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Protests continue at Secretariat

Employees warn of escalation if public service ordinance not repealed

BAHARAM KHAN

Protests swept through the government’s administrative core yesterday as employees from different ministries and divisions demonstrated for the third consecutive day inside the Secretariat, demanding the withdrawal of the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

The agitation disrupted administrative operations as employees walked out of their offices and protested for around three and a half hours. The demonstrators urged government staffers across the country to join in.

Against this backdrop, the home ministry has decided to bar visitors from entering the Secretariat today. The decision came in an office order issued by the ministry’s Secretariat Security Branch last night.

Also, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police imposed a ban on all rallies, processions,

- DMP bans all kinds of gatherings in and around Secretariat**
- Home ministry bars visitors’ entry**
- Demonstrations slated to resume at 10:00am today**

and public gatherings in and around the Secretariat, including adjacent areas and the State Guest House Jamuna – the official residence of the chief adviser.

DMP Deputy Commissioner (Media and Public Relations) Muhammad Talebur Rahman in a press release said

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Employees of various ministries and divisions demonstrating at the Secretariat for the third consecutive day yesterday against the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

PHOTO: STAR

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Army, govt are working together, not at odds Say army officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Army and the government are working hand in hand to safeguard the country’s interests and sovereignty, and there is no confrontation or discord between them.

Senior officers of the Army Headquarters made the remarks at a press conference at the Officers’ Mess in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

Brig Gen Md Nazim-ud-Daula, director of the Military Operations Directorate (MOD), said, “This is our country. Its welfare and sovereignty are deeply connected to all of us. If we want to keep this country safe, we have

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2.1m people lost jobs, and 86% of them women

Finds CPD analysis for first half of FY25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Progress in women empowerment is plateauing or reversing in key areas, found a recent analysis by the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

While 2022 government figures suggested 41 percent of women were active in the labour force, the actual participation rate is closer to just 19 percent.

This means only 19 out of every 100 women attempt to engage in economic activities – and not all secure employment, said Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research fellow at CPD, at an event titled “Advancing Gender-Responsive Budgeting and FID4 Outcome”.

The event was jointly organised by Citizen’s Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh and UN Women Bangladesh yesterday.

Official unemployment for women was reported at 3.6 percent, but the real figure is nearly 9.7 percent, Khan said. Among young women, unemployment exceeds 22 percent.

In the first half of the ongoing fiscal year, 2.1 million jobs were lost, with women accounting for 85.7 percent of the sum, the CPD found.

Employment conditions for women remain fragile: 80.8 percent hold vulnerable jobs characterised by low productivity and poor returns.

Only 3 percent receive pensions or retirement

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Make people alert to polls fraud: Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has stressed the importance of raising awareness among citizens to prevent ballot box snatching.

“People need to be made election focused. Citizens must be made aware that no one can snatch the ballot box. We must bring discipline, and we, taking the people together, must hold safe elections,” he told the consensus commission meeting held last night.

“Bangladesh that we got after such a mass uprising should not remain the same Bangladesh,” said Yunus,

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AGREEMENT	
	Restoration of caretaker govt
	Bicameral parliament
	Deputy speaker from opposition
	Opposition-led key parliamentary standing committees
	Separate Supreme Court Secretariat
	Amendment of Article 116 (judicial independence)
	Seniority-based appointment of Chief Justice
	Political allegiance and expression of political opinion by judges to be considered as misconduct
	Comprehensive EC law
	EC to conduct local elections
	RTI Act to apply to registered political parties
	Independent electoral boundary commission
	Parliamentary body to investigate EC’s breach of oath
	Regionalised Public Service Commission
	Restore upazila magistrate courts
	Permanent Public Administration Reform Commission
	Conflict-of-interest law
	Criminalisation of private sector bribery (UNCAC alignment)

DISAGREEMENT	
	Term limits for prime minister
	Appointment process and tenure of chief adviser of the caretaker government
	Composition and power of the National Constitutional Council
	Inclusion of “pluralism” as a basic principle of the constitution
	Number of posts party leaders can hold simultaneously (prime minister, party chief and leader of the house)
	Method of electing the president
	Process for amending the constitution
	Proposal for four provinces
	Electing mayors through ward commissioners
	Eliminating upazila vice chairman

NATIONAL CONSENSUS COMMISSION

Breakthrough on core reforms

Prof Ali Riaz optimistic despite gaps on some key issues, hopes ‘National Charter’ by July

MD ABBAS

Major political parties have reached consensus on a wide range of reforms, yet divisions persist over some key issues, setting the stage for the next round of talks expected to begin within days.

Parties agreed to reinstate the non-partisan caretaker government system, though disputes remain over its formation and tenure, and the mechanism for appointing the chief adviser.

There is also alignment on forming a bicameral legislature with a 100-strong upper house and granting the Deputy Speaker role to the opposition, regardless of the structure of the parliament.

The method of electing upper house members, such as via proportional representation or regional votes, remains unresolved, while some parties still prefer the current unicameral system.

Prof Ali Riaz, co-chair of the consensus commission, said that while full consensus is unlikely, discussions will continue to bridge the remaining gaps.

He was speaking at a briefing at the LD Hall of the National Parliament Building yesterday.

Riaz expressed optimism that a “National Charter” summarising areas of agreement can be finalised by July after the second round of talks, beginning by the end of May or the first week of June.

The commission also plans to engage the National Bureau of Statistics to conduct a survey in order to gather public feedback on some of the key proposals.

After 45 meetings of the commission with 33 political parties, at the centre of the discord lies a proposal to limit the powers of the prime minister, specifically, barring any individual from simultaneously holding the posts of prime minister, party chief, and Leader of the House.

Political parties are also sharply divided over the proposed formation of a “National Constitutional Council” to oversee key appointments and legal standards. Parties disagreed on the constitutional council’s composition and powers.

While parties broadly agree on elevating “equality, human dignity, social justice, and democracy” as state principles, the term “pluralism” as a fundamental principle of the constitution failed to gain consensus.

Beyond the proposal to limit the prime minister’s authority, parties are split over imposing term limits on the prime minister, restricting how many posts the prime minister can hold, and the method for electing the president.

Judicial independence has garnered strong support. All parties back the creation of a separate Supreme Court Secretariat, amending article 116 of the constitution to transfer the powers for appointment, posting, promotion, and disciplinary control of judges from the executive to the Supreme Court.

Proposals to form a permanent attorney service under government employment and appoint the chief justice from the senior mist

judges of the Appellate Division were also broadly endorsed.

There is also full agreement on introducing accountability mechanisms to discipline judges exhibiting political bias and to establish post-retirement conduct codes for them.

Additional proposals, such as strengthening the Appellate Division, regulating presidential clemency powers through a Clemency Board, and bringing transparency to judicial appointments, were also widely supported.

PARTIAL AGREEMENT

- 100 reserved seats for women (disagreement on allocation method)
- Bicameral legislature (disagreement on method of upper house election)
- Amendment of Article 70 (disagreement on exceptions to voting against the party line for finance bills, no confidence motion and constitutional amendment)
- Transparency of electoral expenditure and political party finances
- Establishing a permanent public attorney service
- Barring individuals accused of war crimes from national election
- Formation of Anti-Corruption Ombudsman (majority supports, some have reservations)
- Depoliticisation of Bar Council elections (mixed views, demand for legal community input)
- Expansion of civil rights (debate over legal enforceability and extent)

The proposal to depoliticise bar council elections by denying official status to politically affiliated lawyer panels drew mixed responses. While some parties backed the idea, others insisted that the legal community must be consulted before moving forward.

The recommendation to bar individuals accused of war crimes from running in parliamentary elections received partial support, with many parties seeking a deeper legal review before any legislative changes.

Reform of article 70, currently prohibiting MPs from voting against party lines, saw support with a limit on its scope to confidence votes, constitutional amendments, and money bills.

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Crime wave sparks fear in city dwellers

MUNTAKIM SAAD

A series of killings and muggings in the capital over the past few weeks has raised fresh concerns over Dhaka’s law and order situation, with several incidents caught on camera and widely shared on social media, stoking fear and insecurity among city dwellers.

The latest in the string of violent crimes took place on Sunday night, when two masked assailants shot dead Kamrul Ahsan Shadhon, 52, joint convener of BNP’s Gulshan Thana unit, in Badda’s Gudaraghat area. CCTV footage capturing the incident went viral.

The attack comes just two weeks after the murder of Shahriar Alam Shammo, a 25-year-old Dhaka University student and leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, BNP’s student front. He was stabbed to death near Suhrawardy Udyan on May 13, sparking outrage on campus and beyond.

The recent wave of violence also includes the killings of two young men – Nurul Islam, 26, a freelance photographer, and Samiur Rahman, 23, a student of Dr

Maleka University College – in separate incidents in the capital’s Shankar and Jigatala areas on May 16.

Apart from these killings, several recent mugging incidents, some taking place in broad daylight, have also rattled residents. In several cases, attackers were seen using machetes, hinting at a pattern.

According to Police Headquarters data, violent crime has seen a significant surge in Dhaka between January and April compared to the same period last year.

Between January and April this year, 175 robbery cases were recorded – almost double from last year’s 94. Dacoity cases jumped over threefold from seven to 24 in the same period this year compared to last year. Most alarmingly, murder cases nearly tripled – from 47 last year to 136 this year.

Omar Faruk, a professor at the department of criminology and police science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said that when a society goes through instability, criminals often take advantage of the situation.

“Even after 10 months under the interim

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According to Police Headquarters data, violent crime has seen a significant surge in Dhaka between January and April compared to the same period last year.

TORCHING OF HOMES IN ABHAYNAGAR

Men flee village, women in trauma

No arrest, no case filed even after 4 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Despite the presence of law enforcers, almost all male residents of Dahor Moshiahathi in Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila have gone into hiding after a mob looted and torched their homes following the murder of a local Krishak Dal leader.

Women do not stay in their charred homes at night, fearing more attacks.

On Thursday evening, Tariquul Islam, 50, president of the Krishak Dal in Nawapara municipality and a resident of nearby Dhopadi village, was hacked and shot dead at a house in Dahor Moshiahathi. His family claims he was lured out and killed over a dispute regarding a shrimp enclosure lease.

Later that night, according to locals and victims, a mob stormed the village and looted, vandalised, and set fire to at least 18 houses of the Matua community. Two shops in a nearby bazar were also torched, and four others vandalised. At least 10 people were injured.

Four days later, no case has been filed, and no arrests have been made.

When this correspondent visited the village on Sunday, the aftermath of the attack was evident. Twisted, charred corrugated tin sheets lay across yards. Inside the gutted homes, furniture, clothing, electronics, and household goods were reduced to ashes.

At least five burnt motorcycles and a motorised van stood in front of the houses. Trees were scorched, and silos had been set ablaze. Some women were seen trying to salvage partially burned paddy

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Men and women from different villages wait in separate lines to collect rice at Khornia Union Parishad office in Khulna's Dumuria upazila yesterday. The government is providing destitute families with 10kg of rice each for free under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme ahead of Eid.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Trump vows to 'win' against Harvard

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday vowed to prevail in his clash with Harvard and again threatened to take away billions in funding from one of the world's top universities.

"I am considering taking Three Billion Dollars of Grant Money away from a very antisemitic Harvard, and giving it to TRADE SCHOOLS all across our land," Trump said, without giving details, in one of a flurry of texts yesterday, the Memorial Day holiday in the US.

He also brought up the issue of removing foreign students from Harvard -- a key source of enrollment and tuition money for the oldest university in the US -- saying he is waiting for Harvard to provide a list of these students.

Breakthrough on core reforms

FROM PAGE 1

All parties supported reserving 100 seats for women in the lower house, though opinions vary on how those seats should be allocated.

The parties share the view that key parliamentary committees should be placed under opposition control, including those overseeing public accounts, estimates, and government undertakings.

On anti-corruption, all parties endorsed granting the Anti-Corruption Commission constitutional status, ensuring its transparency, independence and accountability. Most parties favour creating an Anti-Corruption Ombudsman to oversee the implementation of a national strategy on corruption, although a few parties remain partially supportive on this front.

There is unanimous backing for enacting a conflict-of-interest law, as well as bringing public service operations under full automation.

Another key point of agreement is the criminalisation of bribery in the private sector, aligning with international standards under the UN Convention Against Corruption.

In electoral reform, the majority of parties support the enactment of a comprehensive law governing the Election Commission.

There is also full agreement that the Election Commission should oversee local government polls and that political parties should be subject to the Right to Information Act.

The proposal to establish a separate, independent commission for electoral boundary delimitation also received strong backing.

A shared view has emerged around allowing a parliamentary committee to investigate and initiate legal proceedings against election commissioners who violate constitutional responsibilities.

Public administration reform also found relative convergence.

Most parties favour forming a commission to investigate officials involved in electoral fraud, corruption, or killings and torture during the July 2024 uprising.

Proposals to separate audits from accounts, restructure the Public Service Commission into three regional units, and restore local

magistrate courts at the upazila level were widely welcomed.

All parties agreed on revising outdated laws such as the Official Secrets Act of 1923 and modernising the Right to Information Act.

Most parties also support allowing direct election of mayors in municipalities and forming a permanent Public Administration Reform Commission.

Reform of the local government structure also sparked debate.

A proposal to reorganise Bangladesh into four provinces and abolish district councils failed to gain much traction.

Most parties also rejected the idea of electing mayors through ward commissioners instead of a direct public vote, and the suggestion to eliminate the upazila vice chairman post was broadly unpopular.

Disputes also remain over which civil rights to expand and how strongly the state should be bound to enforce them.

Additionally, the very process of amending the constitution continues to be contested.

Protests continue at Secretariat

FROM PAGE 1

The restrictions were enforced following a public notice issued by the DMP commissioner. He urged all concerned to comply with the directive in the interest of maintaining law and order.

Meanwhile, National Citizen Party leader Hasnat Abdullah criticised the halt in administrative services and told protesting employees that they "can be replaced".

Protesters, under the banner of "Bangladesh Secretariat Officers and Employees Unity Forum", yesterday vowed to continue their agitation until the ordinance, which was gazetted on Sunday night, is repealed.

"Our demand is legitimate. That's why we have decided to continue our demonstration tomorrow [Tuesday]," said Nazrul Islam, co-general secretary of the forum.

Terming the ordinance repressive, Nazrul, also an officer at the public administration ministry, said, "We're not against the government; we're against this repressive law. If the government doesn't come to its senses, the movement will spread beyond the Secretariat to offices nationwide."

Badiul Kabir, co-chairman of the forum, added, "Our programmes will continue until this 'black law' or ordinance is completely withdrawn. Once it is repealed, we'll announce the end of our movement."

The interim government promulgated the ordinance just three days after it was approved by the Advisory Council last Thursday. The gazette came out on Sunday night.

Yesterday's demonstrations began around 11:00am, with several hundred employees assembling at Badamtola, near Building No 6 on the Secretariat premises.

From there, they marched to the Cabinet Division's new building and staged a brief sit-in.

