



“And so, if there is no response that meets the humanitarian situation... we will have to toughen our collective position.”  
French President Emmanuel Macron on Israel's blockade of Gaza aid



## Japan to provide \$1b in budget support, grant

### Yunus holds bilateral talks with Japanese PM; 6 MoUs signed

#### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan will provide \$1.063 billion to Bangladesh in loans and grants for budget support, railway upgradation and scholarships, reaffirming its full support for the interim government's reform agenda and commitment to a peaceful political transition.

The agreements were signed in Tokyo by Bangladesh Ambassador Md Daud Ali and Japanese Ambassador Shinichi Saïda, reflecting both nations' resolve to deepen their strategic partnership for peace, stability, and shared prosperity, according to the press wing of the Chief Adviser's Office.

Of the total package, \$418 million will be provided as a Development Policy Loan to support economic reforms and climate resilience, \$641 million will fund the upgrade of the Joydevpur-Ishwardi rail line to a dual-gauge double track, and \$4.2 million in grants will go toward scholarships.

The deals were formalised on the sidelines of a bilateral meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru. Yunus, on a four-day visit to Japan since May 28, received a guard of honour ahead of the meeting and presented Ishiba with the graffiti book "Art of Triumph", chronicling the July uprising in Bangladesh.

During his visit, Yunus addressed the Nikkei Asia Forum and participated in a series of meetings and seminars with Japanese officials, business leaders, and the Bangladeshi diaspora. He is scheduled to return home today.

Six additional Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed yesterday during the Bangladesh Business Seminar in Tokyo, aimed at bolstering economic and investment cooperation. The MoUs in focus are on energy cooperation, industrial expansion, textile accessories, green mobility, cybersecurity investment, and digital integration.

The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and Bangladesh's energy and mineral resources ministry agreed to strengthen collaboration on energy projects.

Japanese firm ONODA Inc signed a land lease agreement with Bangladesh Special Economic Zone (BSEZ) to expand its gas meter assembly manufacturing, inspection, and maintenance operations.

Bangladesh Naxis Co Ltd signed an MoU with BSEZ Ltd to establish a factory producing apparel accessories.

Glaht and Musashi Seimitsu Industry, in partnership with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), will support the construction of a plant to manufacture battery-powered cycles and electric motorcycles.

Cipher Core Co Ltd committed \$20 million to launch a national pilot project using Complete Cipher Technology by inventor Takatoshi Nakamura, aiming to position Bangladesh as a quantum-resilient digital economy, with exclusive rights granted to the local entity for technology deployment and global expansion.

JICA and BIDA signed an agreement for early-stage technical and in-kind support for the Integrated Single Window Platform (ISWP), designed to unify investment-related services across various agencies.

Addressing the event, Yunus congratulated all parties involved and said, "Now it is our task to implement. I am moved."

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus exchanges pleasantries with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba at the latter's office before their bilateral meeting in Tokyo yesterday.

PHOTO: CA PRESS WING

## Help us build 'New Bangladesh'

### Yunus calls on Japan

#### STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus urged the Japanese government and entrepreneurs to extend their full support in building a "New Bangladesh" and by doing so, turning the dreams of millions of youths into reality.

"We are in big trouble. Literally, Bangladesh has gone through a 16-year earthquake. Everything fell apart... we are trying to pick up the pieces," he told the "Bangladesh Business Seminar" hosted by the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at JETRO headquarters in Tokyo, reports UNB.

Calling on Japan as a friend of Bangladesh, he SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

#### 6 MOUS AT A GLANCE

➤ Energy cooperation

➤ Gas meter plant

➤ Apparel accessories factory

➤ E-bike & battery-run cycle plant

➤ Information security initiative

➤ One-stop investment platform

#### DEV BUDGET EXPENDITURE

## Health ministry puts up poor show again

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Two divisions responsible for healthcare delivery have once again ranked among the worst performers in executing their development budgets, spending just a fraction of their allocated funds over the past 10 months.

