of the Institute of Education and Research of the 2018-19 session, also the literature secretary of the JCD's Sir AF Rahman Hall unit.

He was stabbed to death near Suhrawardy Udyan on May 13.

Since May 14, students and teachers have been demonstrating.

While holding a meeting with DU vice-chancellor and representatives of teachers and students, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said yesterday that the case would be handed over to the Detective Branch of police.

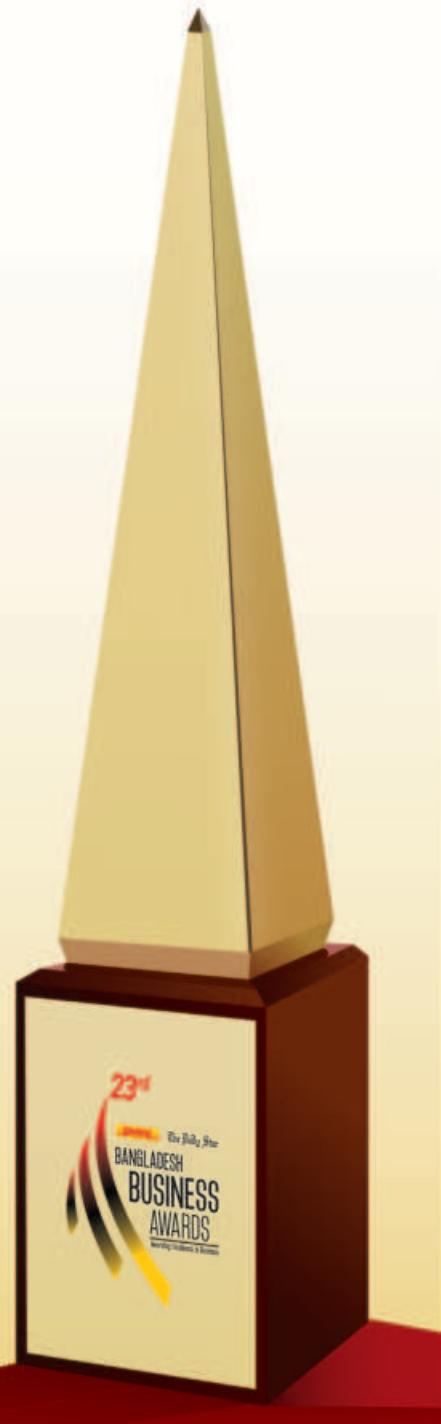
"The home advisor said he was informed by the law ministry that a special tribunal will be handling the case," said Neil M Nahian, a friend of Shammao, who was present at the meeting held at the Secretariat.

Around 4:00pm, JCD leaders and activists staged a protest rally at Shahbagh intersection, halting traffic in the surrounding areas until around 5:30pm, when they concluded their demonstration.

Addressing the rally, JCD General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir demanded the resignation of vice-chancellor and proctor of DU, saying they must be held responsible for their negligence that led to Shammao's killing.

JCD President Rakibul Islam Rakib said two people initially detained by the police in connection with the murder were later released, raising questions.

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Why December, when polls can be in Aug-Oct? Says Amir Khosru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khosru Makhmud Chowdhury yesterday said the national election could feasibly be held between August and October, but the government was not moving in that direction.

"There is no reason to wait until December. The election can be held in August, September, or October. The delay is only fueling uncertainty and anxiety," he told reporters at a city hotel.

"They are not moving towards the election. They are heading in a different direction," he said, referring to the government.

There is consensus on certain reform proposals, he said. "If there is agreement, why the delay? Reforms can be announced within hours."

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Exporters caught off guard

FROM PAGE 1

Garment exporter Energypac Fashions Ltd reported three containers of formal suits and trousers worth over \$30,000 were stuck at Benapole. Chairman Humayun Rashid, who has been exporting to India for seven years, warned of forced rerouting and mounting losses. He also fears disruption in shipments to Nepal, as some of his consignments transit through India.

In Lalmonirhat's Burimari Land Port, around 80 trucks were stopped.

By evening, at least 36 trucks were stranded. Exporter Shamim Hossain, who trades in garment waste, said, "Seven of my trucks are stuck at Burimari. Ninety percent of my business relies on Indian buyers."

He also said over 100 exporters operate through the Burimari Land Port.

At Akhaura Land Port in Brahmanbaria, trade slowed to a crawl. Only three trucks of frozen fish were allowed into India, said Mahmudul Hasan, assistant director of the port.

The restrictions issued without warning on Saturday night direct that garments -- by far Bangladesh's top export -- must now enter India only through Kolkata or Nhava Sheva sea ports. Other restricted goods include carbonated beverages, processed food, cotton and yarn waste, plastic and plastic products, and furniture.

Although the new rules do not affect fish, LPG, edible oil, or crushed stone exports, they have left garment exporters in a bind. Many had already dispatched goods to land ports before the notification was issued. With no immediate option to reroute, shipments now sit idle, racking up costs.

MA Jabbar, managing director



Top industrialists, procurement experts, and government officials participate in a roundtable discussion titled "Budget 2025-26: Time to Make Public Procurement Work for Bangladeshi Manufacturers", organised by The Daily Star at its office yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

of DBL Group, said some Indian buyers might opt to reroute imports themselves, since they import Bangladeshi products via other countries.

Faruque Hassan, former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, warned that the restrictions could undercut years of progress in building India as a major market. "We supply to both local Indian brands and global labels like M&S and H&M through India. Limiting port access will hamper business," he said.

Exporters say land routes are not just cost-effective but essential. "Shipping via sea ports like Nhava Sheva is expensive and time-consuming," said Al Mamun, an exporter.

"Now we are in deep trouble," he said.

According to the Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh exported \$563.81 million worth of garments to India in July–April of the current fiscal year, an 18.85 percent rise from the same period last year. Total exports to India stood at \$1.56 billion in FY24, against \$9 billion in imports.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said the government is engaging with Indian authorities over the issue but declined to elaborate.

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin said the government has initiated a preliminary review to determine the steps Bangladesh should consider.

"Our products are exported mainly due to their competitive pricing. We hope this competitiveness will continue to benefit consumers and businesses in both countries," he said.

The latest restrictions follow

suspend transhipment facilities for Bangladeshi cargo bound for third countries via Indian land borders, triggering concerns over tightening trade conditions.

However, the adviser said, "This is not a continuation of the transhipment issue. Indian traders will also feel the impact of this move. Given our geographical proximity, both countries remain interdependent."

Deputy Director Mamun Tarofder of Burimari Land Port said after failing to enter India, many trucks left the port. At least 36 trucks remained stranded yesterday evening.

Mehedi Hasan, assistant director of the Bangladesh Land Port Authority at Burimari, told The Daily Star that around 200 to 250 trucks pass through the port to India and Bhutan daily.

The trucks bound for Bhutan crossed the border as usual, said Humayun Sawdagar, an exporter.

"Many of us regularly export garments and food items to India through this port. Such sudden restrictions will put us in great trouble," he said.

Not only the exporters, livelihoods of hundreds of people involved in loading/unloading of goods and other activities will be severely affected, he added.

Major portion of the products stuck at the land port are garments and garment waste, according to him. "We urge the Indian government to withdraw the restrictions immediately," said Motiar Rahman, director of the India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

[Our correspondents in Benapole, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, and Brahmanbaria contributed to this report]

below 4 percent of total GDP."

Education and health have received special attention in the budget.

The development budget for the two sectors would not increase, but the revenue budget would increase to accommodate teachers' higher salaries and the appointment of 2,500 new health workers, including doctors.

"In the health sector, despite many facilities being built, many are non-operational due to a lack of doctors or equipment. So instead of more infrastructure, we are focusing on operating these through the revenue budget," he said.

The government will increase allocation so that the non-government teachers' outstanding retirement benefits and welfare payments that have been pending for the last 5–6 years can be cleared immediately.

No long-term mega projects are being included in the development budget.

Although this year's development budget is smaller in nominal terms than last year's proposed budget, it is more realistic, he said.

"There was a lot of waste and inefficiency. We are now streamlining, downsizing and redesigning to reduce costs."

The budget would be announced on June 2, when the tax measures of the budget become effective immediately. As there is no parliament existing now, there will be windows for tax measures corrections until the Finance Bill is announced through ordinances.

"Our objective is to avoid falling into a debt trap, where a significant portion of the budget is consumed by loan repayments -- be it operating costs or interest payments."

To break this vicious cycle, revenue must be increased, but expenditure must also remain limited.

"We aim to keep the budget deficit

Make procurement rules more inclusive

FROM PAGE 1

current framework fails to reflect the strength and capacity of Bangladesh's industrial base.

Despite the rise of multibillion-dollar companies in Bangladesh, domestic suppliers are often denied equal opportunity in public contracts.

Speakers pointed to clauses in the Public Works Department's schedule of rates that create structural entry barriers.

One striking example discussed was the PWD's requirement that a firm must have 65 years of experience to supply elevators to government projects. This rule alone excludes emerging local players, which have already invested in lift production but do not meet this arbitrary threshold.

Another instance involved the procurement of air conditioners.

The PWD rate schedule categorises ACs into country-based tiers, each with a different benchmark price. Tenders based on this classification often implicitly favour foreign brands, sidelining local manufacturers even though they supply nearly 90 percent of residential ACs and 80 percent of electronic home appliances in the domestic market.

Responding to the concerns, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, who attended the roundtable as the chief guest, said the government was already taking steps to make procurement more transparent and competitive.

He referred to a government decision to abolish the controversial rule that allowed bids to be automatically disqualified if they were 10 percent or more below the estimated value of the contract.

"This decision was taken to stop arbitrary cancellations and encourage fairer pricing," Ahmed said, adding that he would look into other issues to make public procurement rules more inclusive.

Ahmed has criticised flaws in Bangladesh's procurement system, citing excessive spending on foreign consultants and collusion in tendering processes.

"I often notice inefficiencies in service-related projects. Recently, I saw a Tk 180 crore consultancy for a complex project. I was shocked. Do we not have local experts for this?" Ahmed said.

He highlighted a tendency to favour international firms despite growing local expertise, pointing to a case where a government department allocated Tk 10 crore for consultancy fees, exceeding the construction cost for just 12 buildings. "This is a leakage issue. Consultants get paid, but we often hesitate to hold them accountable," he said.

Ahmed acknowledged that open tenders intended to ensure fairness are sometimes undermined by bid-rigging.

"Procurement methods need improvement. Open tendering is supposed to be fair, but collusion happens -- bidders sometimes fix prices among themselves," he said.

On large infrastructure projects, such as an \$800 million airport terminal funded by multilateral lenders, Ahmed admitted that loan conditions often favour foreign contractors. For example, high-tech scanners required for the project are not yet manufactured locally.

"Over time, we will build capacity, but for now, we must comply with donor conditions," he said.

Speakers at the event emphasised that reforming procurement rules to support local industry would not only help unlock the full potential of domestic manufacturing but also create jobs, save foreign currency, and ensure greater self-reliance in public infrastructure and service delivery.

He criticised weak enforcement by BSTI, which allows inferior products to undercut leaders like BSRM, and recommended allowing local-international joint ventures.

Mizanur Rahman Mamun, finance director at Hatil Furniture, urged

ACC moves to revive barge-mounted power plant case against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has made a move to revive the 18-year-old barge-mounted power plant corruption case against deposed former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

It filed a leave to appeal petition with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on March 5 this year challenging a High Court verdict that scrapped the trial proceedings against Hasina, who flew to India on August 5 last year following an uprising.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division led by Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury set July 15 for hearing as the petition was in yesterday's cause list of the bench, ACC's lawyer Ashif Hassan told The Daily Star.

He said the commission in the petition sought condonation of delay for 5,452 days to file the petition from the date of HC verdict.

Usually, such a petition is supposed to be filed within 30 days from the date of the delivery of the HC judgement, the lawyer said, adding that the time for releasing the certified copy of the HC judgement is included in the stipulated 30 days.

Lawyer Ashif, however, refused to say the details of the grounds of the leave to appeal petition and seeking condonation of delay in filing this petition.

On April 13, 2010, the HC in a verdict quashed the proceedings against Hasina in the barge-mounted power plant graft case filed by the ACC during the military-backed caretaker government.

changes in rules requiring restricted local wood, which contradict forest conservation policies.

He stressed buying directly from manufacturers to avoid double VAT and reduce costs.

Mamun advocated giving preference to companies with proper environmental and labour compliance and simplifying bureaucratic processes.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, called for a reassessment of the national payment policy.

Highlighting over \$30 billion in annual transactions through public procurement, he said this is a national economic issue, not just financial.

He criticised policies that favour imports under the pretext of global standards, effectively sidelining competitive local producers. Anam termed such practices "a silent but systemic barrier" to domestic industrial growth.

AK Enamul Haque, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, criticised the ineffective role of the Bangladesh Competition Commission, pointing out legal loopholes that benefit officials and foreign interests.

Haque drew examples like unfair disqualification of local firms, inflated procurement estimates, and poorly coordinated infrastructure work.

Highlighting systemic flaws, he stressed that uniform standards can't apply to all projects and that current public procurement practices often waste resources.

He urged structural reforms, transparency, and support for domestic producers to ensure fair competition and sustainable development.

RN Paul, managing director of RFL Group, said the quality of work should be assessed first, and only then should judgments be made.

"It's important to visit the factory and see firsthand what we are doing. Otherwise, it won't be fully trusted," he said.

Pran RFL Group is a leading food processor and conglomerate in Bangladesh. It aims to export products worth \$1 billion by 2025 and \$2 billion by 2030, he added.

He also said that seeing the work on the ground will build confidence in Bangladeshi companies. "Our capabilities have grown significantly."

Currently, alongside meeting domestic demand, PRAN RFL products are being marketed in 145 countries, he said, adding that therefore, local companies should be given priority when it comes to flourishing and expanding their operations.

Aameer Alihussain, managing director of the BSRM, one of the leading steel manufacturing companies in the country, said locally available products should not be made duty free, and the income tax rule should be made the same as the VAT rule.

Another issue that needs to be added to public procurement is the protection of suppliers. Here, bank guarantees or some other system should be put in place to provide protection to local suppliers, he said.

"If suppliers leave the country, how do we address them? If he is a local supplier, a case can be filed against him, or some other action can be taken. Otherwise, no action can be taken. No one accepts his responsibility."

"Another issue is that many times, we see that too many infrastructural changes are made in the middle of a project. This system should be fixed. There should be a general discipline issue here."

Tanjim Ferdous, in charge of NGOs and foreign missions at The Daily Star, moderated the discussion.

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WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY

The doctor next door

How Daktarkhana's GP model is transforming primary healthcare

NILIMA JAHAN

For 36 year-old homemaker Tania Akter, falling ill meant anxiety over costly treatment and unreliable healthcare.