The protesters then moved past Buildings No 4 and 5, entered Building No 6, and advanced toward the main entrance at Gate No 2. As employees gathered there, security personnel closed the gate. The nearby Gate No 3 was also shut for about half an hour as a precautionary measure.

Before wrapping up the demonstrations at around 2:30pm, the

leaders announced a fresh protest march for today, as a scheduled meeting with Law Adviser Asif Nazrul did not take place due to his reported unavailability.

Protest leaders then called on government office staffers across the country to hold similar programmes in solidarity.

Concerns over the ordinance have also been echoed by female Secretariat staffers, who are not often seen in protest. Several female officials were visibly active in the demonstrations against the ordinance.

Chameli Akter Banu, an administrative officer at the public administration ministry, told this newspaper, "We're worried as the ordinance mentions loyalty to individuals. If any officer makes inappropriate proposals and a female subordinate refuses, that officer might retaliate using this law. That's why we reject such a provision."

Lima Akter, an administrative officer at the commerce ministry, alleged that female employees are often subjected to harassment.

"As women, we balance both office duties and household responsibilities. Naturally, that may lead to occasional delays or minor issues. If even small mistakes result in punishment under this ordinance, how are we supposed to continue our jobs?"

Public administration expert and former additional secretary Firoz Mia called these concerns legitimate.

"The authorities have failed to demonstrate credibility in drafting such an important law. A law can be strict, but there is no room for repression," he told The Daily Star last night.

He added that several rules and regulations for government employees were weakened under the Awami League government, thus necessitating stricter laws. "However, the provisions included in the new Public Service Ordinance are repressive. Therefore, the ongoing protests by government employees are justified.

"Civil servants should remain loyal to the state, not to any individual. The proposed ordinance mentions loyalty to individuals, which is unacceptable in a modern bureaucracy."

Currently, there are around 1.5 million government officers and employees in

the country. Under the ordinance, all are considered public servants.

Meanwhile, civil service officers, protesting what they called discriminatory suspension and departmental actions by administration cadre officials against other cadres, are set to begin a countrywide pen down strike from today.

Their demands include the establishment of ministry-based professional autonomy, the abolition of the deputy secretary pool quota, and equality among all cadres.

A pen down strike is a form of protest where employees, especially those in administrative or desk-based roles, refuse to work by simply putting down their pens and halting duties.

According to a press release from the Inter-Cadre Discrimination Elimination Council, officers from 25 different cadres will observe the strike on May 27 and 28 (today and tomorrow), from 9:00am to 12:00pm. Emergency services, including hospital emergency departments, will remain outside its purview.

Blasting the Secretariat protests, NCP Chief Coordinator (South) Hasnat Abdullah yesterday warned of public backlash if ongoing administrative reforms are disrupted, saying the government employees should not assume they are irreplaceable.

"During the July uprising, you [Secretariat employees] wore black badges in support of Sheikh Hasina and continued work. Now you're threatening to bring work and all office services to a halt. But you didn't question Sheikh Hasina's authority, nor did anyone resign in protest [during the uprising]," he told journalists outside Bibpob U'dyan at Sholashahar Gate No 2 in Chatto gram.

"If the fascist Awami League regime had remained in power, you would have gone back to flattering them and resumed your work."

He warned the protesting bureaucrats: "If you threaten this government and obstruct the reform process, we, the people, will take steps ... Remember that the people will find your replacements."

"If the government is held hostage in this way, let me warn you that the situation will not be good. I urge you to cooperate with the government and the reform agenda. If you have reservations, settle them internally and move forward."

Crime wave sparks fear in city dwellers

FROM PAGE 1

government, the police have yet to regain their confidence -- an environment that criminals perceive as favourable for their activities."

He said many officers lack the specialised training needed to handle such volatile situations. "Policing alone is sometimes not enough -- community engagement is also essential to maintain law and order."

RECENT VIOLENT CRIMES

On Saturday night, a group of three muggers attacked a man beneath the Pallabi metro station around 11:30pm, stabbing him and fleeing with his phone.

The victim, Al-Amin Rana, an employee of a private firm at Nikunja, was returning home when the assailants blocked his way, attacked him with machetes, and snatched his iPhone.

"They took my iPhone -- but more importantly, they took away my sense of security," Rana told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said he filed a case with Pallabi Police Station, but no action was taken until the video went viral and media reports drew attention to the incident.

In another similar incident, a viral video shows three men robbing a man in broad daylight on Greenway Lane in Moghbazar on May 18, attacking him

with machetes. The muggers took his phone, Tk 14,000, and other belongings.

Hatirjheel Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Raju said police traced Abdullah, a restaurant worker, after the video surfaced and urged him to lodge a complaint.

Another chilling video from May 19 shows a BNP activist being hacked with sharp weapons on Central Road.

Meanwhile, Mohammadpur and its adjoining areas have seen a string of violent events in recent weeks.

On May 15, a man was killed and another injured in a mob beating during an alleged mugging attempt in Basila Housing City. Later that night, in another incident, seven members of a family were injured in an alleged attack by a teen gang in Jafrabad.

Two days prior, a group of masked youths carrying machetes were seen roaming openly in the Rayer Bazar area in the afternoon, as seen on CCTV footage. On May 18, six teenagers were seen chasing a youth with machetes in the Adabor area around 9:45pm.

On April 28, armed criminals opened fire in broad daylight at the office-cum-residence of a real estate businessman on Sher Shah Suri Road in Mohammadpur -- the second such incident in just over a month.

These incidents are taking place even as the army remains deployed in the capital with magistracy powers to assist in maintaining law and order.

Addressing a press briefing yesterday, Col Shafiqul Islam, colonel staff of the Directorate of Military Operations at Army Headquarters, said the army is working tirelessly to ensure public safety.

He said maintaining law and order is not solely the army's responsibility and stressed the need for coordinated action among all law enforcement agencies. "With joint efforts, we expect the situation to improve."

Speaking to The Daily Star, SN Md Nazrul Islam, additional commissioner (crime and operations) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said Dhaka is a megacity, and it is unrealistic to expect it to be entirely free of crime.

"We have already detected and arrested suspects in several recent cases. For the incidents that occurred over the past two to three days, investigations are ongoing, and we are making progress."

Referring to the Badda killing, he said, "Using CCTV footage, we're close to identifying the perpetrators."

"There is no reason for city residents to worry. We are fully aware of the situation and are working with utmost professionalism."

2.1m people lost jobs, 86% of them women

FROM PAGE 1

benefits through employers.

Women also bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, limiting their paid employment opportunities.

Nearly two-thirds of young women are classified as NEET -- neither in employment, education, nor training -- reflecting significant underutilisation of their potential.

Overseas employment for Bangladeshi women has sharply declined. Monthly female migrant departures dropped from 8,789 in 2022 to 4,610 so far in 2025, Khan said, citing data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

Reports of forced labour, physical abuse and sexual harassment abroad underline the urgent need for better protection, he added.

"Bangladesh's improved Global Gender Gap ranking largely reflects women's political representation in the previous government. Economic, educational, and health indicators tell a less encouraging story. Progress in these areas remains limited compared to other countries."

Bangladesh ranks 99th overall in the

Gender Gap Index, 146th in Economic Participation and Opportunity, and 129th in Health and Survival.

"Gender empowerment progress is plateauing or reversing in key areas. Gender empowerment cannot be solved piecemeal and must receive greater focus in electoral debates," Khan said.

He recommended tracking investments and policy attention in women's employment, skills, health and safety as key indicators of a gender-sensitive budget.

Though a fully integrated approach may not be possible in the next fiscal year's budget, these issues should feature prominently in upcoming discussions, he added.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, convenor of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, underscored the urgent need for Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

Women are disproportionately impacted by economic stressors like high inflation and declining private investment -- issues often downplayed in official narratives, said Bhattacharya, also a distinguished fellow at CPD.

Gitanjali Singh, UN Women Bangladesh representative, reiterated

the relevance of the Beijing Platform for Action and called for institutionalising GRB across all ministries.

She emphasised priority areas such as preventing child marriage, building inclusive infrastructure and enhancing social protection, particularly in light of Bangladesh's upcoming LDC graduation.

While 44 ministries currently produce gender budget reports, the quality of data and its alignment with SDGs and climate budget coding remain inadequate for driving transformative change, said Nubayra Jeheem, programme analyst -- Gender Statistics at UN Women Bangladesh.

Rekha Saha, Secretary of Central Legal Aid at Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, presented a 'Charter of Demand and Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment', developed in collaboration with Bonhishikhka and supported by UN Women.

The charter advocates for enhanced women's participation, economic empowerment, representation in decision-making and more inclusive budget priorities reflecting the needs of marginalised groups.

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Clockwise from left, Officials of Bangladesh Palli Bidyut Association staged a sit-in at Central Shaheed Minar and announced a countrywide work abstention from today, demanding the removal of the chairman of Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, among various other demands. Supporters of BNP leader Ishraque Hossain continue protest at Nagar Bhaban, threatening to intensify movement if Ishraque is not sworn-in within the following 24 hours. Dhaka University students form a human chain on the campus demanding justice for the murder of Shahriar Alam Shammo.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, STAR



‘We’re committed to religious freedom’ Reiterates Yunus at meeting with USCIRF chair



PHOTO: PID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has reiterated the interim government’s commitment to upholding religious freedom and protecting the rights of all citizens in Bangladesh.

He made the remark yesterday while meeting Stephen Schneck, chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) at the state guest house Jamuna.

The meeting covered a range of topics, including the current state of religious freedom in Bangladesh, the July 2024 uprising, the reform agenda, proposed constitutional amendments, and the ongoing Rohingya crisis, according to the CA press wing.

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SHAMMO MURDER

DU probe committee submits report

Findings yet to be made public; students, JCD members continue protests

DU CORRESPONDENT

The investigation committee formed to probe the death of Dhaka University student Shahriar Alam Shammo has submitted its final report to the university’s vice-chancellor.

Professor Md Siddiqui Rahman Khan, dean of the Faculty of Arts and convener of the committee, formally handed over the report to Vice Chancellor Professor Niaz Ahmad Khan at the VC’s office yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, students from the Institute of Education and Research (IER) yesterday staged a sit-in protest in front of the DU proctor’s office, demanding updates on the report of the investigation committee, which the DU administration formed.

The protest began around 11:45am and continued for two hours.

When asked, Prof Siddiqui Rahman Khan told The Daily Star that the report had been submitted to the vice-



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Services stay halted as protest enters 12th day

Ishraque’s supporters issue 24-hour ultimatum for his mayoral oath



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After halting all services at Nagar Bhaban for the past 12 days, supporters of BNP leader Ishraque Hossain have threatened to launch a tougher movement within 24 hours if their demand is not met.

Following a day-long demonstration yesterday, protesters warned they would escalate their movement if the oath-taking process does not begin within the timeframe.

However, they did not clarify what the “intense protest” would involve. A source among the protesters said they might once again march towards Jamuna, the residence of the chief adviser, to press

their demand.

Former secretary Mashiur Rahman, chief coordinator of the protest, made the announcement during the sit-in at Nagar Bhaban yesterday afternoon.

“We gave a 48-hour ultimatum, of which 24 hours have passed without any response. If Ishraque Hossain is not sworn in within the next 24 hours, we will begin a tougher movement. The people of Dhaka will bring him to office through protests,” he said.

He said while the protest remains peaceful, essential services, particularly those under the cleanliness department, would remain unaffected. Workers would

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Palli Bidyut Samity workers go on work abstention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials under the banner of the Bangladesh Palli Bidyut Association have announced a countrywide work abstention starting today.

They, however, said the emergency power supply would not be affected due to their programme.

Yesterday, they staged a demonstration at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital for the sixth day, demanding a unified service rule for the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (REB) and the 80 Palli Bidyut Samitys across the country. They also demanded the removal of the chairman of REB.

Other demands include withdrawal of cases filed by REB against dismissed employees and their reinstatement, regularisation of casual jobs such as readers and messengers, an end to “harassing and punitive transfers”, fixing of working hours and shift schedules, and formation of an interim board to carry out reform activities.

In a statement, Bangladesh Palli Bidyut Association said they want a unified service rule and the merger of the Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) with the Rural Electrification Board (REB), which was decided during the

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Primary school teachers start indefinite strike

Academic activities of over 1cr students being hampered

DEMANDS

Entry-level pay be placed under 11th grade

Eliminate procedural barriers to higher-grade promotions

Ensure cent percent promotion to head teacher posts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Assistant teachers at government primary schools across the country began an indefinite work abstention yesterday, demanding that their entry-level pay be placed under the 11th grade of the national pay scale.

As a result, academic activities for over one crore students at 65,567 government primary schools are being hampered in many areas, especially where teachers’ associations are more active.

According to the Directorate of Primary Education, nearly 3.84 lakh teachers are currently serving in these institutions.

The strike was called by the Assistant Teachers’ Unity Council, a coalition of several teacher

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

No arrest yet in BNP leader’s murder in Badda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have yet to uncover any clues behind the murder of Kamrul Ahsan Shadhon, 52, former joint convener of BNP’s Gulshan thana unit, as of yesterday.

Shadhon, who also ran an internet service business, was shot dead by two unidentified assailants in the capital’s Badda area on Sunday night.

According to police, the attackers approached Shadhon on foot and opened fire while he was sitting on a roadside chair on Road 4 in the Godaraghat area around 10:06pm. He was talking to two or three people at the time. The assailants fled the scene immediately.

Shadhon was taken to National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. A video of the incident has since gone viral on social media.

An autopsy was conducted yesterday at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue. Morgue sources said five bullet wounds were found on his body.

Shadhon’s nephew Zihad Hossain said, “He had no known enmity with anyone, either in business or politics. We hope police will soon arrest the killers.”

Shadhon’s wife filed a case with Badda Police Station against unidentified persons yesterday.

Contacted, Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said no arrests had been made as of 8:30pm yesterday. “We are trying to arrest the killers,” he said.

A police official from DMP’s Gulshan division said they are investigating three possible motives – political rivalry, business conflict, and local supremacy.



Despite a government ban on these battery-run auto-rickshaws, various garages across the capital continue to assemble these vehicles regularly. While authorities take many such vehicles off the street, others simply take their place. The photo was taken in the Rayerbazar area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Schoolgirl dies after being hit by bus in Kamalapur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-year-old girl died after being hit by a BRTC bus at Dhaka’s Kamalapur intersection while returning from school with her grandmother yesterday morning.

The deceased, Roshni Pal, was a first grade student at Motijheel Government Model School, said Md Faruk, in-charge of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) police outpost.

She lived with her family in the Manda area of Mugda.

The accident occurred around 9:30am, Roshni’s grandmother Rekha Biswas said, adding, “She was holding my hand while we crossed the road. Suddenly, a BRTC bus came rushing and hit her.”

“She fell on the road and was badly hurt. We rushed her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, but doctors declared her dead around 10:30am,” she added.

AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK

SC to resume hearing today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court has fixed today for resuming the hearing of two leave to appeal petitions filed by the state challenging the High Court verdict that acquitted BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, former state minister Lutfozzaman Babar, and others previously convicted in two cases over the August 21, 2004 grenade attack.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division, led by Justice Md Ashfaul Islam, set the date as the chief justice is scheduled to join the bench for the hearing tomorrow, Advocate Mohammad Shishir Manir, a defence counsel, told The Daily Star.

The apex court had earlier scheduled today to resume hearings on the matters.

On December 1 last year, the High Court acquitted all 49 accused, including Tarique and Babar, and scrapped the trial court verdicts that had convicted and sentenced them.

The bench delivered its judgment following hearings on the death references and appeals filed by some of the convicts. In response, the state filed two separate leave to appeal petitions with the Appellate Division challenging the HC verdict.



Two children sit precariously on a fragile bamboo bridge over a waterbody in the Aushtagram-Mithamoin boro haor of Kishoreganj. The makeshift structure could give way at any moment, putting their lives at serious risk. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

SC verdict on Azharul's appeal toady

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court is set today to deliver its verdict on an appeal challenging the death penalty of Jamaat-e-Islami leader ATM Azharul Islam for crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

The appeal has been included as item one for "announcement of judgment" in today's cause list of a seven-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed.

On May 8, the apex court bench fixed today for delivering its verdict after concluding the appeal hearing.

On February 27, the SC allowed Azharul to move a fresh appeal before the court challenging his death penalty.

Azharul was allegedly the commander of the Al-Badr force and president of Chhatra Sangha, the then-student wing of Jamaat in Rangpur, during the war.

Jamaat leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami, Abdul Quader Mollah, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Mir Quasem Ali, and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury were previously executed following SC verdicts for crimes against humanity in 1971.

Man stabbed to death in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A man was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants in Khulna city early yesterday.

The deceased is Golam, 25, a resident of Mayur Residential Area under Horintana Police Station.

The incident occurred around 12:30am in an alley near the 22-storey building under Sonadanga Police Station.

His body was kept at the morgue of Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) for autopsy.

Quoting locals, police said a group of miscreants attacked Golam with sharp weapons over a previous dispute. They stabbed him in the abdomen.

Locals took him to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

Md Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Sonadanga Police Station, said a group of 3 to 4 youths carried out the attack with locally made weapons.

"The motive behind the attack is not yet clear," he added.

PRAYER TIMING

MAY 27

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-40	8-00
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-45	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN BARISHAL

8 years on, construction still incomplete

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Even eight years after construction began, Barishal's first specialised hospital for children remains incomplete.

According to the Public Works Department, construction of the hospital began in February 13, 2017, with an expected launch in 2019. The hospital is still under construction and lacks essential infrastructure. Envisioned as a 10-storey full-fledged complex, the hospital was initially planned to be constructed up to four storeys at a cost of Tk 19.48 crore.

PWD officials claimed that 95 percent of the work has been completed and that the building will be ready for handover soon.

Once operational, the hospital is slated to be run by Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

SBMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Moshikul Munir, however, said not even a single appointment has been made so far. No steps have been taken to recruit the required 350

staff members or to procure and install medical equipment.

Currently, the paediatric ward of SBMCH is the only facility serving children from across the division's six districts, as well as from neighbouring Madaripur and Shariatpur.



A recent visit to the construction site revealed that while the main structure is mostly complete, internal works, including electricity connections, are still underway. Two elevators have been installed, but parts of the building still require plastering and painting, while access roads and parking areas are also under development.

Travel ban on ex-MP Sumon, wife

STAR REPORT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued a travel ban on former lawmaker Syed Sayedul Haque Sumon, and his wife Sammi Akter in connection with corruption allegations brought against them.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director AKM Mahbubur Rahman, who is leading the inquiry team, submitted an application.

An inquiry is underway into the allegations of acquiring illegal wealth brought against them, said the ACC official in the application.

The judge also directed the ACC to send a copy of the order to the additional inspector general of police of Special Branch, Malibagh in Dhaka for next course of action. Sumon, the former lawmaker of Habiganj-4, was arrested from Dhaka's Mirpur on October 22 last year.

Potholes, neglect plague Kulaura's vital road

MINTU DESHWARA, Mouhivazar

A seven-kilometre stretch of road connecting Prithimpasha and Karmadha unions in Kulaura upazila of Mouhivazar has long been in a dilapidated state following years of neglect and lack of maintenance by the authorities concerned.

According to locals, the road was last repaired in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Since then, its condition has deteriorated, giving way to numerous potholes after the bitumen surface crumbled.

At present, the road is largely impassable, with potholes ranging between 30 and 50 feet in width, posing serious risks to commuters. It has partially collapsed in at least 50 points along its entire stretch, with Morarbar, Danurmora and Kanikiri areas being the worst affected.

The bitumen surface has worn off entirely, exposing bricks through gaping holes and leaving an uneven surface. Even after a light drizzle, puddles accumulate in the potholes, turning the road muddy and causing significant inconvenience to local residents and drivers.



"This road has become very risky. Our vehicles often get damaged from wear and tear, such as broken wheels and axles, due to the uneven surface and from getting stuck in the potholes," said Shipon Mia, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver.

Several other drivers echoed him. Ayes Ashfaq Tanvir, general secretary of local Robirbazar Club, said residents of some 20 to 22 villages rely heavily on the road for daily commute. The road also connects to several key educational institutions.

"The road's sorry state has been a longstanding problem for locals. We have raised the issue multiple times during upazila parishad meetings. The upazila engineer has assured us that steps will be taken soon," said Jimiur Rahman Chowdhury, chairman of Prithimpasha union parishad.

Contacted, Tarek Bin Islam, upazila engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Kulaura, said a proposal for repair work covering 20 kilometres of road across the upazila has been sent to higher authorities for approval under the RCIP project.

"The road repair project will include the damaged portion on the Prithimpasha-Karmadha route. If approved, work will begin after the tender process," he added.

PLOT SALE

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

PHOTO: TITU DAS

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
(A concern of International Holdings Limited)
300 Feet, Purbachal Road, Khilkhet, Dhaka. Phone: +8801713486800.
Email: info@ausisdhaka.net | URL: www.ausisdhaka.edu.bd

Career Opportunity
Australian International School, Dhaka (a concern of International Holdings Limited), is seeking an experienced professional for the position of Spanish Teacher. No. of Posts: 01.
Educational Qualifications: • A Bachelor's and Master's degree in Spanish. • Any other degree or diploma in education is preferable. **Other Requirements:** • Minimum 3 years of relevant experience. • Age at least 25 years • Having IB curriculum training and experience will be given high preference. • Teaching experience in International English Medium School will be given priority. **Remuneration:** • BDT 90,000.00 (Basic Tk. 45,000.00, House Rent Tk. 36,000.00, Medical Allowance Tk. 4,500.00, Transport Allowance Tk. 4,500.00). **Other Benefits:** • Provident fund and festival bonus after the completion of 1 year of service. **Instructions to Apply:** Please send a detailed CV with a photograph, along with academic and professional certificates. Applications should be sent by **12 June 2025 to career@ausisdhaka.edu.bd** or in hard copy to the HR Department, Australian International School, 300 Feet Road, Purbachal Road, Khilkhet, Dhaka 1229.

STATUTORY NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION, DHAKA
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 813 OF 2025
IN THE MATTER OF:
An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.
AND
IN THE MATTER OF:
Md. WahiduzzamanPetitioner
-VERSUS-
Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh and another.....Respondents
Notice is hereby given in the effect that an application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994, was moved before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh by the petitioner for condoning the delay in holding the Annual General Meeting for the year 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025, of the Company name "Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh" The Hon'ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel has admitted the said application on 18.05.2025 and Hon'ble court directed the petitioner to publish notices within 3 (three) weeks and also to submit affidavit in compliance on or before 26th June, 2025. Any person interested in the said application may appear before the Hon'ble Court. A Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of charges.
Mohammad Ariful Islam,
Advocate, Supreme Court, Room No. 401 (Main), Supreme Court Bar Association Bhuvan, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000, Phone: 01713033898, 01886033898.

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 763 OF 2025
IN THE MATTER OF:
Juki Singapore PTE. Ltd.
.....Petitioner
-VERSUS-
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms and another
..... Respondents
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application under Section 81(2) and 85(3) read with Section 396 of the Companies Acts, 1994 for condoning the delay in holding the Annual General Meeting of the Juki Bangladesh Ltd. for the calendar years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 for submitting the audited balance sheet and profit and loss account for the year ended on 30th June, 2020, 30th June, 2021, 30th June, 2022, 30th June, 2023, and 30th June, 2024 and seeking a direction to hold the Annual General Meeting for the calendar years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 within a reasonable time fixed by the Hon'ble Court has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel vide an order dated 14.05.2025 was pleased to admit the said application.
Any person or persons having an interest in the said application may appear either personally or through a duly authorized Advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing.
A copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of the required costs.
Yours faithfully
(Ragib Kabir)
Barrister-at-Law,
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Tanjib Alam & Associates,
BSEC Bhawan (Level 11),
102 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh.

Procurement Notice
Quantum Reference UNDP-BGD-00859

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh is seeking bids from interested firms/Organizations for the following requirements:

Contracting a firm to Coordinate and Implement Pre-vocational & Vocational training

The deadline for submission of the proposal is at 4:30 PM (Bangladesh Local Time), June 12, 2025

The proposal may be submitted on or before the deadline indicated by UNDP in the **Procurement Notice**. Please visit the link below to learn more about RFP, pre-bid meeting link & submission documents through the quantum platform.

Procurement Notices - UNDP-BGD-00859 - Contracting a firm to Coordinate and Implement Pre-voc & Vocational training

For any technical query, please write to us through bd.procurement@undp.org mentioning the reference No **UNDP-BGD-00859 in the email subject by 12:00 PM, June 10, 2025**

US wants to make tanks, not T-shirts

Says Trump on his tariff policy

REUTERS, Morristown

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday his tariff policy was aimed at promoting the domestic manufacturing of tanks and technology products, not sneakers and T-shirts.

Speaking to reporters before boarding Air Force One in New Jersey, Trump said he agreed with comments from Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on April 29 that the US does not necessarily need a “booming textile industry” - comments that drew criticism from the National Council of Textile Organizations.

“We’re not looking to make sneakers and T-shirts. We want to make military equipment. We want to make big things. We want to make, do the AI thing,” Trump said.

“I’m not looking to make T-shirts, to be honest. I’m not looking to make socks... We are looking to do chips and computers and lots of other things, and tanks and ships,” he said.



Malaysia PM hails ‘significant’ engagement on Myanmar

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim yesterday hailed “significant” steps to engage warring sides in Myanmar, as Southeast Asian leaders met for talks to address the protracted conflict and offset global trade uncertainty from US President Donald Trump's tariff threats.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since its military overthrew the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, triggering pro-democracy protests that morphed into a widening rebellion and conflict that has displaced more than 3.5 million people, according to the United Nations.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations leaders were expected to discuss ways to jumpstart Asean's faltering Myanmar peace process and build on recent efforts by Anwar, the bloc's current chair, to bring rival groups to the table.

Anwar last month held a closed-door meeting in Bangkok with junta chief Min Aung Hlaing.



Community members hold candles in front of a headstone bearing George Floyd's name at the ‘Say Their Names’ art installation cemetery during a vigil marking the fifth anniversary of his death. The installation, located at George Floyd Square in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, features headstones representing Black individuals killed by police. The vigil took place on Sunday evening.

PHOTO: AFP

Putin has ‘gone absolutely CRAZY’

Says Trump after massive Russian drone attack on Ukraine; Kremlin suggests Trump ‘emotionally overloaded’

REUTERS, Kyiv

US President Donald Trump said Vladimir Putin had “gone absolutely CRAZY” by unleashing the largest aerial attack of the war on Ukraine and said he was weighing new sanctions on Moscow, though he also scolded Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Trump posted the remark on Truth Social as sleeping Ukrainians woke to a third consecutive night of Russian aerial attacks, listening for hours to drones buzzing near their homes and eruptions of Ukrainian anti-aircraft fire.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched 355 drones and nine cruise missiles against Ukraine overnight, a huge salvo that the air force's spokesman told Reuters made it Russia's largest drone attack of the war to date.

“Something has happened to him (Putin). He has gone absolutely CRAZY!” Trump said of the Russian president on Truth Social, referring to the previous night's attack by Russia.

“I’ve always said that he wants ALL of Ukraine, not just a piece of it, and maybe that’s proving to be right, but if he does, it will lead to the downfall of Russia!”

Trump also criticized Zelensky, posting that the Ukrainian leader “is doing his Country no favours by talking the way he does. Everything out of his mouth causes problems, I don’t like it, and it better stop.”

- Trump considering sanctions on Russia
- Zelensky should shut up: US president
- Russia launches 355 drones, nine cruise missiles against Ukraine
- Attacks on Ukraine were directed at military targets: Kremlin

The Kremlin, asked about Trump's specific remarks about Putin being “crazy”, thanked the US people and Trump in person for their assistance in launching peace negotiations but suggested Trump and others might be emotionally overloaded.

“This is a very crucial moment, which is associated, of course, with the emotional overload of everyone absolutely and with emotional reactions,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The Ukrainian air force said the third Russian aerial attack in a row hit targets in five locations, but did not elaborate, implying military damage.

A 14-year-old boy was reported injured in the Black Sea region of Odesa. Residential buildings and industrial facilities were damaged in western Ukraine, officials said.

India and Canada move to mend ties

AFP, New Delhi

India's foreign minister said he had spoken to his Canadian counterpart as the two sides seek to ease fraught relations.

The telephone call, which took place late Sunday, is the highest diplomatic contact between Ottawa and New Delhi since Mark Carney became Canadian prime minister in March.

Ties between Canada and India were strained following accusations of New Delhi's involvement in the 2023 assassination of a Canadian Sikh, claims India denied.

India's Subrahmanya Jaishankar said he had “discussed the prospects of India-Canada ties” with newly appointed Foreign Minister Anita Anand and he had “wished her a very successful tenure”.

Less than 5pc of Gaza’s cropland useable

Shows UN assessment

REUTERS, Geneva

Less than 5 percent of Gaza's cropland can be cultivated due to damage and access restrictions, “exacerbating the risk of famine in the area”, according to a UN assessment published yesterday.

“This level of destruction is not just a loss of infrastructure – it is a collapse of Gaza's agrifood system and of lifelines,” said Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization which produced the assessment alongside the UN Satellite Centre.

Before the Israel-Hamas war began over 19 months ago, Gazan farmers cultivated a range of crops including citrus fruits, dates and olives, despite the area being among the most densely populated in the world.

Now, half a million people face starvation, according to a global hunger monitor, amid Israeli restrictions on food imports after an 11-week blockade. In total, just 688 hectares, or 4.6 percent of the total, is available for cultivation, the UN assessment said.

Make people alert

FROM PAGE 1

also the commission chief.