The Medical Education and Family Welfare

only exception was fiscal 2020-21 when the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division achieved the national average, show documents of Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED).

Experts and officials attribute poor ADP execution to the incapacity of implementing agencies, project directors' lack of experience, reliance on the Public Works Department

DIVISION	ORIGINAL ALLOCATION	REVISED ALLOCATION	IMPLEMENTATION (REVISED ADP) RATE
Health Services	Tk 13,741cr	Tk 5,673cr	14.90%
Medical Education & Family Welfare	Tk 6,449cr	Tk 2,283cr	2.34%

Division used just 2.34 percent of its revised Annual Development Programme (ADP) allocation of Tk 2,283.16 crore till April, the lowest expenditure rate among all ministries and divisions.

The Health Services Division fared slightly better, spending 14.9 percent of its Tk 5,673.51 crore budget and ranking fifth from the bottom, well below the national average of 41.31 percent.

This marks yet another year of weak budget execution since the health ministry was split into two divisions in 2017. The

(PWD) for construction work, outdated budgeting practices, and changes in the top tier of implementing agencies after the July mass uprising.

The data on the ministry's dismal performance comes on the heels of a Health Sector Reform Commission report that identifies inadequate allocation, unchecked corruption and mismanagement as key problems in the health sector.

Only 5.2 percent of the current fiscal year's budget -- a mere 0.74 percent of the Gross

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## Election future uncertain, if Dec deadline missed

### Says Mirza Abbas; BNP doubles down on polls demand as it marks Zia's 44th death anniversary

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas yesterday expressed concern that there may never be another election in Bangladesh if the national polls are not held by December.

"Don't try to delay the election with excuses. We know very well that if the election doesn't take place in December, there will never be another election in this country. Bangladesh will be subjugated to foreign masters," he said at a program in front of the BNP central office in Naya Paltan in the evening, marking the 44th death anniversary of BNP founder and former president Ziaur Rahman.

He also claimed that only one person is against holding polls by December -- Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Earlier in the day, after paying tribute at the grave of the BNP founder, Mirza Abbas said that if June is considered for holding polls, there will be no election at all.

"If an election is to be held, it must be held by December. If there's no intention to hold the election, then the responsibility lies with Dr Yunus, not us. The people of Bangladesh will ensure that [polls]," he said, adding that without an election, the country's progress will come to a halt.

He also strongly criticises the chief adviser for his remarks on the election timeline during his ongoing visit to Japan.

He added, "From Japan, Dr Yunus is defaming BNP. He is defaming the country. He has said that only one party wants an election [in December]. But we want to say, there is only one person who does not want an election, and that is Professor Muhammad Yunus."

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Torrential rain throughout Thursday inundated the playground at Bokulnesa Mohila Degree College in Amtali upazila, Barguna. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



### Pakistan, India close to completing border troop reduction

P5



### The right way to reform public administration

P6



### A haven for biodiversity amid urban sprawl

WR1

## Thousands still marooned

### Houses damaged, acres of farmland submerged as rain, tidal surge continue to batter coastal districts

#### STAR REPORT

Thousands of people remained stranded across several coastal districts as tidal surges and torrential rains, triggered by a depression over the Bay of Bengal, kept battering the region for the second day.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), the deep depression has weakened after moving onto land but is still likely to bring heavy rainfall to parts of the country.

Flooding, gusty winds, and the breach of several embankments have caused widespread damage across Noakhali, Patuakhali, Bhola, Cox's Bazar, Khulna, Barguna, and Barishal.

Thousands of homes have been damaged, vast acres of Aman seedbeds submerged, and numerous fish farms washed away, reported our correspondents.

The BMD's Storm Warning Centre said the deep depression has turned into a land depression and is

moving further north or northeast. It also forecast moderate to heavy rainfall in Rangpur, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Barishal, Chattogram, and Sylhet divisions.