Her husband, a salesman at a motorcycle showroom, earns just enough to get by. With little financial cushion, seeing a doctor for everyday health issues – was a luxury she could rarely afford. But that changed a few years ago when Tania first visited Daktarkhana, a small general physician (GP) centre near her home in Dania, Jatrabari. Since then, it has become the family's first stop for any health concern.

"Whether it's fever, the flu, a minor injury, or managing my fatty liver -- I go straight there," she said. "The doctor knows me, listens properly, never rushes, and talks in a way that makes me feel I am heard."

Consultation fees are just Tk 300, and if she visits regularly, the doctor often waives the fee altogether.

"He also gives advice over the phone and refers to a specialist if needed."

Since its launch in Betgari, Rangpur in 2019, Daktarkhana has grown into a network of 197 centres, 13 in Dhaka and the rest across 30 districts, providing continuous, affordable care to over 1,500 patients every day.

More than 1,50,000 people have received treatment so far, delivered by 200 MBBS-qualified doctors. In metropolitan areas, consultations cost Tk 300, while in district and upazila centres, it's Tk 200.



While GP systems have long underpinned healthcare in countries like the UK, US and across Western Europe, Bangladesh lacked a formal model. That is, until a group of young doctors led by medicine specialist Dr Ratindra Nath Mondal decided to act.

"In developed countries, people first see their GP, who handles most issues," said Dr Mondal, founder of Daktarkhana and president of the Bangladesh Society of General Physicians. "They only go to specialists when referred, and always return to their GP for follow-up. This is called the 'structured referral' model."

According to Mondal, around 80-85 percent of illnesses can be effectively treated at the GP level. "When more complex care is needed, our doctors refer patients to our specialist panel," he said. "It cuts unnecessary costs, reduces suffering, and allows our overburdened

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Army handling the matter with sensitivity

Says ISPR on demands of dismissed armed forces members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) yesterday said any provocative actions, anti-public behaviour, or activities that tarnish the reputation of the force are never "desirable".

ISPR issued the statement last night in response to a demonstration by members of the armed forces who were dismissed or relieved of duty. They gathered in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding reinstatement and other benefits.

The Bangladesh Army is handling the matter with "utmost patience, compassion, and sensitivity in all aspects," the statement said. It urged all to act responsibly with respect for the constitutional structure and discipline.

In an effort to seek

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Biman to suspend Dhaka-Narita flight amid losses

RASHIDUL HASAN

Amid much fanfare, Biman Bangladesh Airlines resumed flights to Japan's Narita in September 2023.

Within 21 months of restarting the much-anticipated service, Biman yesterday announced the suspension of operations on this route, effective from July 1.

The national flag carrier said the decision was based on three factors: the ongoing hajj operations, shortage of aircraft in its fleet, and financial viability of the route.

However, insiders said the airline was compelled to take the decision as it has been incurring heavy losses since resuming the service.

Officials told The Daily Star that Biman has so far incurred losses of over Tk 84 crore on the route, averaging around Tk 4 crore per month.

Biman had first launched flights on the Dhaka-Narita route in 1979. After a temporary suspension in 1981, the service was resumed, but it was again suspended in 2006 due to continuous losses.

Seventeen years later, on September 1, 2023, the route was reopened without a proper assessment of its commercial viability.

Since then, the relevant departments at Biman have reviewed

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Biman cites Hajj operations, aircraft shortage, financial loss

Airline incurred over Tk 84cr loss on the route

Around Tk 4cr lost each month since resumption

Flights often operated with nearly half the seats empty

Health reform implementation lacks clear plan Experts tell webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Health Sector Reform Commission addresses many vital issues in the country's dilapidated health sector, but the reform report lacks a clear roadmap for implementing its recommendations, health experts and economists said yesterday.

They said several issues, including integration between public and private health care, mental health and the impact of climate change on health, did not receive adequate attention in the reform report.

While acknowledging that there is room for improvement, they emphasised the need for political will and the formation of a specific taskforce to implement the recommendations.

They were speaking at a webinar titled "Health Reform Commission Report: Quick Fixes or Transformation" organised by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM).

In his presentation, Prof Shafiq Nahin Shimul of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University said the commission was formed at a time when the country was spending less than one percent of its GDP on the health sector, marked by high out-of-pocket expenditure, a shortage and disparity in the health workforce, and weak governance and service quality.

The commission, in its report, rightly

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

ডাচ-বাংলা রাংক এজেন্ট ব্যাংকিং

বায়োমেট্রিক মেশিনে আঙুলের ছাপ শনাক্তকরণের মাধ্যমে

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শেয়ার করবেন না



ডাচ-বাংলা রাংক
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সহযোগী

Two die from
electrocution
STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Chattogram

Two people died after being electrocuted in stagnant rainwater in Bashar Villa area on MM Ali Road in Chattogram city yesterday afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Tayeb, 45, from Purbo Polmogor in Mirsarai upazila, and Rabbi, 14, son of Humayun from Jabirpara area in Kishoreganj.

Chawkbazar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Zahidul Kabir said heavy rain on Saturday night caused water to accumulate on the ground floor of a building.

Both victims got electrocuted when they stepped into the water.

They were rushed to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared them dead, he added.

Nurul Alam Ashiq, in-charge of the CMCH police outpost, said the two were brought to the hospital in critical condition. The bodies were kept at the hospital morgue and later handed over to their families, said Nurul.

PLOT SALE

A plot is for sale in Baridhara Diplomatic Zone. Only interested and genuine buyers should Contact: 01973456904

KISHOREGANJ-CHAMARA PORT ROAD

Years of neglect turn vital road into muddy trap

A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Waterlogging caused by accumulated rainwater in the Satal area of the Kishoreganj-Chamara Port regional road has been causing immense suffering to locals.

The under-construction road has long remained in a dilapidated condition, and the rainfall over the past few days has only worsened the situation.

Vehicular movement has become extremely difficult, with potholes now submerged under muddy water. Heavy vehicles like trucks often get stuck or overturn, leading to accidents, while lighter, slow-moving vehicles are creating traffic congestion at several points.

The Roads and Highways Department began renovating the 19.5-kilometre road -- from Ekrampur in Kishoreganj to Chamara Port -- in March 2020 under a Tk 700 crore project. However, even after four years, the work remains incomplete. The stretch from Ekrampur Railgate to Satal, spanning one kilometre, has been impassable for several years.

Residents of five haor upazilas in the district, along with people from neighbouring upazilas, rely on this road for regional connectivity.

According to RHD sources, the renovation deadline has been extended several times. Authorities cited complications in land acquisition as the reason behind the delays.

Goods such as paddy, coal, stone, and sand are transported daily to Chamara Port via this road before being shipped across the country through waterways. The road's poor condition is causing major disruptions to the port's activities.

Kamrul Islam, a resident of Satal area, alleged negligence and indifference on the part of the authorities and demanded immediate steps to complete the road's renovation for the sake of public interest.

Contacted, Shakil Mohammad Faisal, executive engineer of RHD in Kishoreganj, said they are aware of the situation.

"There are complications regarding land acquisition along the one-kilometre stretch in Satal. The road is being widened from 18 to

32 feet, but the work cannot progress unless the acquired lands are vacated by former owners," he said.

"In the meantime, we are trying to fill the potholes with brick chips and mortar as a temporary fix. However, due to the municipality's failure to clean roadside drains, rainwater has accumulated on the road. Hopefully, the water will recede in a few days so that we can repair the potholes temporarily."

Rafiqul Islam, executive engineer of Kishoreganj municipality, said conservancy workers will be sent to clean the drains and remove the accumulated rainwater.

Rain submerges cropland in Rangpur

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Relentless rainfall over the last one week left vast stretches of cropland submerged across Rangpur region, causing severe disruption to maize and paddy harvest. While the window for safe harvesting is rapidly closing, farmers are hoping for improvement in weather.

"It rained intermittently every day over the past one week. There is no one to hire for harvesting the maize from cropland, so we are doing it on our own, wading through around four feet deep water," said Sheher Ali, 65, of Kaliganj in Lalmonirhat.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials said maize on around 1,25,501 hectares of land and Boro paddy on 5,898 hectares have been cultivated this season in the five districts of the Rangpur region -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari, and Gaibandha. So far, only 40 percent of the paddy and 30 percent of the maize have been harvested, with most remaining crops are fully mature and ready for harvest.

"This time of the year is the peak harvesting season. However, the weather is not on the farmers' side at present," said Shafiqul Islam, additional director of DAE (Rangpur).

Subal Chandra Roy, in charge of Rajarhat Agricultural Meteorological Observatory in Kurigram, said an average of 26mm of rainfall was recorded in the region everyday over the past week.

The weather pattern is likely to persist until May 21, he said.

Sampurna honours women achievers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The third edition of the Green E Sampurna Awards took place yesterday, recognising women from various sectors for their valuable contributions.

Launched in 2022 under the slogan "Ami nari, ami sampurna" (I am woman, I am whole), the initiative aims to honour women whose work propels the country forward. In this year's ceremony, Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam attended as the chief guest.

Veteran actor Dolly Zahur received the lifetime achievement award, while Apu Biswas, Mehazabien Chowdhury and her sister Malaika Chowdhury were recognised for their contributions to film and television. Singer Somnur Monir Konal was awarded for her vocal talent, and Peya Jannatul was honoured for her dual achievements as both lawyer and model.

The Daily Star's Senior Investigative Reporter Zyma Islam was awarded in the journalism category, while Mousumi Mou was recognised as best master of ceremony. Sharmin Suptha received an award for her inspiring comeback in the world of cricket.

Awardees also included Hosne Ara Begum, retired secretary and managing director of Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority, and Dr Kanji Fatema, paediatric neurologist.

Sampurna Bangladesh Founder Subrata Dey said, "Through their outstanding achievements, these women are setting extraordinary examples and leading our society towards progress. They have excelled in diverse sectors -- politics, military, entrepreneurship, medicine, engineering, science, journalism and administration, among others."

Sharna Lata Debnath, president of Sampurna Bangladesh, said, "Sampurna was founded in 2022 with 80 women entrepreneurs. Our aim was to help marginalised, small-scale women entrepreneurs establish themselves successfully in society."

"This year, we are honouring around 30 accomplished women from various sectors with this award."

General Secretary of Sampurna Bangladesh Tahmina Amin Rosy also spoke.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board
69-70, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
www.nctb.gov.bd

Ref. No.: 37.06.0000.303.07.005.25/83

Date: 18/05/2025

Invitation for Corrigendum e-Tender (OTM)

This is to notify to all concerned tenderers that the following tenders have been published by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) through the e-GP portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) regarding textbook printing, binding and supplying Class-6 for the Academic Year 2026.

Existing Date and Time	Corrigendum Date and Time
Tender/Proposal Closing/Opening: 26/05/2025; 14:00 PM	Tender/Proposal Closing/Opening: 27/05/2025; 14:00 PM
Tender Document last selling: 25/05/2025; 17:00 PM	Tender Document last selling: 26/05/2025; 17:00 PM

Interested tenderers may visit www.eprocure.gov.bd website to get the details of the Tender. This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-tender, you are requested to go through the www.eprocure.gov.bd web portal.

*Prof. Md. Shahtab Uddin
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Phone: 2233-85644
Email: secretary@nctb.gov.bd*

GD-1201

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
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INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA MONDAY MAY 19, 2025

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The Daily Star

5

Pope Leo urges unity for divided Church

Vows not to be 'autocrat' at inaugural mass

REUTERS, Vatican City

Pope Leo XIV formally began his reign yesterday by reaching out to conservatives who felt orphaned under his predecessor, calling for unity, vowing to preserve the Catholic Church's heritage and not rule like "an autocrat".



After a first ride in the popemobile before tens of thousands of people in St Peter's Square, Leo was formally installed as the 267th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church and sovereign monarch of Vatican City at an outdoor Mass.

Well-wishers in the crowd waved US and Peruvian flags, with people from both countries claiming him as the first pope from their nations.



A firefighter works at the site of a private enterprise hit by a Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, outside of Kyiv yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia launches 'record' drone attack: Ukraine

REUTERS, Kyiv

The largest known Russian drone attack since full scale war began in 2022 killed a woman in the Kyiv region and injured at least three people, Ukrainian authorities said early yesterday, as Moscow stepped up strikes following peace talks on Friday.

Russia launched 273 drones by 8:00 am local time (0500 GMT), targeting chiefly the central Kyiv region and the Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk

regions in the country's east, Ukraine's air force said.

Based on data provided by the air force, this was Russia's largest drone attack on Ukraine of the war. On the eve of the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 23, Moscow launched a then-record 267 drones.

The first direct talks in three years between Russia and Ukraine on Friday failed to broker the temporary ceasefire Kyiv and its allies have been

urging. The 100 minutes of talks in Istanbul yielded an agreement to trade 1,000 prisoners of war on each side.

US President Donald Trump said he would speak to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky today.

The sustained overnight Russian drone attack yesterday killed a 28-year-old woman in the capital region and injured at least three people, including a 4-year-old child, Ukrainian authorities said.

Israeli military intercepts missile from Yemen

Houthi target Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli military said yesterday it had intercepted a missile fired from Yemen, where the Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed launching two missiles at Israel's main airport.

"A missile that was launched from Yemen was intercepted", the Israeli military said in a statement, adding that air raid sirens had sounded in several areas of the country.

The Houthi later said they had fired "two ballistic missiles" towards Israel's Ben Gurion airport, near Tel Aviv. The Iran-backed rebels have regularly fired missiles and drones at Israel since the war in Gaza broke out in October 2023.

Earlier this month, a Houthi missile struck the area of the Tel Aviv airport, gouging a hole near its main terminal building and wounding several people.

On Friday, Israel bombed the Houthi-held Red Sea ports of Hodeida and Salif following three missile attacks in as many days. It threatened to target the Houthi leadership if the attacks continued.

Pak FM to visit China on heels of conflict with India

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's foreign minister will make a three-day official visit to China, his office said yesterday, a little over a week after Islamabad reached a ceasefire with India to end their most serious conflict in decades.

Ishaq Dar will start his visit today in Beijing where he will hold "in-depth discussions" with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi "on the evolving regional situation in South Asia and its implications for peace and stability", his office said.

"The two sides will also review the entire spectrum of Pakistan-China bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and global developments of mutual interest," it said.

Bomb kills one near California fertility clinic FBI calls it 'terrorism'

REUTERS

A bomb exploded near a reproductive health facility in Palm Springs, California, on Saturday, killing one person and injuring at least four in an incident the FBI called an "intentional act of terrorism".

The authorities have a person of interest in the investigation and are not searching for a suspect, Akil Davis, assistant director of the FBI's Los Angeles field office, told reporters. He provided no further details.

The person killed was near a vehicle that had been blown to pieces outside the clinic, operated by American Reproductive Centers, Davis said.

Unease grips foreign ministry

FROM PAGE 12
decision of removing foreign secretary.

"This is a bad precedent. You campaign against an official and then the government decides to remove him. If the government does not deal with such issues with a strong hand, the officials will not be confident about the leadership," an official said. "This will create a sense of mistrust within the colleagues and impact the functioning of the ministry."