The commission members informed him about the latest progress in the talks with political parties, according to a statement of chief adviser's press wing.

The statement said discussion was held on the formation of an independent commission to investigate the role of those involved in irregularities in past elections.

Prof Ali Riaz, the commission's vice-president, said all political parties already reached a “consensus” in this regard.

The chief adviser, who presided over the meeting at Jamuna, instructed the commission to work on increasing public awareness in reform process and electoral matters by involving not only political parties but also civil society and grassroots organisations.

The first round of talks between the commission and political parties ended on May 19. The second round is expected early next month.

At the meeting, consensus commission member Ayub Mia proposed forming a body for implementing the recommendations of Public Administration Reform Commission.

He added that apart from the Public Administration Commission's recommendations, two other commissions are working on NBR reforms, leading to a lack of coordination.

Judicial Reform Commission representative Justice Emdadul Haque called upon the chief adviser to ensure that the commission formed based on the consensus of political parties to appoint Supreme Court judges can work transparently.

Anti-Corruption Reform Commission representative Itekharruzzaman urged for a roadmap to implement the proposals put forth by the reform commissions on media, labour, local government, women, and health.

Badiul Alam Majumder, who leads the Electoral System Reform Commission, called for issuing the draft proposal prepared for the 2008 local government elections as an ordinance.

Police Reform Commission representative Safar Raj Hossain was also present at the meeting.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Health Services Division
Directorate General of Health Services
Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD)
30 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208
www.cmsd.gov.bd

CORRIGENDUM of the IFT
Package No. SR-2405
Selection of C & F Agent (Chattogram Sea port)

Section	Existing entries-	Amended entries-
Tender Last Date and Time	14/05/2025 Up to 5:00 pm	02/06/2025 Up to 5:00 pm
Tender Closing Time and date	15-05-2025 at 11:00 AM	03-06-2025 at 11:00 AM
Tender opening Time and date	15-05-2025 at 11:30 AM	03-06-2025 at 11:30 AM

All other terms and conditions of the IFT and relevant portion of the Tender document will remain unchanged.

Enclosed: Corrigendum Notice of the IFT
01(One) copy.

Md. Huzur Ali
Director (Additional Secretary),
Central Medical Stores Depot,
Directorate General of Health Services,
30 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, Tejgaon,
Dhaka-1208.
Tel. 88-2-48115486
E-mail: cmsd@cmsd.gov.bd

GD-1284

Female teacher made OSD ‘for advocating equal rights’

FROM PAGE 12

Yasmin, a prominent women's rights activist, also edits Nari Angan, an online platform.

The controversy stems from articles published in Hisya (rights), a magazine which she edits and publishes. The articles reportedly support equal inheritance rights for men and women, a stance some religious groups claim contradicts Islamic inheritance laws.

After its release, students and religious organisations, including H e f a z a t - e - I s l a m , demonstrated on campus demanding her dismissal.

The Democratic Rights Committee, in a statement signed by Professor Anu Muhammad, condemned the action against Yasmin.

“It is unfortunate that a female teacher is being removed from her post simply for expressing an opinion. This goes against freedom of expression,” it said.

The committee demanded an impartial, s u b j e c t - b a s e d investigation into the issue.

Yasmin posted the order

on Facebook, writing, “My freedom of expression has been violated. As a woman, I protest this incident. However, no force can suppress my voice when it comes to speaking up for human rights.”

Bangladesh Feminist Archives, a platform for preserving, documenting and promoting intersectional feminist movements in Bangladesh, condemned the government's move, which it said goes against the values of democracy, July uprising, and the principles of free speech.

“Nadira Yasmin committed no crime. She simply voiced an opinion in a public debate. Even if her position were controversial, she had every right to express it. The state's duty was to protect her, not surrender to mob pressure,” it said, urging the interim government to reverse the decision.

Meanwhile, Mufti Tarekul Rahman, private secretary to Hefazat's Narsingdi wing leader, said, “A solution has been reached. We are happy.” He did not elaborate.

Janata Bank PLC.
Head Office
IT Procurement, Security, Compliance and Maintenance
Department
110, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
Tel: +8823356514, Fax: 88-02-5564644, Telex: 675840 JBD BJ
Website: www.jb.com.bd

Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following goods:

SL No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	1116718	JBPLC/ITPSCMD/IT-Proc-24/Re-Tender/PT-Tools	Tender for Procurement of Penetration Testing Solution/Tools for Janata Bank PLC. following Open Tendering Method.	26/06/2025 03:15 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sa/-
(Mohammad Shakawat Hossain)
Deputy General Manager

GD-1288

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
PRISONS DIRECTORATE
30/3, Umesh Datta Road, Bakshi Bazar, Dhaka-1211
www.prison.gov.bd

Memo No. 58.04.0000.030.25.007.25-923
Date- 26.05.2025

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the national e-GP portal:

SL No	Tender/ Re-Tender ID No	Name of work	Publishing, Closing date & Time
1	1119011	Hybrid Jeep	25-May-2025 18:30:00, 17-Jun-2025 11:30:00
2	1119034	Jeep	25-May-2025 18:30:00, 17-Jun-2025 15:00:00

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 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).

(Abdul Quddus)
BJ-02720000243
Asst. Inspector General of Prisons (Finance)
For Inspector General of Prisons
Telephone No.57300514.

GD-1286

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
সড়ক পরিবহন ও মহাসড়ক বিভাগ
ঢাকা মাস ট্রানজিট কোম্পানি লিমিটেড
মেট্রোরেল ভবন, উত্তরা ডিপো, সোনারগাঁও জনপথ
সেক্টর-১৬, দিয়াবাড়ি, উত্তরা, ঢাকা-১২৩০
www.dmtl.gov.bd

স্মারক নং: ৩৫.০৫.০০০০.০২২.০২৩.২৫-২৫৩
তারিখ: ২৬-০৫-২০২৫

উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকা মাস ট্রানজিট কোম্পানি লিমিটেড (ডিএমটিসিএল)-এর আওতায় “The Universal Ticketing System (UTS) for Single Journey on Dhaka Metro Rail Line-6” বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্ত ঠিকাদার নিয়োগ করা হবে। আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর থেকে ৭ (সাত) হাজার টাকা প্রদানপূর্বক অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে আপাতী ২৭-০৫-২০২৫ খ্রী. হতে ২৯-০৬-২০২৫ খ্রী. তারিখের মধ্যে দরপত্র সলিস সংগ্রহ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। পূর্ণাঙ্গ বিজ্ঞপ্তির জন্য www.dmtl.gov.bd, www.dtea.gov.bd, www.rthd.gov.bd এবং www.cptu.gov.bd ভিজিট করুন।

দরপত্র দাখিল পূর্ববর্তী প্রিফি সন্মার সময় ও স্থান: ১৬ জুন ২০২৫ তারিখ সকাল ১০.৩০ ঘটিকা। ডিএমটিসিএল এর সম্মেলন কক্ষ, মেট্রোরেল ভবন, উত্তরা ডিপো, সোনারগাঁও জনপথ, সেক্টর-১৬, দিয়াবাড়ি, উত্তরা, ঢাকা-১২৩০।

দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ সময় ও স্থান: ৩০ জুন ২০২৫ তারিখ দুপুর ০৩.০০ ঘটিকা। মহাব্যবস্থাপক (স্টোর ও প্রকিউরমেন্ট) এর কার্যালয়, মেট্রোরেল ভবন, উত্তরা ডিপো, সোনারগাঁও জনপথ সড়ক সেক্টর-১৬, দিয়াবাড়ি, উত্তরা, ঢাকা-১২৩০।

(মোহাম্মদ আব্দুল হক)
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GD-1290

Implement only essential reforms

Govt should prioritise key reforms aligned with election timeline

Given the current political situation, wherein the call for an election roadmap has become louder than ever, it is important that the interim government only carry out some essential and practical reforms that can be backed by political consensus.

Since taking office on August 8 last year, the interim government has formed 11 commissions to reform the constitution, judiciary, election commission, police, public administration, local government, anti-corruption, health, women's affairs, mass media, and labour. All of them have submitted their reports, with many proposing more than 100 recommendations. Since March 20, the National Consensus Commission (NCC) has been holding talks with various political parties and other stakeholders to reach a common ground on the recommendations. While it is understandable that an agreement will not be reached on every single recommendation, some can be left behind for consideration at a later time by an elected government. In fact, during their dialogue with NCC members on May 25, civil society members urged the interim government to refrain from amending the constitution and leave the task to elected representatives. There are other such reform recommendations that are best addressed by a parliament rather than an interim administration, since such action may be viewed as crossing a constitutional boundary.

The interim government should also consider, while selecting recommendations, what is feasible within its tenure. For example, the police commission's report urges immediate implementation of a Supreme Court directive regarding arrests, searches, and questioning. This kind of recommendation can easily be implemented in the short term. Therefore, the government should carry out such reforms if doing so helps with holding a free and fair election. When the NCC was formed on February 12, its tenure was fixed for six months; in other words, we can expect the NCC to complete the discussions and deliver a summary of agreed-upon recommendations by August/September. If the election is going to be held anytime between December 2025 and June 2026, there may not be sufficient time left to implement even all the agreed-upon recommendations.

With that in mind, the interim government should prioritise recommendations that will make the return to democracy and a parliamentary system smoother. As such, the focus should be on the reports of the election, police, judiciary, public administration, and local government reform commissions. However, the government must be careful not to leave out key stakeholders in their attempt to implement the reforms. While the consensus of political parties is crucial, there are groups who will be impacted by the reforms, and they must be consulted as well. Ultimately, we hope all stakeholders will rise above their individual concerns and prioritise greater national and democratic interests in reaching an agreement on the necessary reforms.

Listen to primary teachers' demands

Govt should be prompt in resolving the issue

We are concerned about the protest currently being carried out by the assistant teachers of government primary schools. The teachers, who have been observing partial work abstention since May 5, started a full work abstention programme yesterday. They plan to continue their protest indefinitely to press home their three-point demand: setting their starting salary at the 11th grade of national pay scale; resolving complications in availing higher grades after 10 and 16 years of service; and ensuring faster promotions, including promotion of assistant teachers to fill 100 percent of headteacher positions. After the interim government took office in August last year, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education formed a nine-member consultation committee to improve primary and non-formal education in the country. The committee submitted its report on February 10, proposing over a hundred recommendations, including pay scale upgrades and promotions for assistant teachers of primary schools. The teachers are staging their protest seeking revisions to some of these recommendations.

There are currently more than 65,000 government primary schools in the country, which employ around 3.75 lakh teachers. Among them, headteachers are in the 11th pay grade, while assistant teachers fall under the 13th grade, with a starting basic salary of Tk 11,000, plus benefits. The consultation committee recommended eliminating the "assistant teacher" position and introducing "teacher" as the entry-level designation. Under this change, the initial pay grade for teachers would be the 12th, with a starting basic salary of Tk 11,300, plus benefits. After two years, their jobs would be made permanent, and following another two years, they would be promoted to senior teacher, moving to the 11th pay grade. The committee also recommended upgrading headteachers to the 10th grade and suggested that all headteacher positions be filled through promotions. Currently, 65 percent of headteachers are promoted, while 35 percent are recruited directly.

Under the circumstances, we urge the government to address the primary schoolteachers' grievances through dialogue and take prompt action. Rising living costs are affecting these teachers, too, making it increasingly difficult for them to manage their expenses. During the previous regime, promised salary increases were not properly implemented, while promotions to the headteacher positions remained stalled since 2009. Many primary schoolteachers retired in the same position they joined. We, therefore, call on the government to recognise the urgency of the issue and act swiftly to resolve it.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

St Petersburg founded

On this day in 1703, Peter the Great founded St Petersburg. It played a vital role in Russian history and is especially known as the scene of the 1917 revolutions and as a fiercely defended city during World War II.

How the FY2026 budget can make a difference amid challenges



MACRO MIRROR
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Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN

The national budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year, set to be published on June 2, comes at a critical economic crossroads. It assumes crucial importance in steering the country towards a stable economic condition. Weak management and lack of governance during the previous government's time left the economy in a deep crisis, the burden of which is currently being shouldered by the interim government. The country has been facing formidable economic challenges, including persistent inflation, low revenue generation, low investment, low employment generation, high non-performing loans (NPLs) in banks, rising external debt-servicing obligations, and poor utilisation of public funds.

Against this backdrop, expectations from the FY2026 budget are high, which are further compounded by the repeated promise from the interim government to undertake reforms in order to establish a discrimination-free society. Understandably, the interim government is now expected to demonstrate this commitment through its budget formulation, which should not aim to chase ambitious growth targets, but should prioritise macroeconomic stability, inflation control, and welfare enhancement of the common people.

Reports suggest that the size of the upcoming budget will be Tk 7.9 lakh crore, which is 0.88 percent lower than the outgoing budget. Similarly, the Annual Development Programme (ADP) will be set at approximately Tk 2.3 lakh crore—13.2 percent less than the original allocation in FY2025. This downsizing underscores the government's objective to restore fiscal discipline and curb inflationary pressures. The budget aims to lower the fiscal deficit to around 3.6 percent of GDP—the lowest in more than a decade, signalling a serious attempt at prudent financial management. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that fiscal consolidation does not come at the cost of investments in critical sectors such as health, education, and social protection.

In Bangladesh, budget allocation for health remains underwhelming, with spending still below one percent of GDP, a figure that has stagnated for decades. Similarly, the allocation for education continues to fall short of the targets outlined in the Eighth Five-

Year Plan, undermining efforts to build human capital. These shortcomings highlight a tension between fiscal austerity and the urgent need to invest in social sectors to build human capital and promote equity.

As before, the challenge for the interim government will be strengthening revenue mobilisation, which remains significantly low compared to the potential for higher collections. Amid low revenue collection for about a decade, the government aims to increase revenue collection in FY2026 by 7.6 percent



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

compared to the revised target for FY2025, which seems unrealistic. It has to address this challenge not by raising tax rates but by expanding the tax base, enhancing compliance, and digitalising tax collection systems. Bringing high-income earners and the informal sector into the tax net is critical. The postponed restructuring of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) into two separate divisions—a move designed to improve tax administration but met with protests from officials—demonstrates the complexities of reforming revenue institutions. While political resistance has delayed this reform, it remains imperative that the interim government modernises tax administration, enforces compliance, and combats tax evasion.

Subsidy reform is another area demanding immediate attention. Blanket subsidies, particularly in energy and agriculture, contribute significantly to fiscal pressures and distort market signals. The budget has to phase out such subsidies and adopt

targeted support to ensure that the vulnerable population are protected, while promoting efficient resource allocation.