In a morning bulletin at 9:00am yesterday, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) forecast floods in low-lying areas of Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Netrakona, and Feni in the next 72 hours.

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**LATE AL-HAJJ ABDUL MONEM**  
(05 JANUARY 1937 - 31 MAY 2020)  
FOUNDING CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR  
ABDUL MONEM LTD.

In remembrance of his 5th death anniversary, we pay tribute to our esteemed visionary leader and foremost contributors to the Industrial sector of Bangladesh.

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# Beneath the grey sky, the red tree sings

If I could describe Dhaka in my sketchbook using one colour each day, most of the pages would probably be grey. Dusty roads, concrete buildings, tired mornings, and hurried lives that carry that dull shade. But there would be a few grey pages where I'd reach for the red and orange, making a few bold, scattered strokes across the corners. Those are the days when the Krishnachura blooms.

JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

The royal Poinciana may be native to Madagascar, but it feels like it has belonged to us for years. We call it by our own beautiful name -- Krishnachura -- as if it knows Dhaka's summers by heart and waits all year just to remind us that Dhaka is still beautiful. Even in the middle of chaos and concrete, it gives us a quiet moment that makes the heart feel a little lighter.

So vibrant, so sudden, so poetic -- that's Krishnachura. One morning, I look up and suddenly the sky seems to be on fire. The trees I passed every day without noticing have exploded into the shades of red. They wait quietly through the seasons, but when summer arrives, the branches burst into flames of red and orange. It's as if the Krishnachura tree has remembered a forgotten poem and started to recite it out loud.



In a city that's always moving, always rushing, I spot it -- sometimes from a rickshaw, sometimes through the window of a crowded bus, or while walking down the street. The tree stands still, and I pause for a second, maybe a few minutes. I reach into my pocket for my phone, trying to capture the moment, because I know it won't last. Soon, the petals will fall, and I won't even realise how much I'll miss them.

It had just rained, light and sudden. The wet petals on the ground remind me it's all temporary. I look around and see lovers taking photos, framing the flowers in the background. I notice tired passersby looking up at the tree, quietly admiring it under its shade.

The flowers may not last long, but they stay in your memory forever. You remember that one tree near the tea stall, or the big one that scatters red petals like confetti onto a quiet footpath when a soft wind passes through. You remember how, even in the extreme heat of summer, something as simple as a flower surprises you.

There's something special about its timing, too. It shows up when the heat has made everything heavy, when people are most tired. It may not offer shade, but it offers hope -- it offers wonder!

Every year, when the Krishnachura comes back, it whispers: Some things exist just to be seen, just to be loved for a moment.

And in a city full of grey days, it gives me a reason to colour the page differently.

PHOTO: JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

## Japan to provide \$1b in budget support

FROM PAGE 1

He said what happened in the country in the past 16 years left nothing in shape, and in this situation, Japan came up as a good friend.

"I came here to thank you and design the next step," he said. "We want to show the history that it was done, done in a perfect way. We have kind of tightened our belt and say here we are to work. With your support, it is doable."

"Let's put our hands together and execute it .... It's not about making money. It's about changing people's lives," he said.

Speakers at the event included Shinji Takeuchi, Japan's parliamentary vice-minister of economy, trade and industry; Norihiko Ishiguro, chairman and CEO of JETRO; and Fumiya Kokubu, chair of the Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation.

On Thursday, both nations inked MoUs on training and employing Bangladeshi skilled workers, with projections that Japan may hire up to 100,000 workers from Bangladesh over the next five years amid a growing labour shortage.

During the bilateral talks, Yunus and Ishiba emphasised the need to conclude the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) soon, with expectations that it will enhance investment and trade and secure duty- and quota-free access for Bangladeshi products after LDC graduation, a foreign ministry official said.