Meanwhile, former ambassador Sufiur Rahman has yet to join the foreign ministry even after a month of his appointment as Chief Adviser's Special Assistant.

According to a circular

issued by the Cabinet Division on April 20, he will discharge his duties at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In line with the Rules of Business 1996, he has been vested with the executive authority in the ministry to assist the chief adviser. Sufiur Rahman served as Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva. Earlier, he served as Bangladesh's ambassador to both Australia and Myanmar. He also worked in various capacities in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India.

Asked about it, foreign ministry director general (admin) Abul Hasan Mridha told The Daily Star he received no information from the high-ups on that

matter. Asked why he did not join the foreign ministry, Sufiur Rahman refused to comment.

A foreign ministry official said there are both opinions – for and against Sufiur Rahman's joining the foreign ministry.

Asked, former ambassador M Humayun Kabir said removal of a sitting foreign secretary is unprecedented, and there are both internal and external factors at play.

"We need to remember that we have never experienced the situation of August 5 and the events of pre and post August 5," he said.

After such events, societal expectation

changes and the government needs to act accordingly, he said.

"The ministry needs to act professionally and proactively, instead of being defensive and reactive," said Humayun Kabir, also president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.

"We need to remember that we are in a turbulent world now. We are facing challenges in our relationship with our neighbouring countries. We need to maintain integrity," he said.

He suggested that the Chief Adviser's Office and the foreign ministry maintain strong coordination in the handling of external affairs as well as internal integrity.

Post-Brexit UK willing to 'align' with EU in some areas: minister

AFP, London

AUK minister said yesterday that the government could be willing to align with EU rules in some areas as opposition parties accused Prime Minister Keir Starmer of "surrender", ahead of landmark talks.

Starmer is set to sign a new deal with the European Union this week as he hosts the first post-Brexit EU-UK summit today.

The London gathering with EU chiefs is aimed at agreeing steps towards a closer relationship between Britain and the 27-country bloc that it left five years ago after an acrimonious referendum.

Details of any deal have remained vague, and Minister for European Union Relations Nick Thomas-Symonds told the BBC Sunday that they were still being worked out.

He said the Labour government was taking a practical approach "where it is in our national interest to align on common standards to make sure we get far easier trade, to mean that businesses.. can start trading with the EU again".

Starmer has ruled out rejoining the customs union and single market but has suggested the UK is ready for regulatory alignment with the EU on food and agricultural products.

Zila Parishad

Munshiganj

www.zpmunshiganj.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice 05/2024-2025

Memo No. 46.41.5900.004.54.004.21-149

Date: 17.05.2025

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Apurush
17.05.25
Assistant Engineer
Zila Parishad, Munshiganj.

33 Bangladeshi sue Malaysian firm

FROM PAGE 12
for quota approvals, levies, temporary work passes, health checks, and commissions for the job agents.

The workers realised only later that it was the responsibility of the employer to pay all these expenses.

They arrived in Malaysia in batches between June and October 2023.

The workers were asked to hand over their travel documents and passports

before being housed in dormitories in Kuala Lumpur.

They later learnt that the job offers were fake and they had to remain in the dorms, where they were given only basic necessities such as raw food to cook for themselves.

Eventually, the workers lodged a complaint with the migrant workers' rights group Tenaganita, which led to an investigation by the labour department.

তর্তি
বিজ্ঞপ্তি

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Another setback for exporters

Fresh Indian curbs on imports from Bangladesh concerning

We are disappointed by India's latest move to restrict the import of a number of Bangladeshi goods—ranging from garments and agro-processed foods to fruits, furniture, and plastics—through land ports. According to a notification issued by India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), garments, the single largest Bangladeshi export to India, will only be allowed entry through two sea ports. This marks India's second trade restriction in just over a month, following its April 8 revocation of transhipment facilities for Bangladesh's export cargo to third countries via Indian ports and airports. We must say the pattern that emerges from these moves is quite disturbing not only for the disruptions it will cause to our exports, but also for what it signals about the current state of bilateral cooperation and communication.

There was, according to a report, no formal communication from Delhi in advance. Sources at the Bangladesh High Commission have said they learned of the move only after it had taken effect. There was no prior notice in case of the April 8 restriction either. For decisions that affect billions of dollars in trade and the livelihoods of exporters and importers on both sides, such a lack of engagement and transparency is unbefitting of neighbours with interlinked economies. Bangladeshi exporters have already started to feel the brunt of the latest restrictions, with 17 trucks carrying products from the PRAN-RFL Group reportedly getting stuck at the Burimari land port on Sunday morning. These trucks were bound for Siliguri in West Bengal but halted due to the new import curbs.

Of course, among the sectors to be affected most is garments, with Bangladesh's apparel exports to India valued at about \$700 million annually. Around 93 percent of these exports are routed through land ports. Rerouting them now through sea ports may significantly increase costs, delay deliveries, and hurt the competitiveness of exporters. Delhi may view this as a reciprocal measure, as hinted by a section of Indian media, considering Bangladesh's move last month to block yarn imports via land ports (shortly after India suspended transhipment facilities). But we must remember that our imports from India are nearly ten times the value of our exports, indicating a significant trade deficit with India. Given this imbalance, any additional restriction on our limited exports only deepens the inequity in trade relations. Moreover, such restrictions, if truly necessary, should be introduced with proper dialogue, phased implementation, and clear intent.

We, therefore, urge the Indian authorities to withdraw these unilateral and reactive measures and engage in constructive dialogue with Bangladesh to resolve any outstanding trade issues. Both countries stand to lose if mutual trust and cooperation in bilateral trade are eroded.

Swift justice raises hope

Magura rape case verdict should serve as a precedent

It is encouraging that a Magura court has concluded the trial proceedings of a rape case in just 24 days after the trial commenced on April 23, 2025. Reportedly, the court sentenced 44-year-old Hitler Sheikh, the prime accused, to death for the rape and murder of his daughter-in-law's eight-year-old sister. However, three other accused were acquitted as the charges against them could not be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. That said, the surprising efficiency with which our judicial system worked in this case may serve as a model for future trials.

After the verdict, the victim's mother was reported to have expressed disappointment over the acquittal of three accused, stating, "They deserved punishment, as they assisted in the murder and concealed information." We hope proper justice will be served if the case is appealed, but for the moment, what we should take away from this case is the speed with which the trial was conducted. The same urgency should be applied to the many other rape cases pending in courts across the country. As a Supreme Court lawyer rightly pointed out, inconsistency in the pace of justice leads to disparity and undermines public confidence in the judiciary.

According to the Human Rights Support Society, at least 6,305 women and girls were raped in the past five years. Despite this alarming rate, conviction remains extremely low. Of the 20,914 cases of violence against women and children filed through 14 one-stop crisis centres between 2001 and July 2024, only 1,48 percent ended in convictions. Currently, 101 Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunals are handling such cases, with each burdened by an average of 1,500 pending cases. To address this backlog, more tribunals must be established. Additionally, we must protect victims and witnesses as they are sometimes pressured into withdrawing cases or settling out of court. The longstanding problems of faulty investigations and inadequate forensic facilities should also be addressed through institutional reform.

In our country, rape trials often drag on for years—even in lower courts. The swift verdict in the Magura case shows that timely justice is indeed possible. While we strongly support expediting investigations and trials, it is equally important that the process be thorough and fair. We urge the government to do everything in its power to ensure both speed and quality in justice delivery.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



Death of Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi

On this day in 2024, Iranian hard-line president Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter crash. Masoud Pashayi, the country's most reform-oriented president in decades, was elected to replace him in July.

The bold move to a flexible exchange rate regime

MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun
is the executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.
Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KATUN

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has recently announced a shift to a flexible exchange rate system after a long period of a managed exchange rate system. Although this decision is primarily driven by conditions from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the disbursement of loans, it has been a widely discussed issue in the country. Bangladesh is currently under an IMF programme for a \$4.7 billion loan, but the IMF did not disburse the fourth instalment in January 2025 as Bangladesh was reluctant to adopt a market-based exchange rate. Now, with the central bank agreeing to go for a flexible exchange rate, the IMF will disburse the fourth and fifth instalments in June this year.

This is a significant policy move that follows years of concern by Bangladesh Bank (BB) about the risks of currency depreciation and volatility. In early May 2024, BB introduced a crawling peg system as part of the IMF loan programme's conditions, aiming to stabilise the foreign exchange market when pressures on reserves arose due to remittance fluctuations and trade imbalances. Adopting the crawling peg, a system where a currency is allowed to change within a set range, was a transitional mechanism since a sudden move to a free float could lead to excessive depreciation and worsen inflation.

The flexible exchange rate shift has been made because of a stable foreign exchange reserves at present. The foreign exchange reserve improved after the payments in December 2024 and robust exports and increases in remittances halted the declining trend of foreign exchange reserves. Additionally, the decline in illicit capital outflow has contributed to building up reserves.

The tight monetary policy is expected to reduce the inflation rate in the coming months, although the rate of decline is still slow as per official data. The central bank has refrained from selling dollars to the market and has been building foreign exchange reserves over recent months by buying dollars.

This policy shift of moving to a flexible exchange rate is expected to offer several economic benefits. It will enable BB to focus more on domestic issues, such as controlling inflation and managing interest rates, without the burden of constantly maintaining a fixed exchange rate.

Another benefit of a flexible exchange rate is that it enables the economy to adjust automatically when

external factors change. For example, when global prices fluctuate or a trade imbalance occurs, the exchange rate can adjust independently to maintain stability, allowing the economy to handle external challenges more smoothly, with minimal interference. Consequently, this reduces the strain on foreign exchange reserves and makes the system more stable in the long run.

Additionally, a flexible exchange rate can make the country's exports cheaper and more competitive in international markets. This can encourage foreign investment, especially in industries that focus on

of competitiveness of Bangladeshi exporters, as all competitor countries devalued their currencies. Eventually, economic reality forced BB to devalue the taka. But by then, the adjustment was swift and steep instead of gradual. As a result, imports became too costly.

Of course, BB will have to be prepared to face the associated challenges with a flexible exchange rate regime. One of the primary concerns with a flexible exchange rate is the potential for increased volatility, which could undermine investor confidence, disrupt trade, and complicate long-term business planning. While a flexible exchange rate allows the currency to adjust naturally to market conditions, it can also result in sudden and unpredictable fluctuations that could destabilise the economy. This is particularly worrisome for a low-income country like Bangladesh, which is vulnerable to external shocks.

Another challenge associated with a flexible exchange rate is the pass-through effect on inflation. When the

will require careful management and ongoing strategic interventions. BB has announced a mechanism to stabilise the currency market by establishing a \$500 million fund to sell dollars in the market as needed. This measure aims to mitigate sudden fluctuations in the exchange rate and reduce the risk of extreme depreciation. However, effective management of this fund will require close monitoring of both domestic and global economic conditions.

The transition to a flexible exchange rate may initially raise concerns among both domestic and foreign investors. Investors generally prefer stable exchange rates, as volatility can increase the risks associated with cross-border trade and investment. The fear of sudden devaluation could lead to capital flight or a reduction in foreign direct investment (FDI).

Transparent communication will be crucial for BB in managing investor expectations. Clear and consistent messaging about the central bank's



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

exports, leading to a stronger export sector and contributing to overall economic growth.

Moreover, a market-based exchange rate would eliminate the scope for arbitrary interventions by BB that artificially favour certain groups or create a misleading picture of economic strength for political gain.

In the past, BB interfered with the currency market to keep the taka value unrealistically high to benefit a select group, such as importers and to signal a strong economy to the public. During the previous regime, the BB governor kept the value of the taka artificially high through interventions, for example, selling dollars from reserves in the market to prop up the taka. This led to the loss

value of the taka depreciates, the cost of imports rises, which can lead to higher prices for goods and services and increased inflation. Since Bangladesh is an import-dependent economy, this could result in higher costs, especially for essential commodities such as fuel, food, and raw materials.

BB can utilise its monetary policy tools to control inflation in case of exchange rate fluctuations. For instance, by adjusting interest rates, the central bank can work to keep inflation at a moderate level. However, this will require coordination with fiscal policies to ensure that higher expenditures do not drive inflation too high and economic stability is not undermined.

Therefore, navigating the challenges of a flexible exchange rate

polices, including the mechanism for market interventions and strategies to maintain stability, will help reduce investor uncertainty.

The decision by BB to adopt a flexible exchange rate is a bold step in aligning Bangladesh's economy with global market dynamics. While the shift presents several challenges, such as increased volatility, inflationary pressures, and the need to build investor confidence, the opportunities it offers, particularly in terms of economic resilience, adaptability, and competitiveness, are significant. Only prudent macroeconomic management backed by appropriate policies and political stability can help achieve the benefits of a flexible exchange rate system.

We need a free trade agreement with the UK, like India



RMG NOTES

Mostafiz Uddin
is the managing director of Denim Export Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

The recent signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the UK and India marks a significant shift in global trade dynamics. This deal, which eliminates tariffs on 99 percent of Indian exports to the UK and reduces duties on 90 percent of goods from the UK entering India, is projected to boost bilateral trade by 25.5 billion pounds a year by 2040. This agreement will no doubt positively impact India's textile industry, for which Europe is a major target market.

As a manufacturer deeply invested in our nation's economic future, particularly in the RMG sector, this development is both inspiring and concerning. More than anything, it highlights the urgency for Bangladesh to pursue similar trade agreements to maintain and enhance our competitiveness in key markets like the UK.

Bangladesh's RMG industry is a cornerstone of our economy,

contributing significantly to export earnings and employment. In 2024, RMG exports reached an impressive \$38.48 billion, with the European Union accounting for over 50 percent of this total. The UK remains one of our top export destinations, with earnings from apparel exports to the UK increasing by 3.74 percent to \$2.92 billion in the July-February period of FY25.

However, the global trade landscape is rapidly evolving. Countries are actively seeking bilateral and multilateral agreements to secure favourable trade terms amid heightened protectionist measures by the US. This picture is changing fast. Each day, fresh news emerges of new trade deals being negotiated, and events in the US have certainly had a cascading effect around the world. For this reason, I believe Bangladesh must move quickly.

India's recent FTA with the UK

is a testament to this trend, aiming to provide Indian exporters with enhanced market access and reduced trade barriers.

I believe the UK-India FTA sets a precedent that could potentially disadvantage Bangladeshi exporters if similar agreements are not pursued. With India securing tariff-free access for its textiles and other goods, Bangladeshi products might face relatively higher duties, making them less competitive in the UK market.

We all know that fashion and textiles is an industry of fine margins. Price elasticity is high. A small change in prices or costs can have a significant impact on demand. Likewise, small alterations in duties can confer significant advantages.

We must also consider that the UK's trade data indicates a decrease in imports from Bangladesh, amounting to 3.3 billion pounds in the four quarters at the end of Q4 of 2024. It is a 2.3 percent decline compared to the previous year. This trend, coupled with India's enhanced access, could further erode Bangladesh's market share in the UK. It is concerning and we need to act now to address this slide and make sure it does not become a long-term issue.