Monetary policy will need to work in tandem with fiscal measures to stabilise the economy. The adoption of a market-driven exchange rate regime—a condition for IMF loan disbursement—has been a significant reform. However, it could lead to volatility of the currency market, which should be addressed through careful management. The Bangladesh Bank has adopted a contractionary monetary policy to control inflation, which has to be pursued for a few more months as the inflation rate is still high. However, the productive sectors should have access to sufficient liquidity support. Coordinated fiscal and monetary efforts are necessary to stabilise the exchange rate, manage external borrowing, and strengthen foreign exchange reserves. The balance of payment situation has improved due to higher exports and remittances

generation. Bangladesh faces rising youth unemployment and underemployment, compounded by structural challenges in the labour market. Therefore, the upcoming budget must also consider measures to bolster employment generation. It should prioritise labour-intensive sectors such as RMG, agriculture, ICT, and construction. Investment in skills development, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship support will be vital to prepare the workforce for meeting the market demands. Micro, small, and medium enterprises should be provided with support in areas such as access to finance, capacity-building, and market linkages.

The FY2026 budget should also clearly present a roadmap of economic measures in view of Bangladesh's graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status in November 2026. The loss of duty-free, quota-free (DFQF) market access and concessional financing will necessitate proactive strategies to maintain export competitiveness and financial stability. The budget should support productivity enhancements, strengthen trade facilitation mechanisms, and invest in export diversification to reduce dependency on a narrow range of products and markets. Additionally, in view of the US reciprocal tariff and LDC graduation, the budget must rationalise tariff structures to align with global trade norms and enhance competitiveness. In the case of finance, Bangladesh should explore alternative sources of concessional financing, such as climate funds, green bonds, and public-private partnerships for sustainable infrastructure development.

While stabilisation and reform are essential, the budget must not lose sight of social equity. The interim government's proposed streamlining of social safety nets, reducing the number of schemes while increasing beneficiary coverage, reflects a move towards efficiency. However, allocations for social protection remain inadequate. The new budget must ensure that reforms translate into tangible benefits for the most vulnerable segments of society, supported by robust implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

The FY2026 budget must be more than a mere fiscal statement. While budgets are annual by design, they must reflect the country's long-term ambitions, grounded in its medium-term strategies like five-year plans and sectoral policies. By focusing on prudent fiscal management, targeted social protection, and strategic investment in infrastructure and human capital, policymakers can navigate Bangladesh's current economic challenges and foster economic opportunities for citizens.

Ways to tackle medical negligence and malpractice in Bangladesh



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A M SHAMIM

Medical negligence or failure by a healthcare provider to meet the accepted standard of care, resulting in harm to the patient, has reached a new level in Bangladesh. It is now eroding public trust in the local health system despite tremendous achievements, especially in the private sector. Recent high-profile cases, such as the death of a five-year-old during a routine circumcision at a hospital, the tragic demise of a young, expectant mother during childbirth at another hospital, and the death of a young male during an outdoor endoscopic procedure, underscore the gravity of the issue. Incidents like these, often attributed to profit-driven motives, unregulated practices, and a lack of accountability, reflect a healthcare system under strain. The widespread apathy and lack of legal due process for victims of medical negligence also result in frequent violence against healthcare professionals. In September 2024 alone, newspapers reported separate attacks by angry "mobs" at four major hospitals—Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Mugda Medical College Hospital, Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital,

and Shariatpur Sadar Hospital. These do not include the incidents that happen in smaller clinics and health centres in the nooks and crannies of the country.

One of the key challenges is, Bangladesh lacks a unified law addressing medical malpractice. While provisions in the Penal Code, 1860 (Sections 304A, 336-338) and the Consumer Rights Protection Act (CRPA), 2009 (Section 53) offer remedies, enforcement is weak. The burden of proof rests heavily on plaintiffs, requiring expert testimony and facing procedural delays. Besides, the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) Act, 2010 allows disciplinary action against professionals, but its scope is limited to registration issues of the concerned healthcare facility and practitioners.

Victims often resort to violence or settle out of court due to distrust in the legal system. A 2008 report by Ain O Salish Kendra documented 504 cases of medical negligence between 1995 and 2008, yet few resulted in convictions. There is also a general lack of understanding that in medical

practices, adverse outcomes, despite following standard protocols, are not uncommon, even in developed countries. Hence, the difference between negligent misconduct and honest error is often overlooked, creating antipathy towards healthcare providers.

Comparison with India's approach to medical negligence offers instructive insights. While both nations face similar challenges, India's legal framework and judicial precedents provide a more structured pathway for redress.

India explicitly includes healthcare under the term "services," enabling patients to seek compensation through consumer courts. The country also applies the Bolam Test to assess whether a doctor acted in line with peer-approved practices, reducing subjectivity in negligence claims. Besides, bodies like the Maharashtra Medical Council adjudicate complaints, streamlining resolution without prolonged court battles.

In Bangladesh, addressing medical negligence requires a multi-pronged approach combining legal overhaul, institutional strengthening, and cultural shifts as follows: i) codify negligence definitions, compensation standards, and penalties. Include guidelines akin to the UK's Ogden Tables for calculating damages based on injury severity; ii) amend the Consumer Rights Protection Act, 2009. Explicitly classify medical services under "service" provisions to empower consumer courts; iii) establish Quasi-Judicial bodies. Create

medical tribunals under the BMDC, which should outline the standard procedures to expedite cases; and iv) separate the responsibility of the doctor and the hospital. A doctor should be held responsible when any professional misconduct is proven by comparing it to the standard procedure. A hospital is accountable, but to what extent (for example, if the incident happened during outdoor practice, etc.), that also needs to be outlined.

Systematic improvements are also required, which includes: mandating a national accreditation system for clinics and hospitals; empowering the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to penalise unethical practices, including unnecessary tests and kickbacks from pharmaceutical companies; increasing health spending in the GDP; aligning with World Health Organization recommendations; and allocating funds for infrastructure, training, and rural healthcare access.

We should also focus on building trust with transparency by enhancing doctor-patient communication and running public awareness campaigns.

Bangladesh's healthcare situation demands urgent action. By integrating legal rigour, adopting global best practices, fostering institutional accountability, and awareness building, the nation can transform its healthcare landscape. Reforms must prioritise patient safety, equitable access, and trust-building to curb medical tourism and restore faith in local facilities.

Rediscovering meaning in a fractured reality



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity”—this is a hopeful refrain from Albert Einstein, whose own life was marked by upheaval, exile, and intellectual solitude. Yet, to the average person today, who is struggling with global crises and personal insecurities, such optimism might feel elusive—even naïve. The present moment is not merely difficult; it is suffocatingly uncertain. From economic turmoil and political chaos to personal disintegration and mental health deterioration, the world seems caught in the throes of a quiet, universal anxiety.

Across borders and cultures, a pattern emerges: fear, restlessness, and a gnawing sadness that transcends material reality. The structure of society itself appears to be trembling: governments falter, public trust erodes, communities fragment, and individuals find themselves isolated amid a sea of digital noise and sociopolitical confusion. What was once solid now seems slippery; what was predictable now feels precarious.

This is the age of mental stress, a silent killer cloaked in invisibility, wreaking havoc on the lives of billions. And while its symptoms may be subtle—a sleepless night here, a racing heart there—its long-term consequences are profoundly grave. Depression, anxiety disorders, emotional fatigue, and burnout have ceased to be exceptions. They are now the norm.

Mental stress is no longer confined to urban sprawls or high-powered jobs. As technology permeates the remotest villages, and the global economy impacts every household, even rural lives are no longer insulated. The

speed of modernity, the glut of information, the cult of productivity, and the constant need to “keep up” have together forged a psychological battleground from which few can escape unscathed.

Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and author of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, once observed, “When a person can’t find a deep sense of meaning, they distract themselves with pleasure.” But in the digital age, pleasure has become its own kind of tyranny. Social media offers dopamine but no peace; instant connectivity brings exposure but not intimacy. The human soul, once enriched by slowness, silence, and spiritual reflection, is now under constant siege by noise, comparison, and distraction.

This explains why, despite technological advancements and material abundance, the epidemic of mental unrest continues to grow. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that nearly one in eight people globally live with a mental health disorder. Suicide has become one of the leading causes of death among young adults. Even children now exhibit symptoms of chronic stress—a devastating indictment of our collective failure to build an emotionally sustainable society.

Where does this stress originate? The answer is complicated.

Firstly, political instability and the erosion of democratic values around the globe create an ambient fear that the future is neither safe nor fair. Economic inequality adds fuel to this fire, with growing numbers of people facing unemployment, underemployment, or

exploitative work conditions. At home, broken family systems, generational trauma, and emotional isolation hollow out the spaces that once offered refuge.

Then there is the problem of overidentification with success and failure. As J.K. Rowling poignantly put it, “It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all.” But society no longer permits

distortion—catastrophising, generalising, personalising—has been well-documented by psychologists. Aaron Beck, father of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), identified that distorted thinking is central to anxiety and depression. By restructuring these thought patterns, he argued, individuals can reclaim agency over their emotional state.

Thus, the first step towards liberation is self-awareness. As Socrates taught, “Know

thyself.” In understanding our fears, motives, and habits, we acquire the tools to reframe them. This is not an esoteric task, but a deeply practical one. A journal, a walk in nature, honest conversations, or even a few minutes of mindfulness each day—these can be revolutionary acts of healing in a world that thrives on our disconnection from self.

Beyond introspection, there is a profound need for something greater: belief. Not only

religious faith, though that too has proven a balm for many, but belief in the inherent value of life and the resilience of the human spirit. Fyodor Dostoevsky once declared, “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.” Whether that “something” is family, service, creativity, or a cause, it must be found and held onto tightly.

But individuals cannot bear this burden alone. Society must change. Mental health should be treated with the same urgency and funding as physical health. Workplaces need to adopt human-centric policies. Schools must teach emotional intelligence alongside academics. We need public discourse that values compassion over polarisation, understanding over judgement.

As philosopher Martin Buber said, “All real living is meeting.” This simple truth reminds us that the path forward lies not in isolation, but in connection. In solidarity. In mutual care.

Despite the darkness of the times, there is, indeed, light at the end of the tunnel. History attests that humanity has always risen from ashes—be it after world wars, plagues, or great depressions. We are still here, still breathing, still hoping. And that, in itself, is a triumph.

To trust in the future is to trust in ourselves. This is not a passive hope, but an active resistance against despair. It is what psychologists call “post-traumatic growth”—the idea that suffering, though painful, can lead to transformation and renewal.

We must, therefore, reclaim our mental well-being not only as individuals but as a collective. Through compassion, authenticity, and inner strength, we can pierce the gloom. As Japanese author Haruki Murakami once wrote, “And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through... But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in.”

In that truth lies our greatest hope. That no matter how long or dark the tunnel may be, we don’t walk it alone. That eventually, we will emerge—not broken, but reborn.



FILE ILLUSTRATION: RAKEEB RAZZAQ

The Sagar-Runi case and our crisis of justice



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MD. IBRAHIM KHALILULLAH

Thirteen years is a long time to wait for justice. In most places of the world, that kind of delay would be an anomaly. In Bangladesh, it’s become a routine. On May 21, a Dhaka court quietly extended the deadline for the investigation report in the murder of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi—for the 118th time. The new deadline is July 8, and few expect it to stick. The case has become less of a legal proceeding and more of a national metaphor for institutional decay, political obstruction, and a state still struggling to break out of its past.

The couple—he a news editor at Maasranga Television, she a senior reporter with ATN Bangla—were killed in their home in February 2012, stabbed to death while their child, just five years old at the time, was in the next room. The crime shocked the nation. It should have shocked the system into action, too. But 13 years on, the case remains unsolved, the culprits unpunished,

and the consequences unresolved.

This isn’t just another cold case. It’s something else entirely—a symbol of how deep the rot runs, and how hard it will be for the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus to convince people that real reform is even possible.

When Yunus stepped into the role of chief adviser in the wake of the political upheaval in August last year, he did so on the strength of a promise: fundamental reform. Not just a new government, but a new kind of governance. He spoke of irreversible change. More than nine months later, the Sagar-Runi case is still stuck. This is important, because a failure like this tells people more than speeches or policy proposals ever can.

The history of this case reads like a catalogue of missteps. Initial investigations were fumbled, passed between agencies like a burden no one wanted. First, the local police, then the Detective Branch, then the

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)—none of them got close to solving it. More than a hundred extensions later, there’s still no conviction, no clear suspect, not even a timeline that makes sense. Along the way, key evidence was destroyed, including—most recently—in a fire at a police office.

Earlier this year, the case took another turn. The family’s lawyer accused high-level officials from the previous government of actively obstructing the investigation. That lines up with what UN human rights observers have been saying since 2022: that Bangladesh suffers from a “pervasive culture of impunity,” where political connections act like shields against scrutiny. If those allegations are even partly true, it raises difficult questions—not just about the past, but about how much has changed under this new administration.

To be fair, the interim government hasn’t entirely ignored the case. A task force was formed in October last year, including members from the Police Bureau of Investigation, the CID, and even Rab, although they had already been removed from leading the probe. The team has interviewed over 70 people, including a range of former officials. That’s more effort than we have seen in years. But even so, there’s a sense that the clock is ticking louder than ever.

In April, when investigators told the court they needed nine more months, they

were granted just six. That decision reflects a growing impatience on the part of the judiciary, the public, and especially the press. Every delay chips away at confidence. Every missed deadline reaffirms a painful truth: that, sometimes, justice in this country is more political than procedural.

And there’s a broader context here. Prof Yunus came to power not through an election, but through what’s been called a “Monsoon Revolution.” The movement that swept Sheikh Hasina’s government out of office was driven by popular frustration with corruption, authoritarianism, and the sense that institutions had become hollowed out. The new administration’s legitimacy hinges on the idea that things are different now. But how different, exactly? The continued stagnation of the Sagar Runi investigation raises uncomfortable doubts.

If the interim government can’t resolve this case—one that stands as a touchstone for press freedom, justice, and accountability—what does that say about its ability to reform anything else? This isn’t just another file on a dusty desk; it’s a test case for the government.

Some of the hurdles are real. The crime scene was reportedly contaminated hours after the murders, with journalists and onlookers trampling over key evidence, according to the case investigators. The DNA evidence recovered is partial and inconclusive. These aren’t small issues, but

they don’t fully explain why 13 years have passed without answers. They don’t explain the lost documents, conflicting timelines, or the inertia that has followed this case like a shadow.

There’s a lesson here that goes beyond forensics or bureaucratic reform. For Bangladesh to truly move past the Hasina era—or any era defined by unchecked executive power—it has to deal honestly with its ghosts. That means confronting cases like this one head-on, without delay and compromise. Anything less risks repeating the cycle.

For journalists still working in the country, the message is chilling. The Sagar-Runi case isn’t ancient history; it’s a daily reminder that their safety is negotiable, their profession vulnerable. And for ordinary citizens, the case underlines something more basic: that justice, when delayed this long, can start to look like denial.

There are still a few weeks before the new deadline. Maybe something will finally move. Maybe the 119th time will be different. But hopes are thin, and patience is thinner. A revolution, no matter how well-intentioned, can’t rely on symbolism alone. It has to deliver—not just policy, not just vision, but results.