Current bilateral trade stands at around \$4 billion. Since Bangladesh's independence, Japan has provided more than \$24 billion in loans and grants. A foreign ministry official noted, "Bangladesh can get a lot of Japanese investments if we can truly improve our business environment."

The two countries reaffirmed their political and security cooperation, including the early delivery of five patrol boats to the Bangladesh Navy under Japan's Official Security Assistance. They also agreed in principle to the Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology, hoping for its early signing.

Both leaders reiterated their commitment to the strategic partnership and a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, grounded in peace, stability, rule of law, and multilateralism.

Yunus expressed gratitude for Japan's sustained development support, particularly under the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) initiative. Ishiba lauded Bangladesh's efforts in temporarily sheltering the Rohingya refugees.

Both sides agreed that the ultimate resolution of the Rohingya crisis lies in their safe, voluntary, and dignified return to Myanmar, and emphasised the need for sincere dialogue among all stakeholders.

Ishiba described Bangladesh as a "long-standing friend" and pledged Tokyo's continued support during the country's democratic transition. "Bangladesh plays a critical role in regional stability," he said, highlighting its importance in ensuring peace across the Indo-Pacific, according to the CA's Press Wing.

He paid tribute to Yunus, expressing confidence that Bangladesh would usher in a new era under his leadership. "Japanese people have profound respect for you," Ishiba added.

Yunus thanked Japan for its "unwavering support" over the past 10 months, noting the difficult inheritance left by the previous regime.

He emphasised Bangladesh's

commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and expressed readiness to work with Japan on maritime security, sustainable marine resource management, enhanced connectivity, and the fight against transnational crimes.

The chief adviser outlined a series of infrastructure and trade proposals, seeking Japanese support for a land-based LNG terminal at Matarbari and an import-based LPG terminal at Moheshkhali.

He also sought support for duty- and quota-free access for Bangladeshi exports for at least three years after LDC graduation in 2026; soft loans to upgrade the Dhaka-Chattogram highway into a six-lane access-controlled expressway; upgradation of the Chattagram-Cox's Bazar highway; and a new four-lane bridge over the Meghna Gomti river.

He invited Japanese investment in sectors such as automobiles, electric vehicles, light machinery, high-tech electronics, and solar energy, proposing integration into Japan's industrial value chains.

Yunus urged Tokyo to launch a skilled workforce partnership programme, saying it could help fill Japan's labour shortages and open opportunities for "hundreds of thousands" of Bangladeshi workers.

Additionally, he requested an increase in scholarships and opportunities for Bangladeshi students and vocational training instructors to study in Japan.

Ishiba assured that Tokyo would continue to assist Bangladesh in overcoming its current challenges. He recalled his own visit to Bangladesh 38 years ago for the inauguration of the Japan-funded Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, and expressed his intention to visit Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

## Election future uncertain

FROM PAGE 1

Mirza Abbas claimed that it was Prof Yunus who mentioned holding polls by December.

"BNP has always wanted elections by December. It was Dr Yunus who first mentioned December, not us. Later, he shifted the timeline to June. If he talks about holding the election by June, it will never happen in Bangladesh," Abbas told the reporters.

Mirza Abbas said Ziaur Rahman carried out many reforms without bringing in any foreign consultants.

"Ziaur Rahman undertook various reforms such as canal re-excavation programs, the garments industry, and women's education. But this government, in the name of reforms, has reached a point where they no longer want to hold an election."

Abbas further criticised the interim government for "importing people from abroad" to carry out reforms.

"These people are not citizens, they don't love the country, and lack commitment to Bangladesh. How

can they reform a nation they don't care about?" he asked, urging the government to prioritise the welfare of its own people over foreign interests.

Many BNP leaders and activists, including Standing Committee members Abdul Moyeen Khan, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Salahuddin Ahmed, and Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, paid tribute at Ziaur Rahman's grave, braving the rain.

In another event, BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed demanded that a clear roadmap be announced for the next parliamentary elections by December.