More generally, I am hearing anecdotal evidence of a slowing down of orders for suppliers in

Bangladesh amid ongoing challenges in global trade. We urgently need some breathing space right now.

In the face of these developments, Bangladesh must act decisively to negotiate its own trade agreements with key partners, including the UK. Such agreements should aim to secure favourable terms for our exports, particularly in the RMG sector, to ensure continued growth and competitiveness. I know from my many visits to the UK and dealings with UK companies that they greatly value Bangladesh as a competitive, reliable business partner.

Negotiating an FTA is a complex process that requires careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national interests. However, the benefits of such agreements, including enhanced market access, reduced tariffs, and strengthened economic ties, are too significant to ignore.

The global trade environment is shifting, and Bangladesh must adapt to maintain its economic momentum. By proactively seeking trade agreements that protect and promote our key industries, we can ensure that Bangladesh remains a competitive player on the international stage. The time to act is now before the window of opportunity narrows further.

EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Mahfuz Anam

Printed by him on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd at Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon Industrial Area, editor@thedadlystar.net

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Subscription:
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This country belongs to women too



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IQRA L QAMARI

Every time I come back from a protest, I feel a deep camaraderie with my fellow protestors, as it should be when you are true to the cause, I suppose. But then as everyone disbands, I am always left with a sense of abandonment. It perhaps reveals my own predilection for rebellion. I end up fantasising all of us heading to a *cha-er-tong* afterwards and plotting in hushed tones to overthrow the system. Then overthrow the system.

The irony is that, the last time we did end up toppling the regime. It felt like I was fully immersed in the participation, screaming at the top of my lungs for justice, dignity and freedom, driven by the conviction that my voice was being heard, finally. But that fever dream was brief and with a gut-punch I witnessed firsthand how quickly this frail package of dignity, justice and freedom can come under threat again.

Still, I am not the one to get stuck in the gloom and doom. We hop on to the next fight, the next uprising. Because being a

So, on the hideously hot Friday afternoon, I stood smiling, observing a middle-aged woman with a cotton scarf wrapped around her head, holding a banner that read, "I am a "prostitute." So what?" It was not a question, but a dare thrown to the ones who think that morality is theirs to ration out. It was a defiant call to freedom, and Moitree Jatra was just that—the next chapter in that freedom struggle. It was evidence that we will not yield to the same old mania, the bargaining chips and the desperation of searching for control in a machinery that is wired to run with the same old tricks.

Moitree Jatra was not a gathering of any political banner or one social cause. It was a many-threaded march led by those who know: no one is free until all women are free. Those who understand that patriarchy does not boil down to a few individuals, but is a system that draws out power at the cost of someone else's oppression, which is the scaffolding of every structure that

banner in this movement. Why Indigenous activists, sex workers, third gender activists, academics, journalists, artists, including both men and women, participated in full gear, shoulder to shoulder. A religious cleric was seen carrying a placard against sexual harassment in madrasas, a mother holding up her son so he can take a hard-look at a play on sexual abuse being demonstrated on stage, young women with short hair and

calls for reform. It called on the government to uphold its constitutional responsibilities by addressing violence and disinformation targeting women and marginalised groups. It called for stronger protections, better access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, safety for sex workers, protection of Indigenous land. Systemic failures were pointed out, from the lack of accountability in rape trials to the

The weight of that line was crushing. Because isn't this how it goes? You demand your rights; they assassinate your character. A conservative religious commentator recently mocked members of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission for their contradicting reaction of taking offense at the word "prostitute," whilst demanding dignity of sex workers at the same time. That isn't ignorance—it's a deliberate distortion. As if to demand dignity, you must accept humiliation for yourself and the ones you are fighting for. Either way, both are denied agency.

Some political leaders speak of how women will be "allowed" to work if their parties come to power, as if autonomy is a favour, that can only be granted if it is tethered. I assume this is the logic of patriarchy. That women's freedom must be conditional, negotiated, and revoked at will. And it thrives not because women are weak, but because men are too invested in a system that disproportionately benefits them to let go of the reins. A system where women's labour props up the household, the damned GDP, the political movements, but when it's time to inherit the stage, they're dismissed. Women led last year's revolution from the frontlines. And yet, when it was time to share the spoils, they were gone. The rhetoric of liberation morphed into an all-boys' club. We all know this pattern and Moitree Jatra called out that hypocrisy under the sweltering sun.

Moitree Jatra was not just about the state apparatus and its failures. It showed a window to what standing up for your community means. It was ally-ship. It was protest without a puppeteer with vested interests and the greed for holding the highest seat. Moitree Jatra fully displayed how there can be tact, composure and perseverance in the face of the same brand of paranoia and stupidity, regardless of whichever regime has been dethroned. It took the stage from the macho-fuelled gatekeepers of power and gave it to the ones who could report on oppression directly. As the writer Alice Walker had put it—*Hard times require furious dancing*. The rhythm was set by the ceaseless drumming of resistance last Friday. And we better get dancing.



Moitree Jatra was a many-threaded march led by those who know: no one is free until all women are free.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHANGMA

bold, red *tip* calling for the rights of garment workers and Dalit women. Indigenous women marched not as tokens, but as leaders, naming land grabs and environmental destruction for what they are—patriarchal tools of control. They were not there for free snacks or party loyalty. They were not there because they were educated, privileged or polished. It was about belief. And the diversity went beyond the aesthetic values.

The demands of the Moitree Jatra reflected that they were not just surface-level

normalisation of workplace harassment.

It was not just rage that reverberated through the sea of people. There was jubilance in the air because the best thing you can do in the face of oppression is laugh and partake in joy. There was singing and dancing and irony. The most electric performance came from the crowd itself—the chants and the courage to speak hard truths. One slogan rang repeatedly—*Chyechilam hisya, hoye gelam beshya* (I had only asked for my share, but they called me a "prostitute").

woman is, in its true essence, a freedom struggle. One that goes beyond gender—rooted in the liberation of the oppressed, the exploited, the Indigenous, the labouring—anyone whose breath is choked by the leather boots of the patriarchy.

This is why tea garden workers led the

exploits labour, land, and life itself. It allows violence to go unlabelled, unpaid labour to go unrecognised and upholds obedience as virtue. It sidelines women once their role has served the function of showcasing inclusivity.

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Global trade war puts climate action under threat



Mizan R Khan
is technical lead at LDC Universities Consortium on
Climate Change (LUCCC).

MIZAN R KHAN

President Trump's successive executive orders to increase tariffs since January 2025 have turned into a global trade war, particularly between the US and China. Average tariffs on Chinese goods now stand at more than 100 percent, while Chinese retaliatory measures on US exports to China exceed those of the US average. Additionally, the US has imposed more than 10 percent tariffs on almost all goods from most countries across the world. As China is now the leader of renewable energy and clean technologies, these tariffs will greatly impact its production and deployment, having serious impacts on climate change, an unfolding crisis of our time.

It may be mentioned that the US administration has again submitted



The trade war could slow the global clean energy transition, at a time when it is the need of the day.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

its application to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Domestically, the US is cutting back on its climate commitments, reducing the support for clean technology industries under the Inflation Reduction Act. So, how this new push back through escalating tariffs on clean technologies will affect climate diplomacy and actions is not yet very clear. But some likely trends can be discerned.

This unfolding tariff war is likely to stymie economic growth. An earlier report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) shows that tariff increases are associated with a persistent decline in economic growth. This is likely to impact all sectors and priorities at national levels worldwide.

Tariffs on green goods, including Chinese exports of solar panels,

are often produced by Chinese firms with components made in China. These companies are already responding to US restrictions by relocating parts of their production to new countries. This has been most visible in the solar industry, where value chains shifted to countries in Southeast Asia to avoid US tariffs and restrictions. Now it is to be seen

that under a scenario of rivalry and non-cooperation, challenges to mitigation and adaptation would be high, rendering the goal under the Paris Agreement of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius unrealisable. This scenario could lead to four times more emissions than a sustainability-focused pathway with low challenges to mitigation and adaptation.

Reducing emissions will be more expensive, as investments needed to scale clean technologies will plummet. As a result, these technologies fail to penetrate the markets that need them most.

Adaptation as well will meet challenges under this SSP3 scenario, as this will promote deforestation and the intensification of cropping.

Extensive deforestation and agricultural expansion would reduce ecosystem services and biodiversity, reducing their adaptive capacity. This area is likely to be a priority agenda at COP30 in Belem, Brazil, in November 2025.

We may recall that to prevent a rise in protectionism among countries, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was established in 1947, which eventually led to the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995. The WTO ensures a system of rules-based international trade with checks for discriminatory trade practices and barriers. Now, the unfolding unilateralism in the form of only bilateral deals among countries is likely to seriously undermine

multilateralism in the global trading system.

Finally, it may be argued that Trump's tariff policies are likely to harm the US more than others, with higher inflation, joblessness and even a potential recession. This is likely to further strengthen China's leadership in the global green technology supply chain. The trade war could slow the global clean energy transition, at a time when it is the need of the day. China, the world's largest emitter, is also the clean technology leader, with record deployment of renewables and EVs. Consequently, the country's progress on its emission and environmental targets has implications for global trade, investments and the global energy transition.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Upazila : Sadar, District : Narsingdi
www.iged.gov.bd

Memo no. : 46.02.6860.000.14.001.23-513

Date : 17-05-2025

e-Tender Notice No : 07/2024-2025

e-Tender is Invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for 02 (Two) nos Package under GOB Fund, FY: 2024-2025 for Upazila- Sadar, District- Narsingdi.

Sl No	Tender ID	Name of Work	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1.	1114423	e-Tender/REV/NAR-S/2024-25/G-01 Supply of Furniture and Decorated of Hall Room at Narsingdi Sadar Upazila Parishad, District- Narsingdi.	02-Jun-2025 13:00:00	02-Jun-2025 16:00:00
2.	1114424	e-Tender/REV/NAR-S/2024-25/W-01 Renovation Works with Sound System and Furniture Supply of Meeting Room at Narsingdi Sadar Upazila Parishad, District- Narsingdi.	02-Jun-2025 13:00:00	02-Jun-2025 16:00:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be Accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline / hard copies will be Accepted.

To Submit e-Tender, Registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is Required.

The Fees for Downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be Deposited online through any Registered Bank's Branches up to 13:00 on 02-Jun-2025.

Further Information and Guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

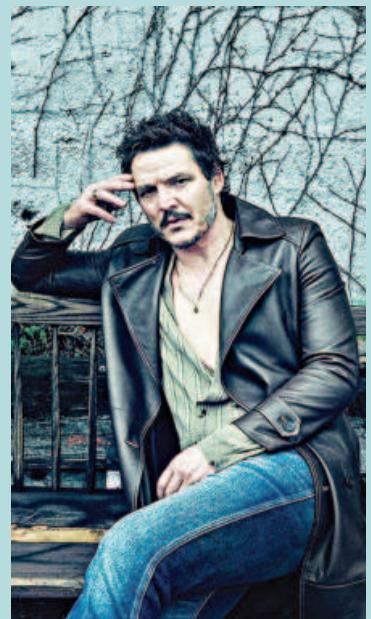
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Pedro Pascal condemns Trump-era immigration policy at Cannes

At the Cannes Film Festival, actor Pedro Pascal delivered a strong critique of Donald Trump's immigration policies during a press conference for Ari Aster's pandemic satire *Eddington*.

Speaking alongside co stars including Emma Stone and Joaquin Phoenix, Pascal stressed the power of storytelling against fear-driven politics, stating, "Fear is the way they win." He reflected on his family's escape from dictatorship in Chile, their asylum in Denmark, and resettlement in the US, reaffirming his support for refugee protections.

The actor's remarks coincided with a new US policy offering undocumented migrants \$1,000 and travel aid for voluntary return, part of Trump's reinstated immigration crackdown. Pascal's statements underscored the link between political narratives and personal histories in today's volatile climate.



Kaaktaal bids farewell after four years of music

Popular Indie band Kaaktaal has officially announced its disbandment, marking the end of a nearly four-year musical journey. Formed in 2021, the band rose to prominence for its evocative lyrics and genre-blending sound.

Over the years, the band carved out a loyal fan base through hits like *Ghum*, *Niruddesh*, *Chena Shohor*, *Abar Dekha Hole*, and *Shobuj Bicycle*—tracks that became staples in Dhaka's underground and indie scenes.

In a farewell statement shared online, Kaaktaal expressed gratitude to fans for a journey that exceeded their imagination. However, they admitted that their decision to conclude came as the journey was "losing its peace," the very essence of why it began.

Lawrence, Pattinson's 'Die, My Love' receives Cannes standing ovation

Jennifer Lawrence and Robert Pattinson's psychological drama *Die, My Love* received a six-minute standing ovation at its world premiere in Cannes. Directed by Scottish filmmaker Lynne Ramsay, the film marks her return to the festival after eight years and is based on Ariana Harwicz's 2017 novel.

Lawrence plays a mother battling postpartum depression, with Pattinson as her husband. Their volatile relationship unfolds in



scenes of self-harm and emotional disintegration. Ramsay, visibly moved, briefly addressed the audience before leaving the venue.

The supporting cast includes LaKeith Stanfield, Sissy Spacek, and Nick Nolte. This marks Lawrence's first Cannes competition entry and her second appearance as a producer. Ramsay's previous Cannes credits include *We Need to Talk About Kevin* and *You Were Never Really Here*.

'Taandob' teaser hints at mayhem with monkey masks

Raihan Rafi unveiled the long awaited teaser for *Taandob* yesterday, sparking excitement among fans. A mysterious monkey mask appears repeatedly throughout the teaser, worn by Shakib Khan and a group of followers. However, its significance remains a secret, likely to be revealed in the full movie.

The teaser escalates in intensity when Jaya Ahsan is shown pointing a gun at Shakib Khan. Impeccably dressed and radiating suspense with her piercing look, she adds a compelling layer of intrigue to the scene.

So far, it's confirmed that *Taandob* stars Shakib Khan, Jaya Ahsan, and Sabil Nur in key roles. The producers confirmed that the full cast list will be announced soon. Director Raihan Rafi has hinted that even greater surprises lie ahead.



NEWS

Environment not conducive to polls yet

FROM PAGE 12

unease among political parties.

On the need for consensus in the interest of the nation, he said, "What serves the nation best should be our priority. That's why, based on dialogue, we have supported common ground and changed our position where necessary."

Chaired by NCC Vice President Prof Ali Riaz, the dialogue was also attended by Election Reform Commission Chief Badul Alami Majumdar and Anti-Corruption Reform Commission Chief Iftekharuzzaman, among others.

In his opening remarks, Ali Riaz said the meeting aimed to conclude the initial phase of discussions with Jamaat.

Kuet teachers now suspend

FROM PAGE 12

who assaulted teachers be brought to justice first.