Until then, the legacy of Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi remains suspended in time, like their case file, like the trust of a nation still waiting for proof that justice doesn’t only belong to the powerful.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

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6 Was sore
11 Like good sentries
12 Roulette bet
13 Old photo tint
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15 Become cheerful
17 Take in
19 Kickoff aid
20 Scathing review
23 Hard to control
25 Head, to Henri
26 Energy-boosting drink
28 Amorous archer
29 Stamping need
30 Go bad
31 Finish
32 Print units
33 Engaged
35 Cargo spots
38 Battery part
41 Parting word
42 Bolshevik leader
43 Gagger group
44 Minnesota team

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6 Bicker
7 Hen pen
8 Crude home
9 Swelled head
10 Cub’s cave
16 Belt loop attachment
17 “Great!”
18 Madrid month
20 Pizzeria supply
21 Top players
22 Uncool group
24 Good times
25 Toll hwy.
27 Still in the deck
31 Follow
33 March time
34 Fresh
35 Crone
36 Lyric work
37 Tell stories
39 Jumble of noise
40 Print units

YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

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IVAN
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SLOP
PAW
AFRICA
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TENTS
ERGO

PAIL
PLANE
AORTA
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dsopinion@gmail.com.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Senior Jail Superintendent
Dhaka Central Jail, Keraniganj
Email: srjailsuper.dhaka@gmail.com

Memo No. 58.04.2600.072.04.032.2025.570

Date:26.05.2025

E-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the national e-GP portal:

Schedule No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing, Closing date & Time
Schedule No-“KHA”	1118760	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:00:00
	1118771	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-02 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:15:00
	1118773	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-03 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:30:00
	1118776	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-04 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 10:45:00
Schedule No-“GHA”	1118783	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetable) of Package-05 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:50:00 16-Jun-2025 11:00:00
	1119008	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Edible Oil, Transports and other products) of Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:58:00 16-Jun-2025 11:10:00
	1119019	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Edible Oil, Transports and other products) of Package-02 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	25-May-2025 23:58:00 16-Jun-2025 11:20:00

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 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).

26.05.2025
(Suraiya Akhtar)
Senior Jail Super
Dhaka Central Jail, Keraniganj
Contract No. 01769970110

GD-1285

LOCAL FILMS LINE UP for Eid-ul-Azha release

This Eid-ul-Azha, local theatres gear up for a rare showdown as eight distinct Bangladeshi films, spanning thrillers, dramas, and comebacks, each staking its claim at the box office.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As the Eid-ul-Azha holidays approach, Bangladesh's film industry is preparing for a rare moment of cinematic abundance. For the first time in years, moviegoers will have an unusually rich selection of local films—from action thrillers and romantic dramas to mystery and satire—all vying for attention at the box office.

The stage is set for an Eid showdown not just between stars, but between genres, ambitions, and visions of what Bangladeshi cinema can be.

At the centre of the buzz is *Taandob*, a political thriller directed by Raihan Rafi. Superstar Shakib Khan leads the cast alongside Jaya Ahsan and Sabila Nur in a story about an orchestrated attack on a television station.

High-octane and unapologetically dramatic, the film blends suspense with the urgency of newsroom chaos. Rafi has hinted



to play,” Badhan told The Daily Star. The film marks her first role as a law enforcement officer and could signal a new era of strong, nuanced female leads in Bangladeshi thrillers.

Mosharraf Karim, one of Bangladesh's most versatile actors, returns to the big screen with *Insaaf*, an action drama that explores the blurry line between justice and retribution.

Co-starring Sariful Razz and Tasnia Farin, *Insaaf* comes with all the trappings of a commercial potboiler, but early buzz suggests it also carries political undertones. Directed by Sanjoy Somadder, the film seems poised to appeal to both mainstream and more discerning audiences.

Adding to the Eid mix is *Neel Chokro*, a family-friendly thriller from director Mithu Khan. The film marks Arifin Shuvoo's much-anticipated return after a quiet spell. Paired with rising talent Mondera Chakroborty, Shuvoo's role promises suspense layered with emotional complexity. While the plot has been kept under wraps, promotional material hints at a narrative grounded in memory, loss, and moral choices.

Meanwhile, veteran actor Zahid Hasan steps back into cinema with *Utshob*, directed by Tanim Noor. Known for his stage and television work, the actor hasn't headlined a major film in years, and his return has stirred nostalgia among fans.

For audiences looking for something softer, *Tagar*, starring Puja Chery and Ador Azad, offers a romantic drama tinged with melodrama. Directed by Aalok Hasan, the film leans into traditional love-story tropes, but its sleek visuals and youthful cast might attract a younger crowd.

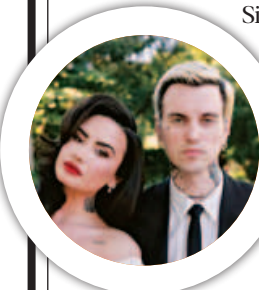
And then there's *Pinik*, a revenge drama led by Shobnom Bubly, also featuring Ador Azad. The trailer hints at a personal vendetta playing out against a dark urban backdrop—gritty, loud, and emotionally charged. Director Zahid Jewel has described it as “a woman's journey through rage and resilience.”

Interestingly, *Utshob* is also the title of another Eid release—this one starring Sunerah Binte Kamal. Known for her Bangladesh National Film Award-winning performance in *No Dorai*, Sunerah's return is eagerly awaited.

Tanim Noor's film—separate from Hasan's version—focuses on family dynamics and identity, though plot specifics are still under wraps. Whether the title overlaps is a coincidence or clever marketing remains to be seen, but it certainly adds a layer of intrigue.

With eight diverse films lined up, this Eid is shaping up to be a rare moment of experimentation and ambition in Bangladeshi cinema. Whether audiences are drawn by big names, daring stories, or fresh faces, the box office will serve as the ultimate jury.

Demi Lovato weds musician Jordan Lutes



Singer and actor Demi Lovato has tied the knot with Canadian musician Jordan “Jutes” Lutes in an intimate ceremony held on Sunday, May 25, in California.

The wedding, covered exclusively by Vogue, began at 4 pm (PT) and featured Lovato in a custom pearl-white Vivienne Westwood gown with a corset bodice and cathedral-style veil. For the reception, she changed into another Westwood design—“The Audrey”—an ivory satin column dress adorned with hand-applied pearls.

The celebration was planned by celebrity event organiser Mindy Weiss. The couple, who met in 2022 while working on Lovato's album *Holy Fvck*, got engaged in December 2023, with Lutes proposing with a pear-shaped diamond ring. The wedding marks a significant chapter in their relationship, which Lovato has described as the “best years” of her life.

‘Ityadi’ set to air new episode filmed in Jhenaidah



Popular magazine show *Ityadi*, written and hosted by Hanif Sanket, returns with a new episode filmed in Jhenaidah, airing on MTV on Friday, May 30, at 8 pm. Despite inclement weather, thousands gathered to witness the live shoot.

The episode features a folk song by Selim Chowdhury and Tasiba based on the works of poet Pagla Kanai, and another by Monir Khan. It opens with a dance segment introducing Jhenaidah, performed by over a hundred dancers.

A local quiz leads to a short drama on banana and betel leaf, while reports highlight Dattanagar Agricultural Farm and regional history. Comedic sketches address social issues, including *Poster Nirjaton*, *Poshu-Pakhi Preeti*, and *Facebooker Sangbad Sheba*, among others. The episode features an ensemble cast and retains the show's signature interactive and informative format.

NEWS

HC rejects writ

FROM PAGE 12

“How can the recommendations of the commission be challenged by a writ petition? The recommendations should be left to the government.”

Aneek also argued that the petitioner lacked locus standi (the legal standing to bring such a petition), as he is not directly aggrieved by the recommendations. “Therefore, the writ was not maintainable and should be summarily rejected.”

Fawzia Karim Firoze, a senior Supreme Court lawyer, also opposed the petition, supporting Aneek's arguments.

In a press release, Shirin Sharmin Haque, chair of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, said, “All members of the commission are committed to ensuring women's rights and welcome rational and constructive discussions and criticism with all stakeholders. We are satisfied with the court's decision [to reject the writ petition] and call on all relevant stakeholders to work together towards a just and equal society so that our recommendations can be meaningfully discussed.”

Lawyers representing the commission also expressed satisfaction with the court's decision. “We, as lawyers instructed by the Chair of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, are pleased to note that a divisional bench of the High Court, comprising Justice Fatema Najib and Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi, has summarily rejected Writ Petition No-7426 of 2025, on the grounds of it being premature. The writ had sought to challenge the constitutionality of certain recommendations of the commission, even though those had neither been adopted nor implemented by the interim government.”

The statement, signed by Supreme Court lawyers Sara Hossain, Rashna Imam, Qazi Zahed Iqbal, Manzur Al-Matin, Abeda Gulrukh and Priya Ahsan Chowdhury, concluded, “We hope there will be no further efforts to waste the court's valuable time on this matter, and that all concerned stakeholders engage in reasoned and constructive debate on the commission's recommendations to ensure rights and justice for women.”

22% of revenue to go towards interest

FROM PAGE 12

once provided loans at less than 1 percent interest rate. Now, loans from Japan come at nearly 2 percent interest rate.

Besides, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are now providing a portion of their loans at market-based interest rates.

As the taka depreciated against the US dollar in the past three years, the interest burden against foreign loans soared in terms of taka.

The average exchange rate rose more than Tk 120 per dollar this fiscal year, up from Tk 111 last fiscal year.

The Bangladesh Bank's recent policy rate increases have contributed to rising interest payments on domestic loans.

The interest rate for the government's domestic borrowing from banks and non-bank sources

Japanese cabinet

FROM PAGE 12

skilled workforce to Japan; trade and investments; and with the heads of Japanese companies and the Japanese youth.

He will also address an audience at the Soka University of Japan, which will confer an “Honorary Doctorate Degree” on Yunus.

Besides, he will attend a community event at the Bangladesh embassy in Japan. Some major Japanese media, including Nikkei Media, Asahi TV, Nippon TV, Asahi Shimbun, and NHK, will interview the chief adviser.

During the bilateral meeting with the Japanese PM, heads of JICA and JETRO, the chief adviser will discuss the present status of trade and investments and the future potentials, conditions for business environment, according to Siddique.

He added that the two countries will sign seven memoranda of understanding in the areas of investment, energy, and technology.

“We also expect to sign an exchange of notes on budget support and the improvement of Joydebpur-Ishwardi dual-gauge rail line to a double line.”

Bilateral trade stands at \$4 billion, and the two countries are working towards inking an Economic Partnership Agreement by the end of this year.

through treasury bonds and bills also increased between 10 and 12 percent, which was 8 percent until 2023.

The country's interest payments soared as the government borrowed heavily, particularly for mega projects, often without proper research, said Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director at the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development.

This borrowing was justified by the relatively safe debt-to-GDP ratio at the time, which led to a significant increase in debt, he said.

“Borrowing was often driven by political decisions without proper feasibility studies being conducted, leading to widespread corruption. Consequently, the loans were not utilised effectively or efficiently.”

As a result, these projects are not generating sufficient returns to repay the loans, which ultimately becomes

a burden on the budget.

Some of the loans taken in recent years have short repayment periods, further exacerbating the financial strain and due to high interest payments, the government's fiscal space has been severely constrained, he added.

“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,” said Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud last week.

A key objective of the interim government is to reduce the country's debt risk from “moderate” to “lower”, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star last week.

“It's not that we won't borrow from foreign and local sources, but we will bring the amount down,” he added.

Hamas agrees

FROM PAGE 12

“inhumane” and “senseless” war, while aid groups said the trickle of aid is not nearly enough to staunch the hunger and health crises.

In Gaza City, civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that an early-morning Israeli strike on the Fahmi Al-Jarjawi school, where displaced people were sheltering, killed “at least 33, with dozens of injured, mostly children, including several women”.

Another strike killed at least 19 people “after the warplanes targeted the Abd Rabbo family's home early this morning in the town of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip”, Bassal said.

Israel has expanded its Gaza offensive, activating tens of thousands of reservists as it aims for the defeat of Hamas, reports AFP.

It issued an evacuation warning for parts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis yesterday, following what it said were rocket launches from the area as the country prepared to celebrate Jerusalem Day.

The Israeli military said yesterday that over “the past 48 hours, the (air force) struck over 200 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including terrorists, weapon storage facilities, sniper and anti-tank missile posts, tunnel shafts, and additional terrorist infrastructure sites”.

BNP welcomes army

FROM PAGE 12

At a high-level gathering at Dhaka Cantonment on May 21, Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz Zaman said the national election should be held by December this year.

“The army chief's statement has reassured the nation. He has said the military will play no role in governing the country. The nation has received this message well.”

The BNP leader further said that everyone wants elections, and so if a roadmap is provided, the country will enter a democratic transition.

Saying that the interim government should be able to depart with dignity, he opined that after a government departs, it is never desirable that it be on the receiving end of all the blame.

“Governments will come, and they

will go. But there must be amicable relations with all parties.”

Meanwhile, Khasru reiterated that the media in Bangladesh would not be able to properly carry out their duty until democracy is restored.

“Whoever is there undemocratically -- at some point, they want to keep the media under pressure to maintain their power.

“Our unity should be for democracy and for the restoration of democratic, constitutional, and political rights, which inherently include media freedom.”

He emphasised that the media plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability.

“Just as accountability exists in an elected parliament, the media is also another part of this. They also ensure accountability to the people.”

Men flee village

FROM PAGE 2

from the ruins, while elderly women wept over the destruction and loss.

Not a single man was in sight. The women said their male relatives fled after the attack, and some only return briefly during the day to clean up. They sleep elsewhere for safety.

According to Shriti Biswas, whose home was attacked first, the violence began around 6:30pm as a programme, where 700 people were invited, was underway at her home.

She said that due to music being played on loudspeakers, the killing and the chaos that took place only a few hundred feet away went unnoticed by her and the guests.

“Just before dusk, four men barged in and began smashing everything. They beat our guests and overturned our cooking pots. When I asked what they wanted, they kicked me to the ground and asked for my husband. When I said he wasn't home, they attacked my nephew Sagar Biswas instead,” said Shriti.

“They burned at least 10 maunds of rice, stole our money and jewellery, and torched beds, TVs, harmoniums, khol, flutes which were among about 30 musical instruments prepared for the event,” she added.

“Since that evening, I couldn't contact my husband and son,” she added.

“The fire service arrived after 10:30pm, long after everything was destroyed,” she said, breaking down in tears.

Another victim, Shiuli Biswas, was in her burnt house with two children and

her elderly mother-in-law. Her husband also fled on the night of the attack.

“They took one of our motorcycles and burned another. They looted Tk 2.5 lakh in cash, three sets of gold jewellery, two TVs, 30 maunds of boiled paddy, and sacks of rice stored in the house. Everything is gone,” she said.

She received two blankets, Tk 6,000, and some food from the Union Parishad. “But we don't want aid. We want peace and safety.”