But now, they will also refrain from participating in any administrative functions — except those relating to the disciplinary committee — if no satisfactory progress is made in concluding the investigation into the assault incident by noon today.

Following an investigation by a syndicate-mandated investigation committee, 37 students were shown show-cause notices on May 12. The students did not respond within the deadline and the administration did not take any further action at its own discretion.

The Kuet Teachers' Association said the administration halted the judicial process in violation of university regulations under pressure from "invisible higher authorities" and to

protect the interests of a "select group of students".

If the administration fails to take satisfactory action by 12:00pm tomorrow [today], we will begin a sit in protest at the vice-chancellor's office," the association said in the press conference after the meeting.

The show cause process, initiated as per the 103rd syndicate decision and completed by the disciplinary committee, must now proceed to a final hearing to ensure due process, they said.

"No individual authority can override this standard procedure. The disciplinary process must be concluded by 12:00pm tomorrow to restore the academic environment," they said.

If essential university structures such as disciplinary bodies cannot perform their duties due to persistent threats and interference, and if

teachers continue to face harassment, cyberbullying and public humiliation, then a normal educational environment cannot exist.

The syndicate had previously formed a separate committee to address rising incidents of cyberbullying and social humiliation faced by teachers. But no visible action has been taken so far.

"Despite assurances from the vice-chancellor, many of our colleagues remain victims of cyberbullying," the statement said.

If the crisis persists, the VC would be held solely responsible for any fallout, the association said.

The university has been closed since February 18 over a myriad of protests.

Nusraat Faria

FROM PAGE 12

The list of accused includes Apu Biswas, Nipun Akter, Ashna Habib Bhabna, Zayed Khan, Suborna Mustafa, Rokeya Prachy, Sohana Saba, Meher Afroz Shaon, Jyotika Jyoti, Symon Sadik and Azizul Hakim.

In March, a complaint was submitted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, seeking a case against these actors, the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and 265 others on charges of attempted murder.

The complainant, one Enamul Haque, claimed he was injured during student protests in Bhatacharia last year. After recording his statement, the court instructed the officer in charge of Bhatacharia Police Station to register the complaint as a First Information Report. The case was registered on April 29.

DU students, teachers ramp up protests

FROM PAGE 1

"The real perpetrator must be identified and brought to justice."

Alongside the Dhaka University JCD unit, activists from Jagannath University, Tejgaon College, Dhaka College, Titumir College, and various other educational institutions under Dhaka-based and Dhaka Metropolitan JCD units participated in the demonstration.

Earlier in the day, JCD's DU unit staged a black flag procession and protest rally, demanding the resignation of the vice-chancellor and proctor for their "failure to ensure campus security".

Students and teachers from Dhaka

University's Institute of Education and Research (IER) besieged Shahbagh Police Station for about an hour and a half, demanding the arrest of Shammo's killers.

The demonstration began around 12:20pm. They ended the programme at 1:45pm after assurances from police officials of intensifying investigations.

DUVC Niaz Ahmed Khan and Proctor prof Saifuddin Ahmed expressed solidarity with the demonstrators.

Meanwhile, teachers from Dhaka University, under the banner of the "White Panel", a pro-BNP teachers' platform, also issued a 48-hour ultimatum to identify and arrest those responsible for the murder

They warned of launching a tougher movement if their demand is not met within the stipulated time, from a human chain held at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla.

"Shammo did not die a natural death—he was brutally murdered. Even after five days, the real perpetrators remain at large. Instead, a token arrest has been made to mislead us, which is unacceptable," said Professor Md Morshed Hasan Khan, convener of the White Panel.

"We urge the university administration and the home ministry to bring the actual killers to justice. Otherwise, we will be compelled to take stern action."

Nagar Bhaban sealed

FROM PAGE 1

With all gates locked, including the main entrance, key civic services such as birth and death registration, trade licence issuance and renewal, and tax payments remained suspended.

From around 9:30am, people from different parts of the capital gathered in front of the DSCC headquarters, causing severe disruption to traffic in the surrounding areas.

Monju Ara Begum, a small business owner from Kamalapur, came to Nagar Bhaban to renew her trade licence, while Shamim Ara Bithi, from Swamibagh, came to enquire about her daughter's birth certificate. Speaking to this correspondent, both expressed frustration, saying the suspension of essential city corporation services for political protests was unacceptable.

On the fourth day of the protest yesterday, demonstrators also blocked adjacent roads for about two hours and announced a complete blockade today (Monday) from 11:00am to 3:00pm.

Visiting Nagar Bhaban in the afternoon, this correspondent observed thousands of protesters chanting slogans and demanding the resignation of LGRD Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain. Protesters alleged that Ishraque has been unable to take his oath due to interference by the adviser, despite the court's verdict and the gazette notification.

Asif Mahmud, whose temporary office is located within Nagar Bhaban, has reportedly not come to work in recent days due to the notification.

ongoing agitation.

Traffic in front of Nagar Bhaban came to a standstill between 10:00am and 12:00pm, resuming only after protesters left for a procession through Golap Shah Mazar, Zero Point, Purana Paltan, Jatiya Press Club and Education Bhaban, before returning to Nagar Bhaban.

Following the procession, former secretary Moshiur Rahman, speaking on behalf of the demonstrators, announced: "We'll stage a sit-in from 11:00am to 3:00pm tomorrow [today] to suspend all operations at the Nagar Bhaban. The blockade will remain in effect throughout this period."

On March 27, the Dhaka First Joint District Judge and Electoral Tribunal declared Ishraque Hossain, a member of the BNP's Foreign Affairs Committee, the rightful mayor of DSCC. The Election Commission issued a gazette on April 27 recognising the verdict.

As per law, the government must arrange the oath-taking within 30 days of gazette publication — a deadline that is now fast approaching.

Meanwhile, the Local Government Division (LGD) sent a letter to the law ministry on May 15, seeking an opinion on whether any legal complications may arise from the verdict and the Election Commission's decision not to appeal it.

The letter, signed by LGD Joint Secretary Mahbuba Ireen and sent to the Law and Justice Division Secretary, states that the EC has decided not to challenge the court's verdict declaring Ishraque mayor. In light of this, the LGD requested legal

opinion regarding further steps under Section 6 of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009.

However, the law ministry had yet to provide an opinion as of yesterday. Contacted, Law and Justice Division Secretary Sheikh Abu Taher confirmed that no decision had been made regarding the LGD's request.

In a press statement yesterday, the LGD ministry said that any subsequent legal and official actions would be determined following the High Court's verdict on writ petition No. 8137/2025. If the verdict contains directives towards the ministry, they will be followed accordingly. Otherwise, legal procedures will be undertaken to resolve tenure-related complexities, once the law ministry's opinion is received.

On April 28, the LGD received a legal notice from Supreme Court lawyer Md Mamunur Rashid, urging the ministry not to arrange the oath-taking ceremony of Ishraque and highlighting various inconsistencies and irregularities in the said verdict. Subsequently, Rashid filed a writ petition with the HC, challenging the legality of the verdict and decree dated March 27, of the Election Tribunal in Election Case No. 15/2020, as well as the revised gazette issued by the EC on April 27.

The writ sought a directive to the LGD ministry to refrain from administering the oath to Ishraque, and also requested the law ministry to take departmental action against the tribunal judge for delivering a fraudulent verdict, the statement said.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



'Pakhider Bidhansabha'

Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, will stage *Pakhider Bidhansabha* at Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy's National Theatre Hall.

Adapted from Sheikh Fariduddin Attar's *Mantiq-ut-Tayr*, the play is penned by Dr Shahman Moishan and directed by Dr Ahmedul Kabir. It will be performed by postgraduate students from the department's 2023 cohort.

DATE: THURSDAY | MAY 22
TIME: 7PM ONWARDS
VENUE: BANGLADESH SHILPKALA ACADEMY



Rihanna returns with new song for 'Smurfs' movie

Rihanna has returned to the music scene with a fresh track for the upcoming summer flick *Smurfs*. Her new single, *Friend of Mine*, marks her first release since 2022's *Lift Me Up*.

Rihanna doesn't just contribute musically — she also voices Smurfette in the animated film, joining a cast that includes John Goodman and Sandra Oh among many others. She's also taken on the role of executive producer. The film is set to hit cinemas on July 18.

Though fans are still eager for an album, Rihanna made it clear during the 2025 Met Gala that her pregnancy isn't getting in the way. "I can still sing!" she proclaimed on the red carpet.

The doctor next door Army handling

FROM PAGE 3
hospitals to focus on critical cases."

The Dakarkhana model also supports young medical graduates, addressing a major gap in the system. Each year, many MBBS doctors struggle to find meaningful work, with no formal pathway into general practice.

To bridge this, Dakarkhana offers newly qualified doctors a four-day General Practice Orientation Course (GPOC), developed by the Bangladesh Society of General Physicians. So far, over 10,500 doctors have completed the training.

"Each of our centres is run by MBBS doctors trained to diagnose and manage common illnesses, offer counselling, and refer when necessary," said Mondal. "They spend at least 15 minutes with each patient. Listening itself is a form of treatment."

During the pandemic, when many health services shut down, Dakarkhana clinics provided free telemedicine consultations, including late-night support for pregnant women, children, and chronically ill patients.

"Our long term goal is to establish one GP centre for every 6,000 families," Mondal said. "Once that's in place, primary healthcare will truly be within reach and we'll be far closer to meeting our SDG targets."

The government has recently announced plans to launch over 100 GP clinics in Dhaka. However, Dr Mondal stressed that nationwide reform is essential.

"The day we have one GP centre for every 20,000 people, we'll have a working healthcare system," he said. "With proper support from the government, this model can serve as a blueprint for the entire country."

Crucially, he said, the government doesn't need

to start from scratch.

Bangladesh already has a vast network and infrastructure—community clinics, union sub centres, upazila complexes, district hospitals, and medical colleges. Our Dakarkhana model can be integrated into this system at minimal cost."

Protect family

FROM PAGE 3
sister," said MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam in a statement yesterday.

"These threats are especially alarming given that the main accused has been convicted, while other accused family members have been acquitted of all charges," she added. "The fear of retaliation expressed by the family must not be taken lightly."

"We strongly urge the authorities to act swiftly and decisively to prevent any further acts of violence, threats, or harassment against this already traumatised family," she added.

The foundation also voiced deep concern over the wider issue of gender-based violence and child rights violations across the country. It highlighted that the victim's sister, being a 14-year-old child bride, reflects the urgent and persistent crisis of child rape and child marriage in Bangladesh.

MJF urged the government to clarify what concrete steps are being taken to prevent such violations and to ensure the safety and dignity of vulnerable girls nationwide.

Standing in solidarity with the Magura victim's family, MJF reiterated its demand for justice, accountability, and comprehensive protection measures to be enacted without delay.

FROM PAGE 3

a peaceful resolution, a delegation from the army visited the press club and listened to their statements. The delegation assured that the demands would be verified and resolved in accordance with military regulations. They advised that complaints should be submitted directly to the relevant authorities, not through any third party.

As of May 14, 2025, the army had received 802 applications. Of these, 106 have been resolved, while the rest are under consideration.

"Regrettably, some unfortunate incidents today [Sunday] have raised concerns about the traditions and values of this disciplined force. Following two successful meetings, as the delegation was departing, a group of

unruly dismissed military personnel incited others to obstruct the delegation's vehicle, throw bricks and stones at law enforcers and chant inappropriate slogans," the statement said.

"The army exercised maximum patience and empathy to control the situation, but at one stage, law enforcers had to disperse some disorderly former members," it added.

Meanwhile, many protesters claimed they had been unfairly dismissed and denied rightful benefits during the previous government's tenure.

Mehedi Hasan, a protester, said he joined the army in 2017 but was dismissed in 2023 following an altercation over a leave request. "I was not given any benefits at the time," he said.

Health reform

FROM PAGE 3

acknowledged the existing limitations and recommended a people-centric and rights-based approach to health services.

Several important issues were missing from the report, said Shafiu. For example, he said the commission focused mainly on the public health sector, even though the private sector provides around 70% of healthcare services.

There is also no rigorous plan for public private partnership in the sector.

He said while the commission recommended allocating 15 percent of the total fiscal budget to the health sector, it did not outline a process for raising the budget to that level.

Other health professionals, such as nurses and medical technologists, did not receive proper attention in the report, except for doctors, he said.

The commission has given dozens of

recommendations, and it is not possible to implement all of them at once, he said.

Shishir Moral, a special correspondent at Prothom Alo, said the commission's report contains many errors.

"You won't be able to achieve much on the basis of this faulty national document unless it is revised," he said.

Prof Selim Raian, executive director of SANEM, said spending in the health and education sector should be considered as an investment. He said a major barrier to implementing any reform is the presence of anti-reform stakeholders – particularly within the political elite – who are well-connected and benefit from the existing system.

Mahtab Uddin, research director of SANEM, said they arranged the webinar to encourage constructive criticism so the report can be improved and policymakers can act accordingly for the benefit of service seekers.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka.

Corrigendum of Local Tender Notice

Memo No.44.01.0000.024.01.003.2024-983

Invitation for national tender published in different national dailies as per Memo No. 44.01.0000.024.05.001.2021-672 Date: 22 April 2025 is hereby amended (Water Craft for Bangladesh Police) as follows:

Other terms and conditions shall remain as before.

SL no.	Description	Published	Revised/Amended
10	Tender Selling last date	20 May 2025	24 May 2025
11	Tender closing date and time	21 May 2025 at 12.00 pm	25 May 2025 at 12.00 pm
12	Tender opening date and time	21 May 2025 at 12.30 pm	25 May 2025 at 12.30 pm

17.05.2025
(Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman, BPM)
BP-7705121323
Addl. DIG (Transport)
Bangladesh Police
For Inspector General, Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
Phone : +88 02 223384779

GD-1189



Research & Innovation Center (RIC)
Gopalganj Science and Technology University (GSTU)

Enhancing Digital Government and Economy (EDGE) Project

Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC)

Information and Communication Technology Division

Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Information Technology



Date: 18/05/2025

Issue No: ICT/BCC/EDGE/RIC/GSTU/AA/01/2025/May-07

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the tender details are as below:

Sl.	Tender ID	Procurement title	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing and opening date and time
01.	1112862	Supply of Goods and Equipment for the Establishment of a Hygienic Bulk Roti-Making Machine.	01-Jun-2025, 12:00	01-Jun-2025, 14:10
02.	1113098	Supply & Installation, Fitting & Fixing of FRP Disaster base Biogas Plant integrated with IoT based smart monitoring system and machine learning based operation	01-Jun-2025, 12:10	01-Jun-2025, 14:30
03.	1113271	Supply & Installation of Equipment for comprehensive approach for sustainable waste management system by waste to energy	01-Jun-2025, 14:00	01-Jun-2025, 16:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hand copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

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

18.05.2025
Dr. Md. Abdullah Al Asad
Chief Coordinator
RIC-GSTU
Mobile: 01719934193

GD-1190

Biman to suspend Dhaka-Narita flight

FROM PAGE 3

passenger numbers, revenue, and operational costs.

Several officials, seeking anonymity, said the key figures behind the resumption of the Narita flight were then managing director Shaiful Azim and then acting director (sales and marketing) Salauddin Ahmed.

Asked about the Airbus proposal. In this context, Biman launched flights to destinations such as Narita, Rome, and Toronto, without been incurring losses on the route.

"Biman suspended operating this flight due to poor cabin factor," said Raoshan, who is also general manager (public relations) of Biman.

The move was promoted as an achievement of the then Sheikh Hasina government.

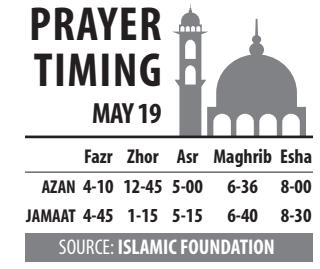
Biman operates the Narita route with Boeing 787-800 aircraft, which have 271 seats. Insiders said nearly half the seats remained vacant on most flights.

Data from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport shows Biman is the only carrier offering direct flights between Dhaka and Narita. Eight other airlines operate connecting flights on the route via third countries.

Airbus proposal.

Asked about the suspension, Biman spokesperson ABM Raoshan Kabir said the airline had been incurring losses on the route. "Biman suspended operating this flight due to poor cabin factor," said Raoshan, who is also general manager (public relations) of Biman.

In aviation, code-sharing is an arrangement where one airline sells seats on a flight operated by another carrier under its own flight number and code, allowing airlines to expand their route networks. "We resumed the Narita flight with the approval of the then Biman Board," he added.



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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

PUBALI BANK PLC.
REGISTERED OFFICE

26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

NOTICE OF THE 42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given to all concern that the 42nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Pubali Bank PLC. will be held on **Wednesday, 18 June 2025 at 11.00 AM** (Bangladesh Standard Time) using digital platform through the link <https://www.pabalibangla.com/AGM2025> to transact the following agenda:

AGENDA

- To receive, consider and adopt the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2024 and Reports of the Directors and Auditors thereon.
- To declare Dividend for the year ended 31st December 2024 as recommended by the Board of Directors.
- To appoint the Statutory Auditors of the Bank for the year 2025 and to fix their remuneration.
- To appoint Corporate Governance Compliance Auditor for the year 2025 and to fix their remuneration.
- To elect / re-elect Directors in place of retiring Directors.

All the honorable members/shareholders of Pubali Bank PLC. are requested kindly to make it convenient to attend the meeting virtually in time.

Dated: Dhaka
18 May 2025

By order of the Board of Directors
sd/-
Md. Anisur Rahman
General Manager & Company Secretary

NOTES:

- The "Record Date" is fixed on **Thursday, 22 May 2025**. The members whose names will appear in the register of the Members of the Company and in the Depository Register (Central Depository System of CDBL) as on the "Record Date" will be eligible to attend/participate and vote in the 42nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) and also will be entitled to receive dividend.
- Pursuant to BSEC's letter No. BSEC/ICAD/SRIC/2024/318/87 dated 27.03.2024, the Annual General Meeting will be conducted by using digital platform through the link <https://www.pabalibangla.com/AGM2025>.
- As per Companies Act 1994 under Regulation 79, 80 and 81 of schedule- I and as per article no. 90 & 91 of the Bank's Articles of Association, one- third of the directors need to retire every year and they will be eligible for re-election. Under this circumstances, the honorable directors (a) Mr. Moniruddin Ahmed (b) Mr. M. Kabiruzzaman Yaqub FCMA (UK), CGMA (c) Mr. Azizur Rahman and (d) Mrs. Rana Laila Hafiz will retire in the 42nd Annual General Meeting and they will be eligible for re-election.
- An entitled member who wants to attend the meeting virtually by using digital platform and cast his/her vote through online has to go to the link: <https://www.pabalibangla.com/AGM2025> for login to the system. After putting his/her BO ID/folio ID, an OTP (One Time Password) will be sent to his/her registered mobile number and email address (as per CDBL data/company's record). By using the OTP, he/she will be able to attend and cast his/her vote through online. Time for online registration and e-voting will be **Tuesday, 17 June 2025 from 8.30 AM** to before closure of the Meeting on **Wednesday, 18 June 2025**.
- Any Member/Members of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the AGM may appoint any person, as his/her/their Proxy or Attorney to attend and vote on his/her/their behalf. A Member, being a corporation or company, may appoint its representative, duly appointed and authorized, to attend and vote on its behalf. The proxy form or power of attorney or letter of authority, as the case may be, duly signed and stamped must be submitted at Share Department, 11th floor, Registered Office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka of the Bank no later than 48 hours before commencement of the Annual General Meeting i.e. **Monday, 16 June 2025** up to **11.00 AM**.
- A valid proxy holder/Attorney/representative may attend the meeting virtually by using digital platform by login to the system through link: <https://www.pabalibangla.com/AGM2025> and also may cast his/her e-vote through the above mentioned link from **Tuesday, 17 June 2025 from 8.30 AM** to before closure of the Meeting on **Wednesday, 18 June 2025**. After putting BO ID/folio ID of the shareholder, an OTP (One Time Password) will be sent to the provided mobile number and email address of the valid proxy holder/Attorney/representative. By using the OTP, he/she will be able to

Forgotten Currents Bengal's Ties to the Straits World

Bengali Hindus and Muslims worked in the Straits world as warriors, goldsmiths, fishermen, slaves, interpreters, religious teachers, traders, and diplomats. A minor 'Bengali' dynasty of four Turki adventurers, fleeing the turmoil of Bengal's reunification c. 1352, ruled Samudra Pasai until 1390.

RILA MUKHERJEE

Medieval Bengal's links to the Straits world, a narrow stretch of water connecting to Southeast Asia and beyond, are overlooked. This world saw not only ocean-going vessels, but also coastal and localised traffic which, like riverine transport, has gone largely unrecorded.

Bengali Hindus and Muslims worked in the Straits world as warriors, goldsmiths, fishermen, slaves, interpreters, religious teachers, traders, and diplomats. A minor 'Bengali' dynasty of four *Turki* adventurers, fleeing the turmoil of Bengal's reunification c. 1352, ruled Samudra Pasai until 1390. An anonymous Portuguese document on Bengal in 1521 references Bengali Muslim shipping. A document from 1522 discusses the Banten-Melaka accord, citing a grandee 'Bemgar' (a Portuguese reference to his Bengali origin).

Fries' map (Image 1) depicts numerous port towns in the southern Bay, but Bengal (lying between *India Intra Ganges* [India within the Ganges] and *India Extra Ganges* [India beyond the Ganges]) is unrepresented. It features no port towns, only heathens and devil-worshippers. This is the northern Bay of Bengal—a coast marginal to European shipping. Its geographic fortunes reflect a continuity and uniformity of historical experience, which the following sections will underline.

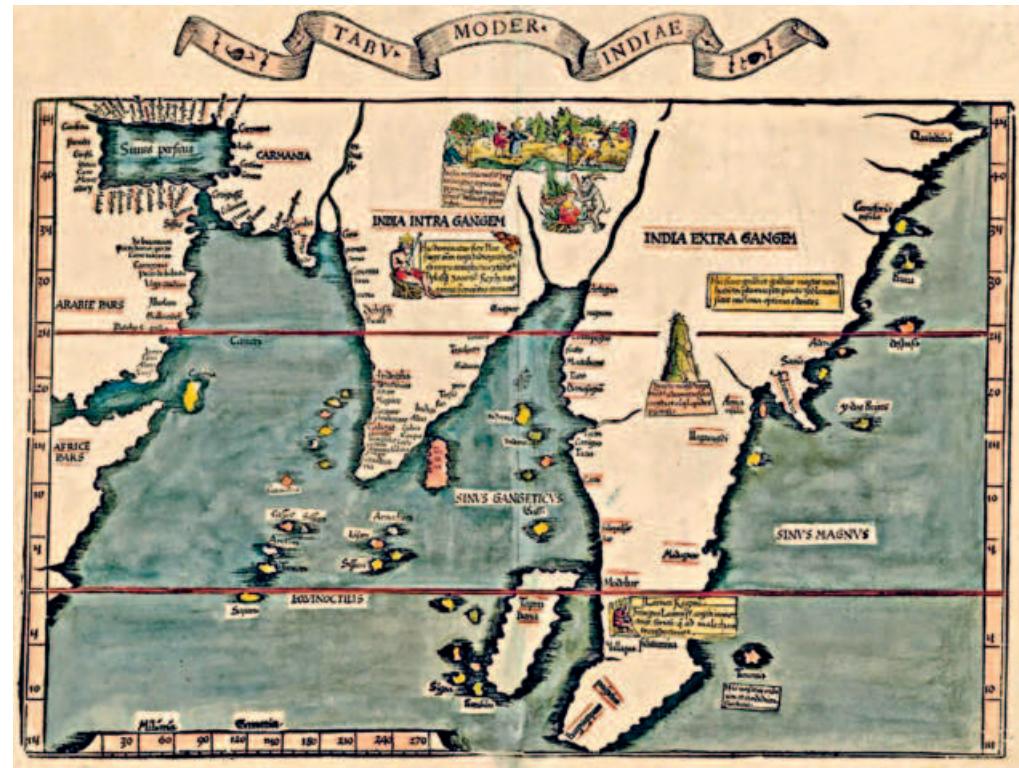


Image 1: Lorenz Fries, Indian Ocean, 1535

Sultanate's later years and Portuguese Melaka's early years), Bengal saw increasing silver inflows. The Melaka-Bengal trade took off in the 1530s, but was hampered by a customs duty of 8% compared to the usual 6% for other Asian shipping at Melaka. By the sixteenth century's end, it was again disadvantaged by the imposition of an exit duty for goods destined for Bengal. This forced mariners to explore alternate routes and ports—Achin, Banten, and the Malay Peninsula ports of Kedah, Trang, and Perak.

Sixteenth-Century Bengal

Unlike the fifteenth century, the sixteenth century offers abundant documentation of Bengal's trade. Sanjay Subrahmanyam noted that the Bengal-Melaka trade was dominated by Klings from the Orissa-Andhra coast rather than by Persians from Bengal, as popularly believed. There were four arcs: the first to Melaka—essentially a textiles-for-cloves trade; the second to the Pegu port of Cosmin (Kusum); the third to Lanka, Malabar, and the Maldives; and a fourth to Gujarat and the Red Sea, less to the Persian Gulf. The *Malay Annals* note that in 1509:

“...there came a ship of the Franks from Goa trading to Malaka; and the Franks perceived how prosperous and well-populated the port was. The people of Malaka for their part came crowding to see what the Franks looked like... and said ‘these are white Bengalis’!”

Obviously, Bengalis were familiar. In 1513, on Melaka captain Rui de Brito's advice, Melaka's *bendahara* Nina Chatu sent a ship to Bengal to 'give news of us in that land truthfully, so that they might come here without fear.' In 1516, an official Portuguese expedition was tasked with 'discovering the Bay of Bengal'. It dispatched João Coelho, who reached Chittagong on a ship owned by a Muslim merchant, Ghulam Ali (Gromalle), a 'relative of the governor of Chittagong'. Coelho remained there until 1518, when the first Portuguese fleet of three vessels under D. João da Silveira's command arrived. More squadrons claiming trading rights were dispatched to Gaur and Mrauk U in 1521 and 1534, and Domingo de Seixas was

with fixed and low customs duties if the Portuguese discontinued their visits to Chittagong, then under Arakan. In return, Bakla received licences for four ships to trade with Goa, Hormuz, and Melaka. This run, supplemented by stops at the port towns of Sripur and Sandwip, extended this network into smaller ports like Loricoel and Catrabuh. As the formal and informal met at these port towns, religious conversion accelerated. Loricoel got an Augustinian church. Sripur's Kedar Rai allowed Francis Fernandez to build a church in 1599, giving land and money for the purpose. Around 1599/1600, Bakla's Pratapaditya allowed the Jesuit Father Fonseca to erect churches and carry out conversions. The first Catholic church of Bengal was built in Ishwaripur with his financial support. Was this an age of commerce? Did geographic factors aid or hamper trade?

Growth or Decline?

Urban fortunes fluctuated as rivers shifted. Pandua vanished, to be replaced by the first city of Gaur on the interfluve between the Kalindri and Bhagirathi rivers. The Gaur we reference is actually the second city of Gaur. It was damaged in the 1505 earthquake, which affected river courses. Earlier, the Bhagirathi had flowed east of Gaur, but in the second Gaur, the river lay to its west. Devastated by floods, it was finally abandoned in 1575; a plague outbreak was the last straw. Its port Satgaon decayed; Hugli port appeared in 1580. Bengal's capital shifted to upland Tanda, but fluvial instability generated a west-to-east migration, and upland Bengal's unstable physical morphology overturned port-capital hinterland relations. In the southeast, Bakla port town was destroyed by a cyclone and storm-wave in 1584.

Fortunes fluctuated in the Straits world as well, but for different reasons. Melaka's rise presaged Singapura's decline; Melaka's trading hegemony was challenged by Samudra Pasai and Ayutthaya, and its fall to the Portuguese in 1511 benefited Ayutthaya, Achin, Banten, and Pegu. Banten became an alternative to Melaka. Ayutthaya rose in 1438 at Sukhothai's expense; the Dutch conquest of Melaka in 1641 benefited Achin and Johor.

Southeast Bengal in the 'Age of Commerce'

We now revisit Anthony Reid's 'Age of Commerce' thesis insofar as the southeast is concerned. Not only can this age be pushed back into the fifteenth century but, as the sixteenth century also showed decline (hinterland and coastal polities fell concurrently: Ava [1527], Bengal [1538], Pegu [1539], Lan Na [1558], Ayutthaya [1596]), the decline was not confined to the seventeenth century alone as Reid argued.

Moreover, the trajectory of decline varied from region to region, suggesting overland pressures at play. Victor Lieberman saw the seventeenth century crisis as part of a global trade depression, population decay and political fragmentation in major markets (such as Ming China), accompanied by a decline in prices, a drop in world temperatures (negatively affecting harvests) and decay in world silver supply. Consequently, polities moved away from cash crops and maritime trade to staple crop cultivation. They pursued self-sufficiency, resulting in lost port cities, de-urbanisation, and political decentralisation. Reid and Lieberman saw mainland Southeast Asia's interior states—less dependent on maritime trade—expanding and establishing control over coastal rivals. Along with the continuity of long-term developments in core polities such as Burma, Vietnam, and Thailand, smaller mainland Southeast Asian states on the periphery experienced crisis and decline in response to core state expansion. While cores expanded, centralised and defined themselves and their cultures, smaller fringe polities like Lan Na and Cambodia declined and got lost in the shadow of their expansive neighbours.