The story is more or less the same for every affected household -- men on the run, homes gutted, and women traumatised.

According to victims and locals, a few men began the attack around 6:30pm. Soon, around 150 people on 40-50 motorcycles and two cars joined in. They attacked the village homes first, then moved to Sundoli Bazar, where they looted and vandalised shops.

Locals also allege that some opportunists took part in the looting.

Victims say firefighters, aided by police and army protection, arrived at the scene at least 4/5 hours after the attack began.

Locals said Tariqul had a dispute over a shrimp enclosure lease in the Bil Kachurabad area. His rivals allegedly lured him to the house of Piltu Biswas, a resident of Dahor Moshiahathi, where he was killed.

Abhaynagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Alim confirmed that no arrests have been made and no case filed. He said the situation is now under control.

THE SYMBIOTIC FUTURE

How AI will reshape, not replace workforce in Bangladesh

AI isn't just the next wave of disruption—it's the next wave of opportunity.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

In such a future, AI elevates humans. And for Bangladesh, where the workforce is agile, ambitious, and adaptable, this represents a tremendous opportunity. To realise this vision, we must invest in our people. That means prioritising skilling, reskilling, and upskilling across sectors.

ARUNDHATI BHATTACHARYA

The evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) has been one of the most defining narratives of our generation. Once the stuff of science fiction, AI has swiftly moved from labs and research papers into everyday life. From enabling virtual assistants to powering financial services and healthcare diagnostics, AI today is not just transforming how we work - it's redefining what work means.

We are standing at the threshold of an era where AI won't replace humans, but will work alongside us, unlocking new frontiers of productivity, creativity, and impact.

Change is not new—we've been here before As AI reshapes industries globally, we see two dominant narratives emerging - one rooted in fear, and another in optimism. The fear is simple: AI will take our jobs. The optimism, however, sees AI as a force that will change the nature of work, augment human capabilities, and create new opportunities.

History offers a helpful perspective. From the industrial revolution to the rise of computers, fears of job displacement have always accompanied technological breakthroughs. Yet time and again, new technologies have given rise to new industries, redefined existing ones, and elevated the role of the human worker. The typewriter enabled the growth of administrative careers. The internet gave rise to the digital economy. AI will be no different.

AI might eliminate some repetitive, manual roles, but in doing so, it will pave the way for more meaningful, higher-value jobs. Roles that demand human creativity, empathy, critical thinking, and strategic judgment will not only endure but thrive.

Bangladesh's digital foundation is taking shape

While this unfolds not just nationally but also in the global context, there's no denying that AI can deliver a unique and beneficial

value proposition for the world, particularly Bangladesh. The country is well-positioned to seize this moment. With over half of the households in the country having access to the internet, a digitally ambitious government, and a youthful population, the country is already laying the foundation for a thriving AI-powered economy.

From textile factories experimenting with automation to financial institutions leveraging data intelligence, key sectors are leaning into change. The expanding startup ecosystem, growing focus on digital literacy, and ongoing improvements in connectivity, signal a nation ready to integrate AI into its economic fabric.

Agents and automation

As digital adoption grows, so do customer expectations. Bangladeshi consumers increasingly expect personalisation, speed, and relevance in every interaction. For businesses, this means rethinking how customer service is delivered at scale and anticipating the future.

Organisations will be increasingly challenged in meeting these raised expectations. They will have to rapidly upskill teams to deliver personalised customer service on the go. Since expanding teams apace with the growing customer base might not make immediate business sense, maintaining the levels of personalisation will emerge as another challenge. The answer will lie in not just enabling employees with greater productivity, but also greater customer focus in every interaction—a multiplier effect that can only be achieved through technology.

Agentic productivity

AI agents are poised to drive exponential transformation for organisations, enhancing team capabilities, boosting productivity, and significantly elevating the quality of services delivered by employees.

Here is how AI agents can do this. Firstly, they will take away the repetitive tasks that do not require creative thinking, such as routine

KYC during customer onboarding. Second, AI agents can serve as a source of standardised knowledge, vital in a job market where talent is highly mobile. And third, AI agents can enable teams to act assuredly in complex situations.

Further, as a completely digital tool, an AI agent leaves a traceable and accurate trail of its actions. Rigorous and regular audits of these footprints and the outcomes can continuously improve the AI agent, making it even more empowering.

Agents can also help highly trained experts do their work more easily. Agents' usefulness for diverse roles and situations is because they are easily customisable. You can create agents as per your needs, requirements and, crucially, your own guardrails.

Bringing AI closer to everyday work

As a region, South Asia is no stranger to resilience. Bangladesh, in particular, has shown time and again that it can rise to meet the future head-on. Now, imagine a textile worker leveraging AI to detect fabric inconsistencies, or AI agents like Salesforce's Agentforce providing round-the-clock support, swiftly resolving routine queries and enabling service representatives to focus on more complex, high-value interactions. Picture educators using AI agents to streamline operations, personalise learning journeys, and unlock new pathways for student success. This is not a distant vision, it's the near future of Bangladesh.

In such a future, AI elevates humans. And for Bangladesh, where the workforce is agile, ambitious, and adaptable, this represents a tremendous opportunity. To realise this vision, we must invest in our people. That means prioritising skilling, reskilling, and upskilling across sectors.

Education is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Bangladesh, and this foundation offers a powerful springboard for the future. By building on its strong academic ethos and expanding access to digital learning, Bangladesh is well-positioned to prepare its workforce for the jobs of the future. With focused investments in technical education and industry-aligned training, the country holds tremendous potential to lead in the digital economy.

Preparing for what's next

Ultimately, the conversation around AI is not about AI versus humans, it's about AI *with* humans. The real opportunity lies in building ecosystems that bring together technology, talent, and trust. And in that partnership lies the promise of progress. The ecosystem must cooperate to ensure responsible AI adoption, prioritising robust AI governance frameworks and safety measures. This could include establishing standards for data usage, auditing AI algorithms for fairness and bias, and ensuring that AI technologies align with our societal values and laws.

AI continues to evolve, the choice before us is clear - we can either view it as a threat, or we can embrace it as an opportunity to reimagine work, empower our people, and build a more inclusive economy.

Arundhati Bhattacharya is the President and CEO of Salesforce South Asia.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

BRAC University

Assistant Manager, IT
Deadline: June 12



Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's degree in Computer Science or a related field from a reputed university, with relevant experience in IT support, systems administration, or network management.

Minimum experience: 5 years



Siemens Energy

Commercial Project Manager
Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

🔗 Degree in Finance/Economics/Business/ Accounting or any relevant field.

Minimum experience: 3-5 years

iDE Bangladesh

Technical Specialist,
Clean Energy Sector
Development, CCSU
Deadline: May 31



Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's or Master's degree in EEE, Renewable Energy, Energy Management, Engineering, or other related disciplines.

Minimum experience: 4-5 years

Sheltech (Pvt.) Ltd.

Senior Executive/
Assistant Manager,
Brand & PR
Deadline: June 15



Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's degree in Marketing, Communications, or a related field, with proven experience in SEO, SEM, and brand-building activities.

Minimum experience: 3-6 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



“Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.”

FRANCIS BACON

From chaos to cohesion: winning at FGDs the smart way

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

If you have ever sat in a group of ten nervous candidates, all trying to out-charm, out-smart, and out-volume one another for a single job, you have likely been a gladiator in the corporate coliseum known as the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Welcome to the recruiter's favourite social experiment: where intellect meets improvisation, diplomacy clashes with dominance, and someone always starts with, “Hi everyone, let me begin by...”. Here, some candidates come in ready to bulldoze through any argument with unwavering confidence, some sit silently waiting for a divine moment of inspiration, while others nervously rehearse that one line they came up with the night before, waiting for the perfect moment that never arrives.

Commonly used by banks, multinationals, and FMCGs to test candidates for management trainee programs, FGDs are less about solving a case and more about putting your soft skills under a microscope. It is less of a Harvard case method and more of a business-themed episode of ‘Survivor’, minus the tropical setting and with higher stakes. In theory, FGDs are meant to assess your ability to work in random groups, communicate effectively, think critically, and handle pressure. For recruiters, it is a chance to observe how candidates behave under pressure, how they interact, and most importantly, how they think; not alone, but as part of a team. In reality, they often become a chaotic blend of polite interruptions, forced smiles, and the

occasional philosophical deep-dive from someone trying just a bit too hard to stand out.

Performing well in an FGD is not about dominating the discussion, quoting Kotler, or dazzling everyone with a mini-MBA lecture. It is about balance. It is about knowing when to speak when to listen, and when to artfully disagree without declaring verbal war.

Understanding the setup

Ten candidates. One abstract case. Twenty minutes. And a couple of poker-faced assessors observing who naturally leads, who builds consensus, and who derails the entire thing by spiralling into a monologue. Some FGDs throw candidates into market-entry simulations, while others dish out ethical dilemmas or public policy conundrums. The content varies, but the behavioural cues are what really matter.

Remember, you are not there to solve the problem perfectly but to be seen as someone people want on their team. To ace an FGD, you do not need to be the loudest, the smartest, or the one with the most bullet points. You just need to be the most intentional. If you are saying “synergy” and “scalability” in the same sentence without knowing what either actually means, you are not impressing anyone. Clear, simple communication always wins.

Talk, but do not take hostages

The biggest myth about FGDs is that speaking more equals scoring more. In reality, recruiters are usually not looking for screen time; instead, they are watching



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

for clarity, brevity, and influence. Great participants often jump in early not to dominate but to set direction. Starting the discussion is great; but only if you have something worthwhile to say. Jumping in with “Let me start” and then rambling through disconnected thoughts will not get you anywhere.

A strong opening sounds more like, “Let's first identify the key issues to be addressed”: calm, clear, and collaborative. Then, listen and absorb what others say, acknowledging and building on it. Can you keep your cool when things spiral? Can you lead without dominating? These are the questions that matter, and recruiters are watching for answers, not in what you say, but in how you say it.

The danger of the debate club veteran

You know this type. Arms folded, eyebrows

arched, and ready to demolish your argument with just three buzzwords. These are the classic FGD warriors who mistake intensity for intellect and see the discussion as a zero-sum game, where for one idea to shine, the others must be shot down. But FGDs are not competitive debates. They are collaborative problem-solving tasks. As such, aggression masquerading as confidence often backfires. While disagreements may earn a few nods, quite often it gets marked as inflexibility unless it is quickly followed up with a good rationale and openness to feedback from others. Always look to build on others' points because it helps you introduce new ideas without dismissing others, and that is something recruiters appreciate; people who drive discussions forward with the team, not in spite of them.

The silent saint vs. the anxious overachiever

Two characters almost always show up. The silent saint, who says nothing until the final minute and drops a golden insight like divine intervention. And the anxious overachiever, who speaks after every sentence, paraphrases what has already been said, and somehow still manages to bring up their personal experiences. Neither strategy works in isolation. One risks being forgotten, while the other risks becoming white noise.

Your goal should be to participate a few times meaningfully. That is enough to get noticed without being overbearing. And do not underestimate the value of facilitation. Make eye contact, refer to others by name if possible, and try to nudge the conversation forward. If things get messy, and they often do, offering structure, like suggesting a quick vote or recap, can make you look like a hero.

What they are really looking for

Recruiters are not just looking for confidence. They are also sniffing out ego. They want someone who can hold their own without steamrolling the group. Someone with analytical clarity who also encourages quieter members to share. Someone who can lead but also adapt. You could be wrong, and still make it if you are thoughtful, self-aware, and show strong team dynamics. But you could be 100% right and still fail if you come off as rigid. Remember: people hire those they can imagine working with at 11:30 PM the night before an important launch.

BPL teams to get ticket sales revenue

SPORTS REPORTER

The governing council of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) yesterday announced that franchisees who have complied with player payment obligations last season will receive a portion of ticket sales revenue.

The decision was made during a BPL governing council meeting yesterday, which centered on the issue of outstanding payments owed to both local and international players who were part of the players' draft last season.

"The Governing Council has agreed in principle to allocate a portion of ticket sales revenue to franchisees... This is the first time that the BCB will distribute revenue from ticket sales to BPL franchisees," BCB said in a press release yesterday.

"The disbursement, scheduled ahead of Eid-ul-Adha, will be conditional upon the verification of payment acknowledgments from the respective players," it added.

The BCB has allocated Tk 55 lakh each for the four teams that qualified for the playoffs while the remaining three teams would get Tk 45 lakh each.

However, the final disbursement will be based on the percentage of outstanding player payments each team has cleared relative to their eligible share.

The governing council also warned legal actions against franchisees if they "default on payment obligations despite repeated official notices".

As per BCB guidelines, the franchisees had to clear all their dues by March 8. But it is learnt that most of the franchisees are yet to complete the payments of their players, coaching staff as well as the support staff.



Rishad Hossain, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Shakib Al Hasan – the three Bangladeshi players enjoy a cheerful moment following Lahore Qalandars' thrilling six-wicket win against Quetta Gladiators in the final of the PSL on Sunday. Although Shakib is no more part of the Bangladesh team, the other two Qalandars members have already joined the Tigers' camp in Lahore for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Pakistan, beginning on May 28.

PHOTO: LAHORE QALANDARS

‘Want to keep as many clean sheets as possible for Bangladesh’

With 15 clean sheets in 21 games in the Federation Cup and the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), Abahani goalkeeper Mitul Marma has been the standout performer this season. Mitul, who has conceded only eight goals throughout the season, will be joining the national team's preparations ahead of their Singapore match next month after their final league game today. In an interview with *The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman*, the 21-year-old keeper talked about his performance, improvement, the domestic league, and the national football team. Below are excerpts from the conversation:

The Daily Star (DS): What has been the recipe behind your success this season?

Mitul Marma (MM): The improvement in my performance is also linked to the national football team, where our aim is to keep clean sheets. To achieve that, I must perform well at the club level. When I joined Abahani, I was determined to concede as few goals as possible because Abahani, unfortunately, couldn't form the squad they initially intended. So, we local players pledged to start the season like a champion team by giving our best.

DS: How does it feel to have kept so many clean sheets?

MM: I am not the one to be given sole credit for this, as it was a collective effort. From defenders to attackers, everyone defended well throughout the season, so I was under less pressure.

DS: What has been the difference between this season's Mitul Marma and last season's?

MM: The difference is my mentality, which developed thanks to the national team's

head coach [Javier Cabrera] and goalkeeping coach [Nayan]. I discussed my strengths and weaknesses with them and worked on improving during the national camp. Abahani's goalkeeping coach also helped me a lot.

DS: How competitive has the league been this time in the absence of two big teams – Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC?

MM: Despite the absence of Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel, I think the league was competitive. It became a three-way race among Abahani, Mohammedan, and Kings – unlike previous seasons when only one team dominated. The race for runners up is still open going into the final round.

DS: Do you have any regrets for not winning the Federation Cup and the BPL despite coming close?