This happened in Bengal as the west strengthened at the southeast's expense. Fluvial shifts, fragmenting the southeast with new channels, precipitated a crisis with swampy marshlands and recurring plagues. New agrarian frontiers opened up with rice-growing areas, and

revenues rose. But slave raids and desertion offset these positive trends. The southeast's physical and economic integrity was predicated on the Bengal-Arakan networking, but now the sea route to Arakan was abandoned. Trade through the uplands to Ava, Yunnan, and China decayed. Assam, Tripura, and Manipur reported an escalation in animal pestilences and smallpox epidemics. Smallpox, allegorical or real, was severe. In Tripura, Dhanya Manikya (1462), Dhanya Manikya and Vijay Manikya (dates unknown), and Chatra Manikya (1670s) died of the disease. Smallpox is recorded for 1574, 1637, and 1768 in the Ahom state, and in Manipur for 1520, 1531, 1541, 1581, 1651, 1672, 1685, and 1699.

Paradoxically, as river shifts, raids and disease undermined local communities and dislocated shipping and trade, mobility increased. One reason was the famines from 1630-35 in southeast Bengal and lower Burma. Glanis' testimony, which contemporary Persian records corroborate, noted a particularly severe one between 1662 and 1666, which spread to Assam. The slave trade increased and Pipli, Sagor, Sandwip, Chittagong, Mrauk U, Kedah, Johor, and Achin became slave ports. Achin was a premier slave market where ships from Bengal, Borneo, and Macassar brought slaves in the 1660s. Mrauk U became another market with raided slaves from Bengal and forced converts. Sebastian Manrique claimed he converted, on average, around 2,000 Bengali Hindu and Muslim peasants every year at Dianga, a fishing village adjoining Chittagong. Another 'slave' port, Angarcale, brought in similar numbers.

Arakan's slave trade was both domestic and international. It had entered this trade not only through the compulsions of international trade but also because of its chronic shortage of manpower. While initially used for clearing jungles and as agriculturists for additional rice cultivation, mercenaries and skilled craftsmen were increasingly abducted for resettlement. Mughal chronicler Shihabuddin Talish observed that “[o]nly the Feringi pirates sold their prisoners. But the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service”.

Resilience Against Adversity: The Melaka Factor

The northern Bay of the seventeenth century saw Portuguese power decaying. Per Subrahmanyam, after the Dutch siege of 1606, Melaka's customs revenues fell steadily; by 1620 they totalled 18,000,000 *reis* against 27,000,000 in 1606. Its fortifications were in disarray, and few fighting men remained to defend the city. This dismal picture was exacerbated by expulsion from Sandwip in 1602, from Chittagong and Dianga in 1607, and from Sandwip again in 1617. Felipe de Brito e Nicote, leader of a small Portuguese commercial outpost in Syriam, was killed by the Mon Burmese in 1613. To the *Estado*, this was a disaster, for Syriam was helping Melaka to control trade flows that were passing into ports outside the *Estado*'s direct control—alternate ports like Perak, Kedah, Trang, Ujanslang, and Mergui. The Portuguese lost in the west when Emperor Shah Jahan expelled them from Hugli and Hijli in 1632 and 1635. Bocarro's *Livro das Plantas* lamented the end of the Bay trade in the 1630s:

“...the great Bay of Bengal, and Pegu, where... we once had great settlements of Portuguese... all of them came to an end with great destruction and devastation, and hence today one only navigates to the port of Orixa in the kingdom of Bengal (Pipli), where there is a Portuguese captain appointed by the viceroy of the Mogor, to whom the port belongs... but he has nothing else there, not even a house, save some made of straw...”

I end with a question. Did the Melaka factor ultimately destroy southeast Bengal? The southeast eventually recovered and retained the maritime outlet of Chittagong. But despite the founding of Calcutta port after 1690, western Bengal became a hinterland region, and the sea receded in popular imagination.

This also brings us to the question of resilience. The southeast's chequered career was linked not so much to Melaka, but to Arakan. When Arakan surrendered to Mughal forces in 1666, it lost a port crucial to its survival—Chittagong. The Bengal *nawabs* recovered Chittagong in 1729 as a vastly reduced commercial asset and ceded it to the East India Company in 1793. Boats from Bassein, Rangoon, and Martaban made annual voyages, exchanging Burmese rice and teakwood for cloth, but Chittagong's cloth industry decayed when European companies sent textiles to be 'finished' in western Bengal. Commercially unsustainable and devoid of trade goods, Joseph Cordier (1823) saw it as a declining mart-town with 12,000 people, now exporting only rice and salt. Yet, trade persisted. Chittagong's deepwater harbour enabled commerce with Juggia, Srirampur, Dhaka, Sylhet, and Goalpara. Tamil Muslim shipping from Penang called there in 1838. Howard Malcolm (1836) saw at Chittagong around 300 vessels of between 40 to 100 tons, including “several large Maldivian boats of incredible construction”, indicating networks into the central Indian Ocean. Given this resilience, the port was reorganised in 1887 and in 1928 was declared a 'Major Port' of British India. Today, its shipping tonnage far exceeds that of Kolkata.

Rila Mukherjee is a retired Professor of History at the University of Hyderabad in India, specialising in the history of the Bay world.



Northern Bay of Bengal

Spanning Arid and Monsoon Asia, Bengal is climatologically distinctive. Ruled from Laknawati/Pandua/Gaur/Tanda—where Arid Asia ends—its robust mercantile section, the Bengal-Arakan-Burma continuum, begins in Monsoon Asia, in the dense forests and marshes of the southeast. Cultural and economic fulcrums tilted it toward the Straits world rather than the middle Gangetic plain. Physically distinctive with a coast defined by a low-lying tract called *bhati*, rivers link remote uplands (Image 2). This trans-regional topography (upland/lowland, river/sea) and climate (monsoonal, subtropical to tropical) made it a composite unit for seafaring before the rise of modern navigation.

These quirks dictated sailing conditions. As now, vicious cyclones battered the coast. Northeast monsoon winds blow between October-November and February, enabling sailings from the east coast and Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. From May-June until September, monsoon winds aided return journeys. The Straits run was an integral part of this perilous maritime world.

The Straits World

Melaka port-city dominated the fifteenth-century Straits world. Per received history, Melaka rose with the Portuguese conquest of 1511 that inaugurated an age of commerce, along with Achin (1511), Banten (1527), and Johor (1528). This is incorrect. Emerging at a transitional moment in Bay, Straits and Island Southeast Asian history, Melaka dominated the Straits world from its founding in 1402, generating an Asian age of commerce with Ming China's support. Buddhist, religious, diplomatic, and commercial networking was replaced by Islamic networks. Geoff Wade saw cash cropping and commercialisation generating a trade boom, a demand for money, and new common means of exchange. Newly established mints used sophisticated technology; new fiscal systems appeared. The arrival of the Southeast Asian junk, new navigational techniques, prominence of Theravada Buddhism from Lanka and Bagan, adoption of Islam, and a military revolution were other manifestations. Additional developments included territorial consolidation, the birth of literate administrations and history writing, the increasing prominence of legal codes, and new links between Southeast and South Asia. Ayutthaya's (c. 1438) prominence echoed the cosmopolitanism of Melaka and Arakan's Mrauk U (c. 1431). In 1450, Gaur became the Sultanate's capital and remained, until its decline in 1575, a primate city with a population estimated at 200,000.

Did Melaka's rise as a singular prominent intermediary marketplace at the intersection of the Bay of Bengal, South China Sea, and Java Sea regional networks (Image 3) benefit Bengal? John Deyell's analysis of Bengal's bullion trends shows 1390-1415 marked by heavy, yet disturbed, bullion inflows; 1416-29 saw the reverse—a net outflow from Bengal, suggesting negative trade balances; 1430-92 saw a moderate but sporadic inflow of silver. From 1493 to 1533 (a period spanning a



Image 3: Bengal, Van der Aa, 1708

sent from Ayutthaya to Chittagong to secure supplies for Melaka's constant wars against Achin. The Melaka-Bengal trade took off c. 1530. Around 1538, seeking help against Sher Shah Suri's invasion, Mahmud Shah granted João Correa part of Satgaon's customs revenues. Nuno Fernandes Freire was appointed collector of Chittagong's customs. By the 1540s, two *carreira* existed—one each for Chittagong and Satgaon. Pipli entered Portuguese networks around 1560, also as part of the concession trade. By the late 1570s, Portuguese networks re-oriented towards the Coromandel coast, and the Chittagong and Pipli concessions declined. Around 1582, Chittagong came under Arakan. Concessions bypassed Arakan's meagre trade offerings. Satgaon, attracting the Crown trade, and Hugli after 1580, became hubs. There were also 'quasi-informal' concessions. On 30 April 1559, Bakla's Paramananda Rai and Viceroy Constantino de Bragança signed a treaty at Goa. Bakla was opened to Portuguese shipping

U-19s lose SAFF final in shootout

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered a heartbreaking loss in a penalty shootout (4-3) against India after fighting back from a goal down in regulation time in the final of the SAFF U-19 Championship at the Golden Jubilee Stadium in Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday.

Bangladesh captain Nazmul Huda Faisal blew his shot over the bar before Salah Uddin Shahed saw his shot saved by the opposition keeper after goalkeeper Ismail Hossain Mahin had handed the boys in red and green the advantage with a save from the first shot.

Earlier, it was Mahin's howler which had given India a second-minute lead of the thrilling final, the goalkeeper backpaddling casually to a freekick from India captain Singamayum Shami, eventually watching the ball sail into the back of the net.

The hosts, buoyed by a full-house crowd at the top of their voice, launched a torrent of attacks in the first 15 minutes of the match but Bangladesh soon started controlling the game with their skillful and organised football.

The Bangladesh players applied heavy pressure towards the end of the first half and the persistent pressure paid off 16 minute after the break when substitute Joy Ahmed smashed home from a goalmouth melee as India failed to clear the danger.

Cricketers positive about Pak tour, prefer reduced schedule

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh players are positive about touring Pakistan but requested the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to shorten the series, which was originally scheduled to consist of five T20Is.

Meanwhile, BCB has also proposed extending the ongoing two-match T20I series against the UAE by one game, considering their upcoming tour of Pakistan.

BCB president Faruque Ahmed and cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim are in the UAE and sat down with players to discuss the upcoming tour of Pakistan, with the players responding positively. The BCB is also in discussion with the team management regarding their opinion on the matter.

With the Pakistan tour still pending confirmation due to the India-Pakistan conflict, the BCB expressed interest in adding an extra match in the UAE. The extension would provide time for final decisions and allow the team to travel to Pakistan directly from the UAE, if the tour proceeds.

The BCB has officially proposed the additional match to the Emirates Cricket Board.

"Yes, a proposal has been sent by the board to play another match there. The UAE cricket board will now let us know what decision is taken," said Shahriar Nafees, in charge of BCB cricket operations, to The Daily Star.



(L-R) Shamsunnahar Sr, Maria Manda, Monika Chakma, Ritu Porna Chakma and Rupna Chakma (behind in blue jersey) – the five senior players who returned from Bhutan on Saturday after being called up to the women's national team camp, had their first practice session under coach Peter Butler at the Abahani Ground yesterday morning. Part of the 18 senior players who had rebelled against the English coach, these five players are expected to be part of the 23-player final squad that will leave for two friendly matches against Indonesia and hosts Jordan on May 27.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers eye improvement in second T20I

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh skipper Liton Das said that they need to improve death overs batting and also focus on making the most out of conditions with the ball in the second T20I against UAE on Monday.

Barring Parvez Hossain Emon's ton, Bangladesh batters did not have the impact they should have had on a batting-friendly surface in the first match of the two-match series which Bangladesh won by 27 runs.

The Tigers need to address their batting-order issues as Mahedi Hasan came in front of Jaker Ali and Shamim Hossain. Neither of the three batters contributed anything significant to the score thus having reached 103 in the first 10 overs, Bangladesh could only manage 191 for seven in the end, thanks to Emon's 54-ball 100.

"We have to finish better. We couldn't score much in the last three overs," Liton said after the match.

The bowlers, too, found it difficult to contain UAE at the beginning, and at one point of the chase the hosts had found themselves in the driving seat before the bowlers produced key wickets to grab the win.

"I always know my bowlers can bounce back at any time. I trust our bowling unit," Liton said. "That said, credit to the UAE batters as well.

We have to finish better. We couldn't score much in the last three overs.

Bangladesh T20I captain Liton Das after first match

They batted very well in the middle overs and we need to learn from this – to understand what kind of bowling works on this pitch. The way all the bowlers bowled and showed composure was impressive. It looked 50-50 in the middle overs, but they pulled it back brilliantly," he added.

Mustafizur Rahman was the pick of the Bangladesh bowlers, getting in crucial overs in the middle and finishing with two wickets for 17 runs. With Mustafizur departing for his IPL stint and unavailable for the second T20I, the bowling department would have to find answers. In particular, Mahedi Hasan's spells were the most expensive and a remedy in the Powerplay phase might be needed in case Bangladesh's plans with Mahedi do not work in the Powerplay.

For Emon, the match would go a long way to bolstering his confidence in this T20I outfit, having become just the second Bangladesh batter after Tamim Iqbal to notch a T20I ton.

Having played to his strength, Emon would look to keep the momentum going but the other batters have their work cut out to produce a meaningful score after a disappointing first game in the UAE.

'I was fighting for a BPL title for so long'

Malian striker Souleymane Diabate has been a driving force for Mohammedan Sporting Club since joining the Black and Whites in the 2018–19 season. The 34-year-old has stood by the club through thick and thin, becoming a symbol of loyalty. This season, his dedication has finally been rewarded with a maiden Bangladesh Premier League title for himself and the club. Club captain Diabate played a pivotal role in the club's historic triumph, netting 10 goals in 15 matches. The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman caught up with the veteran to discuss Mohammedan's triumphant season, his enduring commitment to the club, and much more.

DS: Captain, it took six seasons here at Mohammedan for you to win the league. How did it feel?

Souleymane Diabate (SD): I'm so happy. After six long years at Mohammedan, I've made it and we've won the league. So Alhamdulillah, we are champions. I was fighting for this one for so long.

DS: How challenging was the league this time, considering the absence of big clubs like Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Rasel KC?

SD: This year was our year. All the teams were complete, everything was there. Allah had already decided that Mohammedan was going to win the league. So, no one could change it.

This time, the league was very tough [to compete in]. Abahani was there, Bashundhara was there, Fortis and many goods team were there. We fought for it and won.

DS: Last season, Mohammedan were runners-up in the league, the Federation Cup as well as the Independence Cup. This time around, you got eliminated from the group stages of the Federation Cup. Did it fuel you desire to win the league?



SD: We were eager to win that. Like I said, it was Allah's will. We were out of the Federation Cup, but it didn't matter because we had won it before. So, this was our chance to win the league. Mohammedan had never won it. So, we were focused on that. The league was more important for us than the Federation Cup.

DS: Mohammedan has been struggling to clear payments for a long time and couldn't even clear payments for the last three months. As a professional player, how do you keep yourself motivated in such situations?

SD: We are professional players. We play in so many countries before coming to Bangladesh. We face the same problems like we face here.

So, we handle the problems and we continue to play by being mentally strong.

We are from Africa. We are mentally strong. I knew that Mohammedan was going to pay. They are going to give everything before we leave. So, it was not much of a problem because I have been here for six years. Local players, or foreigners, they are going to pay. That's why we didn't cause any problems and continued to play our football.

As far as this season is concerned,

I'm telling you that they will pay. Don't worry about the payment. There have been so many problems and the country had collapsed after Sheikh Hasina got toppled. There are business problems but Mohammedan still managed to pay the players. I know they will pay.

DS: You were offered to leave Mohammedan two years ago. What made you stay?

SD: Football is not all about money. It's about the respect and the love also. So, the love Mohammedan gives me and the respect they give me, that's why I stay. I know if I go to another team, they are not going to give me the same love. We are looking for money but it is not everything. They respect me, they love me, they listen to me also. Anything I say, they will respect it.

DS: How do you evaluate Bangladesh Premier League?

SD: They need more professionalism for Bangladesh football. Many countries, they are more professional than here. Even our team, they need to be more professional.

The league is good, but they need to add more teams, more professionalism.

DS: Can Mohammedan supporters expect to see you in Black and White next season?

SD: I cannot say anything yet. For now, we are champions and I'll celebrate this one and we'll see if I stay or not.

What to WATCH

T SPORTS

IPL

Lucknow vs Hyderabad

Live from 8:00 pm

Bangladesh vs UAE

Live from 9:00 pm

2nd T20I

Live from 9:00 pm

NAGRIK TV

Premier League

Brighton vs Liverpool

Live from 1:00 am

(Tuesday)

STAR SPORTS

SELECT HD1

Premier League

Brighton vs Liverpool

Live from 1:00 am

'City now must play to qualify for CL'

AFP, London

Pep Guardiola has urged his Manchester City flops to use the pain from their shock FA Cup final defeat as fuel to salvage their dismal season by qualifying for the Champions League.

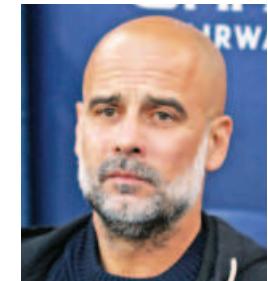
Guardiola's side will finish without major silverware for the first time in eight years after crashing to a 1-0 defeat against Crystal Palace at Wembley on Saturday.

Guardiola believes City can still partially save face by securing a top-five finish in the Premier League, which guarantees a place in the Champions League next term.

They are currently sixth in the table, one point outside the top five, with a home game against Bournemouth on Tuesday followed by a trip to Fulham for their last match on May 25.

"We are sad because we didn't win a beautiful competition. Now we must continue and recover quickly for the last two finals we have to play to qualify for the Champions League," the Spaniard said.

It was City's second successive FA Cup final defeat after losing last year's showpiece against arch rivals Manchester United.



Di Maria 'will not' return for Benfica

REUTERS

Angel di Maria will not return for Benfica next season, the Argentine forward said after the club failed to win the Liga Portugal following a 1-1 draw at Braga on Saturday, finishing two points below champions Sporting.

The 37-year-old, who retired from international soccer last year after making 145 appearances for Argentina, has spent five years at Benfica in two spells, having rejoined the club in 2023.

"It hurts a lot to end this way after such a long year. It was my last championship match with this shirt and I'm proud to have been able to wear it again," Di Maria wrote on Instagram.

"There's still a final on Sunday and we're going to go there with all our desire and joy to win it. Together as always. Thanks for your support, Benfica fans."

Benfica play Sporting in the final of the Portuguese Cup on May 25, before kicking off their Club World Cup campaign on June 16.

Di Maria, whose contract runs until June 30 according to media reports, did not say if he will play in the Club World Cup.

Loyalists rejoice MSC triumph

ANISUR RAHMAN

The vibe would likely have been different had Mohammedan SC clinched their maiden Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) title with a win on the field – especially after such a dominant display by the Black and Whites throughout the tournament.

Instead, their first top-tier league title in 23 years was secured when archrivals Abahani lost to Fortis FC on Saturday.

Even though fan frenzy was largely absent, what stood out was the longing of Mohammedan loyalists to see their club end the long trophy drought. Hardly any fans could be seen at the Mohammedan club tent in Motijheel yesterday, but former Mohammedan players like Hasanuzzaman Khan Bablu, Kazi Jasim Uddin Josy, Imtiaz Sultan Jonny, Rumman Bin Wali Sabbir, among many others, turned up at the club premises to celebrate the joyous occasion.

There has long been an emotional attachment among these players to one of the country's most popular outfits, which reached its peak with their help in the 1980s and 1990s before enduring a prolonged dry spell without the prestigious league title for over two decades.

Understandably, the former players and supporters were exhausted by the repeated failures of their beloved club and had borne the pain of not winning the coveted BPL title – the only trophy missing from Mohammedan's cabinet.

Now, they all share the same sentiment – relief and ecstasy at seeing their side back at the top once again.

"Alhamdulillah, I am very happy because a long-held expectation has finally been fulfilled," said Josy, a league-winning Mohammedan member in 1982, 1986, and 1987.

"It has been unbearable to go 23 years without the league title. We were also victims of discrimination when it came

to recruiting players. Mohammedan were tagged as 'the opposition', and many didn't dare to finance the club. But the approach changed after the Casino scandal," said the former speedy winger.

Jonny, who won three league titles with Mohammedan SC, said, "I can't express my happiness right now. I hadn't even counted the years without the league title – and now I realize it has been 23 years."

"It's hard to describe the feeling of becoming champions again. We always hoped, but for many years, Mohammedan were fighting to avoid relegation. That was unbearable. It happened due to previous



mishmanagement," said Sabbir, adding that the involvement of former players in the last six years since the Casino scandal helped revive the club's past glory.

Former player Sayeed Hasan Kanon called the triumph a result of hard work across all levels and urged the club to take immediate steps to build a strong squad for next season.

"This is the time to form the squad and plan for the next season. It is crucial that we decide about the future while celebrating the title," Kanon said.

For Mohammedan – a club that has overcome numerous challenges in recent years – turning Kanon's words into action is crucial if they are to avoid another 23-year wait for league glory.

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REPORTS OF SECY'S DEPARTURE Unease grips foreign ministry

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A sense of uncertainty prevails in the foreign ministry over reports that Secretary Jashim Uddin will be removed. On top of this, Sufiur Rahman, who was appointed nearly a month ago as the chief adviser's special assistant, has not joined.

Foreign ministry officials say there is a social media campaign portraying certain officials as beneficiaries of the ousted Awami League regime. Some officials also feel deprived and are lobbying to get better positions.

Journalists yesterday gathered at the foreign ministry for Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain to clear the air, but he did not speak.

"You have to wait for some days," he told reporters before moving towards his vehicle shortly after 5:00pm yesterday.

According to a high official of the foreign ministry, it has been decided that Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin will be removed from the post. There are several options: either he will be put on special duty (OSD), posted as an ambassador, or made rector of the Foreign Service Academy.

He did not explain why Jashim Uddin will be removed from the post.

"You can ask the foreign adviser," he told this correspondent.

This correspondent spoke to a number of officials who said they were in an uneasy situation over the reported

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Nusraat Faria shown arrested in attempted murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Popular actor Nusraat Faria was shown arrested in an attempted murder case filed with Bhatara Police Station.

Officer in charge of the police station Mazharul Islam last night said the actor is now at the Detective Branch of police (DB) for her "safety".

Earlier, Nusraat Faria was detained at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport before boarding a flight yesterday morning. She was later taken to the DB office for questioning.

Sujan Haque, inspector (investigation) of Bhatara Police Station, said Immigration Police initially detained her at the airport. A team from Bhatara Police Station subsequently took her into custody.

A DB official confirmed that Faria was taken to the DB office on Minto Road for interrogation.

"We are interrogating her. The next steps will be taken based on the interrogation's outcome," the official said.

Faria is among 17 actors sued on April 29 in an attempted murder case filed with Bhatara Police Station in connection with the July uprising.

Inspector Sujan said she would be shown arrested in the case.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Iran, Azerbaijan hold joint military drill

AFP, Tehran

Iran and Azerbaijan have launched a joint special forces exercise, state media in the Islamic republic said yesterday, weeks after Iran's president visited the neighbouring country.

The "Aras 2025" exercise, running through May 21, involves Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Azerbaijani troops, the IRNA news agency reported.

The drill was being held in areas of Karabakh previously disputed with Armenia before Azerbaijan regained control in September 2023.

"This drill is a key step in boosting border security and confronting potential threats," said Brigadier General Vali Madani of the Guards' ground forces.

Last month, Iranian President Masoud Pesheshtian made a rare visit to Baku, where he met his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev.



Israeli strikes kill 130 Palestinians in Gaza

IDF begins 'extensive' ground ops; no progress reported in indirect ceasefire talks

REUTERS, Cairo

Israeli strikes killed at least 130 Palestinians across Gaza overnight, health officials said yesterday, as Israel said talks with Hamas included a proposal to end the war but sources on both sides said there had been no progress in the talks.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has expanded its strikes on the enclave, killing hundreds of people since Thursday.

The IDF said it launched "extensive ground operations" across the Gaza Strip yesterday.

"We have at least 100 martyrs since overnight. Complete families were wiped off the civil registration record by Israeli bombardment," Khalil Al-Deqan, Gaza health ministry spokesperson, told Reuters by phone.

Israel has blocked the entry of medical, food and fuel supplies into Gaza since the start of March to try to pressure Hamas into freeing Israeli hostages and has approved plans that could involve seizing the entire Gaza strip and controlling aid.

The Gaza healthcare system is barely operational because of repeated Israeli

bombardment and raids on hospitals. The blockade on aid supplies has compounded their difficulties while adding to widespread hunger, for which Israel blames Hamas.

Hamas says it will only free the hostages in return for an Israeli ceasefire.

Egypt and Qatar mediators, backed by the United States, began a new round of indirect ceasefire talks between the two sides on Saturday, but sources close to the negotiations told Reuters there had been no breakthrough.

A Palestinian official close to the talks, which are taking place in the Qatari capital, Doha, said: "Hamas is flexible about the number of hostages it can free, but the problem has always been over Israel's commitment to end the war."

Britain's Sky News Arabica and the BBC both reported that the Palestinian group had proposed releasing about half its Israeli hostages in exchange for a two-month ceasefire and the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Contacted by Reuters, a Hamas official said: "Israel's position is unchanged, they want their prisoners released, without a commitment to end the war."

- Gaza healthcare system barely operational
- Hamas says it will only free hostages in return for truce
- Rubio calls Netanyahu over Gaza

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Contacted by Reuters, a Hamas official said: "Israel's position is unchanged, they want their prisoners released, without a commitment to end the war."

Raising concerns over Election Commission's ability to play an effective role, he said, "The concept of a level playing field is not something to address only on election day – it needs to be created well in advance. The government should act now, especially in areas where there are risks of violence or political clashes."

Stressing the importance of fair polls, Taher said, "The political turmoil caused by the last three elections played a major role in destabilising the country. To overcome this, a credible election is essential."

Taher also expressed concern over the absence of a clear election timeline, which he said was contributing to

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Covered with fly ash, a worker carries a sack of the raw material for cement on his head without any protective gear, risking lung diseases. He earns Tk 600-800 a day by unloading fly ash from vessels and loading on to trucks at Khulna port. Photo was taken yesterday at Jetty-5.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Kuet teachers now suspend admin work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The teachers' association of Khulna University of Engineering & Technology (Kuet) yesterday announced a complete suspension of all administrative activities with immediate effect.

The decision was made at a general meeting at the university's administrative building following a discussion with the vice-chancellor.

"We want to return to our classrooms, but a conducive environment must be restored first," said Md Faruk Hossain, general secretary of the Kuet Teachers' Association.

During a clash between Kuet students and 'outsiders', some students physically assaulted teachers.

On May 5, the Kuet teachers decided to abstain from academic duties, insisting that students

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Environment not conducive to polls yet

Says Jamaat nayeb-e-ameer after talks with consensus commission

Khalilur rejects BNP's claim of his foreign citizenship



UNB, Dhaka

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman yesterday said he remains prepared to exercise his rights as a Bangladeshi citizen to the fullest extent.

He made the comment when the UNB drew his attention to the claim, recently made by BNP leader Salauddin Ahmed, that the adviser is a foreign citizen.

Khalilur also said the burden of proving the claim rests on the individual who made it and, if necessary, it would have to be proven before a court of law.

BNP Standing Committee member Salauddin made the claim during a rally in Khulna on Saturday.

"Has the government lost all sense?" he asked. "How can the Bangladesh Army submit security-related reports to a foreign citizen?"

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current political atmosphere is not yet suitable for a free and fair national election, Syed Abdullah Md Taher, nayeb-e-ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, said yesterday.

"I believe the upcoming election is unlikely to be completely fair and impartial under present circumstances. We're already witnessing incidents of poll-related violence in various constituencies. Recently, Jamaat's office in Pabna's Atghoria was torched."

Taher made the remarks at the second round of talks with the National Consensus Commission held at the LD Hall of the National Parliament to build consensus around key reform proposals.

Calling for institutional changes to ensure credible polls, the Jamaat leader said, "We must establish a system that guarantees fair and accurate elections. Whatever it takes to achieve must be done."

Raising concerns over Election Commission's ability to play an effective role, he said, "The concept of a level playing field is not something to address only on election day – it needs to be created well in advance. The government should act now, especially in areas where there are risks of violence or political clashes."

Stressing the importance of fair polls, Taher said, "The political turmoil caused by the last three elections played a major role in destabilising the country. To overcome this, a credible election is essential."

Taher also expressed concern over the absence of a clear election timeline, which he said was contributing to

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'JOB SCAM' 33 Bangladeshi sue Malaysian firm, govt for Tk 4.8cr

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-three Bangladeshi workers have sued a recruitment firm and relevant government officials and departments in Malaysia, seeking RM1.72 million, or Tk 4.8 crore, in compensation over allegations of employment fraud.

The case was filed with the High Court in the Malaysian city of Shah Alam on March 12. Tenaganita, a local rights organisation, made the matter public on Saturday.

Recruitment company Meranti Binamas Sdn Bhd, the secretary-general of the human resources ministry, the director-general of the immigration department and the government department that oversees and regulates public servants have been named in the suit as defendants.

Besides the compensation, the workers also seek a declaration stating that they were victims of human trafficking and job scams and that the authorities were negligent and a court order to prevent their detention by the immigration department pending the disposal of the suit.

According to the statement of claim, Meranti Binamas brought the workers to Malaysia after promising them jobs as construction workers. The Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia confirmed the authenticity of the job offers.

They were promised a minimum monthly salary of RM1,500, or Tk 60,000, with overtime opportunities. But they were asked to pay RM25,000, or over Tk 7 lakh each

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