MM: After working hard all season, of course, we regret not winning a trophy. But I think becoming runners-up isn't a small achievement either. We



will carry the regret of not winning the Federation Cup for a long time. We lost the Cup due to a disruption in the momentum during the final.

DS: From being the third-choice national team goalkeeper to

being the number one – how did you make it happen?

MM: I believe hard work is the foundation of all achievements, and I never stopped working. I also learned from senior goalkeepers. I think the turning point was the Asian Games in 2023. After our match against China, the coach [Cabrera] told me, "You are now ready for the national team, and you will play for the senior team." Since then, I've tried to give my best. But I don't consider myself the number one goalkeeper – I just focus on doing my best in every match.

DS: Is it possible to translate your domestic performance to the upcoming Asian Cup qualifying matches, considering Bangladesh conceded over 20 goals in the FIFA World Cup qualifiers?

MM: We already kept a clean sheet against India in our first match. My target is to keep as many clean sheets as possible for the national team and help us win. However, there is a big difference between domestic and

international matches.

DS: What's on your mind ahead of the Singapore match on June 10?

MM: First, we are all preparing ourselves by playing in domestic competitions. Hamza Choudhury has already played one match, and Shamit Shome is expected to join us for the Singapore game. So, we will be stronger than we were against India. The inclusion of midfielders like Hamza and Shamit will give us an edge in creating more scoring chances. However, the match will be tough because Singapore also have two or three quality players like Hamza bhai. But we want to capitalise on our home advantage. I think we have a good chance to win.

DS: How do you feel seeing the excitement around Bangladesh's match against Singapore?

MM: I feel really proud that the people of Bangladesh are showing such interest in football, which wasn't common before. That support inspires us to do something great for the nation.

Inter jerseys fly off shelves in Marseille

REUTERS, Paris

In Marseille, the only French city with a European Cup to its name, an unexpected fashion trend has emerged – Inter Milan jerseys are flying off the shelves as Olympique de Marseille supporters back the Italian side against their bitter rivals Paris St Germain in Saturday's Champions League final.

Inter shirts have been selling fast in the port city, which celebrated OM's Champions League triumph in 1993.

"It's crazy, everyone wants the Inter jersey. All year long, there's no demand, nobody wants this jersey. And now, it's like the whole city of Marseille has turned Interista. We're really going to pray for Inter to win," Ismael, a vendor at a major sports shop in Marseille, told French TV channel BFM.

The son of former OM president Bernard Tapie, who led the club to the 1993 title, said he would support Inter as well.

"A true OM supporter can't be happy if PSG wins the Champions League. For France, it would be good for PSG to win it. But me, I'm supporting Inter Milan. Ask any real OM fan – we're all fully behind Inter," Laurent Tapie was quoted as saying by French media.

In 2020, OM fans celebrated at the Old Port when PSG lost to Bayern Munich in the Champions League final.

Isco ‘proud to be back for Spain’

AFP, Madrid

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente called up Isco on Monday for the Nations League final four, six years after the midfielder's last appearance for La Roja.

The 33-year-old has enjoyed a superb season with Real Betis, helping them reach the Conference League final where they face Chelsea on Wednesday.

Euro 2024 winners Spain face France in the semifinal in Stuttgart on June 5 before a potential final against Germany or Portugal.

"It was the opportune moment for Isco to come and give something to us," De la Fuente told reporters. "He will be adding a lot – if not, he would not have been in the list."

Out of favour for several seasons at Real Madrid, former Malaga playmaker Isco moved to Sevilla and then Betis in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

At the Benito Villamarin stadium he has rebuilt his career and become a vital cog in Manuel Pellegrini's attractive attacking set-up.

"I'm happy to return after so many years, it's a nice objective to be able to play again with my national team," Isco told Real Betis's in-house media.

"I'm proud to get back there, that means that things have been going well."

Real Madrid's new defensive signing from Bournemouth, Dean Huijsen, who impressed in the quarterfinal win over the Netherlands, returns to the squad, while Barcelona midfielders Gavi and Fermin Lopez also make the cut.

Teenage winger Lamine Yamal and playmaker Pedri are the key figures, along with Athletic Bilbao attacker Nico Williams.



‘Beginning of a new era’

REUTERS, Madrid

Xabi Alonso said he was convinced he can achieve great things at Real Madrid after he was unveiled as manager of the LaLiga club on Monday.

Alonso was appointed manager on Sunday, returning to the Santiago Bernabeu where he spent six seasons as a player and won several trophies.

The 43-year-old had been in charge of Bayer Leverkusen, who he guided to a double last season as they won the German Cup and lifted their first Bundesliga title without losing a game.

"Without a doubt, this is a very special day for me. A day that I will have marked in my calendar for life. I am very happy to be here, in what I feel is my home," said Alonso, who will begin his tenure on June 1 ahead of the Club World Cup.

"The bond with Madrid has never ceased to exist and, since I entered Valdebebas (training centre) an hour and a half ago, that feeling has been reborn. I have the feeling that this is the beginning of a new era..."

"We have a great team, we have fantastic players and a very good potential. That gives me reason to come here with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. We have the conviction that we can achieve important things, worthy of Real Madrid and these European Cups."

Alonso takes charge of a Real side who had a sub-par season by their own lofty standards, finishing

second in LaLiga behind Barcelona, who also beat them in the Spanish Super Cup and Copa del Rey finals.

They were knocked out of the Champions League as holders in the quarter-finals by Arsenal.

Alonso has signed a three-year contract until June 2028 and replaces Carlo Ancelotti, who took charge of his last game on Saturday.

In his address at the presentation, the Spaniard paid tribute to his predecessor and former coach.

"Before I start talking about the new era, I don't want to forget to talk about the era that has just ended," Alonso said.

"Carlo was my coach, a great person and a huge influence. Without his mastery, I probably wouldn't be here. I take over and carry on his legacy with great honour and pride.

"I hope to live up to expectations and be able to take the club to all the places we all believe we can."

Alonso joined Real in 2009 from Liverpool and made 236 appearances, winning a LaLiga title, two Copa del Rey trophies and the club's long-awaited 10th European crown.

He began his coaching career at Real's youth academy where he managed the Under-14 team during the 2018-19 season, winning the league and the Champions tournament.

He took charge of Real Sociedad's reserve team before making the step up to take the Leverkusen job.



Barcelona players celebrate a successful season with a 3-0 win at Athletic Bilbao on Sunday in their final match, with Robert Lewandowski netting twice to pass his 100 goal milestone for the club. The veteran Polish forward reached 27 league goals for the season, finishing four behind Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

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BNP welcomes army stance on polls, democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said yesterday that his party appreciates the army's stance on holding elections without delay and restoring democracy in the country.

"When the Bangladesh Army speaks of democracy and elections, nothing could be more welcoming than that."

He made the remarks while addressing the 30th founding anniversary celebration programme of the Dhaka Reporters' Unity on its premises in the capital.

Khasru said that whereas armies are known for seizing power, the chief of the Bangladesh Army is calling for a democratic nation run by a government elected by the people.

"I've never heard any army chiefs say such things before."



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A traffic police constable resorts to using a piece of rope stretched across the street to halt traffic, as drivers often ignore his hand signals. The photo was taken yesterday near the High Court in the capital.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

\$1B SOFT LOAN Japanese cabinet to decide soon Says its ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has been and will continue to be a faithful development partner of Bangladesh, Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Saida Shinichi has said ahead of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' four-day Tokyo visit.

Shinichi said Japan is eagerly awaiting a cabinet decision on Bangladesh's request for \$1 billion soft loan as budgetary support.

"We are really expecting the agreement as soon as possible and the official announcement to be celebrated by the two leaders," Shinichi told a press briefing at the embassy yesterday.

Yunus will be leaving Dhaka for Tokyo early tomorrow. During his visit, he will present the keynote at the 30th Nikkei Forum Future of Asia. Asian political and business leaders and academics will join the conference.

On May 30, he will hold a bilateral meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, acting foreign secretary Md Ruhul Alam Siddique told a separate media briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday.

During the visit, the chief adviser will hold meetings with Japan Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship League President Taro Aso, Nippon Foundation President Yohei Sasakawa, JICA President Tanaka Akihiko, JETRO President Kimura Fukunari, he said.

Yunus will attend three seminars -- on human resources development and recruitment of Bangladeshis

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Non-native plants, animals cost Europe over \$1.5tn

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Non-native plants and animals cost Europe over \$1.5 trillion in the last six decades, according to a new study, indicating the global economic impact of such species could be several times higher than previously thought.

The research, published in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution, assessed data on 162 invasive species and their potential damage to various countries.

Previous studies have shown that invasive alien species pose a threat to biodiversity, ecosystem services, and economies. By one estimate, they have contributed to 60 percent of recorded global extinctions.

However, previous estimates of the monetary impact of invasive species were based on only a few documented costs from a limited range of countries, researchers said.

The latest study combines the estimated costs, including damage to agriculture, at the national level for 162 invasive species with models of where the species are distributed around the world.

The analysis maps the impact of species such as the Asian tiger mosquito, the tree of heaven and the American bullfrog, and estimates monetary costs incurred by their spread in other countries, including 78 nations for which no data was previously available such as Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Cyprus, and Egypt.

FY26 BUDGET

22% of revenue to go towards interest payment

Extra Tk 8,000cr for interest payment this fiscal year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

As much as Tk 122,000 crore is expected to be allocated for interest payment in the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which is about 22 percent of the total revenue budget.

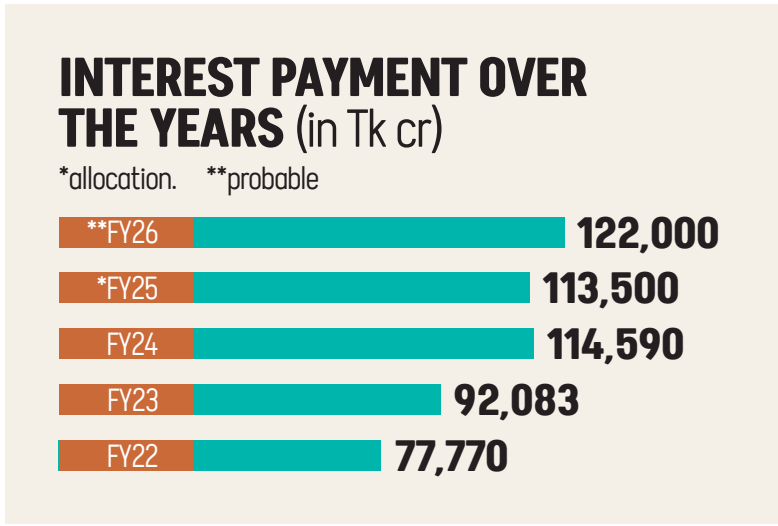
The revenue budget is likely to be Tk 560,000 crore, according to the draft estimation by the finance ministry.

Not only in the upcoming budget, the interest payment against local and foreign loans would increase in this fiscal year's revised budget too as a result of a large number of outstanding debts, interest rate hikes and the devaluation of taka against the dollar.

The allocation for interest payment is likely to be revised upwards by about 7 percent to Tk 121,500 crore this fiscal year, according to the draft estimation.

In the first six months of fiscal 2024-25, the interest payment rose 27 percent year-on-year to Tk 75,902 crore.

Interest payments against external loans would continue to soar in the coming years thanks to Bangladesh's graduation from the least-developed country bracket



and elevated benchmark interest rates in advanced economies, according to the finance division's Medium-Term Macroeconomic Policy Statement.

Usually, interest payments commence once the loan is utilised. But after the pandemic, the government has been taking large amounts of budget support every year, which is disbursed immediately and the repayments kick in.

Many mega projects have been

completed and some are nearing completion. The principal amount of the loans for those projects are yet to be repaid but the interest payments have been paid.

As the per capita income has increased in recent years, the multilateral and bilateral lenders have increased the interest rate. Many of them have been lending at a market-based interest rate, which is high enough.

Take the case of Japan, which

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

WOMEN'S REFORM REPORT

HC rejects writ challenging some recommendations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summarily rejected a writ petition challenging the legality of several recommendations made in the Women's Affairs Reform Commission's report.

The bench of Justice Fatema Najib and Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi dismissed the petition, terming it "premature" as the recommendations have not yet been implemented.

On May 19, writ petitioner Rowshan Ali, a Supreme Court lawyer, argued that the proposals in chapters three, four, six, 10, 11 and 12 of the commission's report conflict with Islamic Shariah, offend religious sentiments, and are inconsistent with the constitution.

He urged the court to direct the formation of a committee comprising constitutional experts, Islamic scholars and civil society representatives to review and advise on any future reforms concerning religious and family laws.

Rowshan filed the petition as a public interest litigation on May 4, stating that chapter 11 of the report proposes equal inheritance rights for men and women, which he claimed contradicts provisions in the Holy Quran.

He also objected to the report's recommendation to ban polygamy, arguing that it is a permitted provision under Islamic law. Referring to article 41 of the constitution, he contended that such a restriction would infringe on the right to freely practise religion.

Appearing for the state, Additional Attorney General Aneek R Haque opposed the petition and urged the court to reject it, arguing that the commission's recommendations were still at a premature stage and that any cause of action would arise only if the government decides to adopt them.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Hamas agrees to US proposal on Gaza truce

Says Palestinian official; 52 killed in Israeli strikes

AGENCIES

Hamas has agreed to a proposal by US special envoy Steve Witkoff for a Gaza ceasefire, a Palestinian official close to the group told Reuters yesterday, paving the way for a possible end to the war.

The new proposal, which sees the release of ten hostages and 70 days of truce, was received by Hamas through mediators.

"The proposal includes the release of ten living Israeli hostages held by Hamas in two groups in return for a 70-day ceasefire and a partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip," the source said.

The proposal also sees the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners by Israel, including hundreds of those serving lengthy prison terms. There was no immediate comment from Israel.

Meanwhile, rescuers said devastating Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip killed at least 52 people yesterday, 33 of them in a school turned shelter, as the head of a US-backed foundation set to supply aid in Gaza quit unexpectedly.

The civil defence agency said many of the casualties at the school in Gaza City were children, while the Israeli military said the site was housing "key terrorists".

World leaders meeting in Spain called for an end to the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



A boy sorts through his belongings amid the debris at the Fahmi Al-Jarjawi School in Gaza City yesterday, following an Israeli strike.

PHOTO: AFP

Female teacher made OSD 'for advocating equal rights'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Nadira Yasmin, assistant professor of Bangla at Narsingdi Government College, was made Officer on Special Duty (OSD) yesterday.

The decision came just a day after Hefazat-e-Islam and other religious groups protested over a magazine she edits and publishes, and demanded her removal from the college within 48 hours.

She has been attached to Satkhira Government College, according to a circular from the education ministry issued yesterday. The circular shows Yasmin was among five teachers transferred in the latest order -- three of whom, including her, were made OSD.

Unlike regular transfers, where teachers are assigned new roles, OSD postings usually remove individuals from active duties while keeping them on the payroll.

Though not officially a punishment, the move is widely seen as a disciplinary measure.

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