"A desire has emerged within the nation for a fair and orderly national parliamentary election, and we have expressed our expectations based on the aspirations of the people," he said at a food distribution event at the High Court Mazar Gate marking the death anniversary of Ziaur Rahman.

In Gulshan, Standing Committee member Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain said there is no alternative to

elections for restoring democracy, and the interim government must ensure polls are held on time. He noted the government's promise to restore people's rights remains unfulfilled.

At an event in Banani, Abdul Moyeen Khan questioned why the interim government fears elections. "You know that the people do not like you. Are you afraid you won't remain in power if a fair and neutral election is held? Why don't you openly admit it?" BNP and its affiliated organisations observed the death anniversary of Ziaur Rahman nationwide, with key programmes including wreath-laying at his grave, Quran recitation, special prayers, food distribution, and discussions.

The party also held a doa mahfil at the chairperson's office in Gulshan, virtually attended by acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

Daylong events, including food and clothing distribution, took place at 26 locations in the capital.

## Health ministry puts up poor show again

FROM PAGE 1

Domestic Product (GDP) -- was allocated to health sector, the lowest among South Asian countries, according to the report.

The commission, which submitted its report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on May 5, recommended allocating 15 percent of the national budget or 5 percent of the GDP to the health sector.

**CRUCIAL PROJECTS DELAYED**

The rollout of crucial health projects faces significant delays due to the implementing authorities' failure to utilise ADP allocations efficiently, making people in urgent need of medical care wait longer.

One such project was taken up to establish full-fledged treatment centres at eight divisional headquarters for cancer, heart and kidney patients.

Approved in July 2019, it was initially designed to build eight cancer treatment centres by June 2022. Later, facilities for treating heart and kidney patients were included in the project involving Tk 2,388.40 crore.

The initiative was taken amid a rise in non-communicable diseases, including heart-related illness, which account for around 70 percent deaths in the country.

But the project authority couldn't complete construction of the health facilities over the last eight years, let alone procure medical equipment and recruit health workers.

"We have sought an extension of the project deadline till June next year and also a revision of costs," said Project Director Towfique Hasan Firoz.

Asked whether it would be possible to finish all the work within the new time frame, he said, "We will try."

Most other projects involved

infrastructure development for hospitals, medical colleges, universities, diagnostic facilities, and medical research centres, and also procurement of medical equipment.

**REASONS FOR POOR SHOW**

Among the 57 ministries, divisions, and constitutional or statutory bodies, only the Anti-Corruption Commission, with an ADP utilisation rate of just 1.29 percent, performed worse than the Medical Education Division, shows the IMED document.

Only four ministries, divisions, and constitutional or statutory bodies lag behind the Health Services Division in terms of ADP implementation.

Prof Shafiqul Nahin Shimul, a teacher at the Institute of Health Economics under Dhaka University, said government agencies lack the necessary managerial and administrative capacity, and experience to implement projects in the health sector.

In many cases, implementing agencies don't have financial autonomy, which forces them to seek the ministry's intervention -- a lengthy and bureaucratic process, he said.

"For decades, the budgeting pattern has remained largely unchanged, failing to reflect sector-specific needs. Some sectors require more allocations, while others are unable to utilise funds effectively. The budget should be reallocated based on necessity. But that doesn't happen, resulting in poor implementation."

For instance, more funds are needed for medicine and the repair of medical equipment. "But there is a mismatch in allocations here," he noted.

Following the July mass uprising last year, different agencies and projects saw changes in their top leadership,

which might be a reason behind the poor ADP implementation this fiscal year, he said.

"However, there have been some positive developments, such as reduction in unnecessary procurement. Previously, major contractors, often in collusion with one another, were involved in equipment procurement in the health sector. That practice has now been curbed," he added.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is implementing 14 out of 19 projects under the Health Services Division.

Asked about the slow pace of ADP implementation, Afreena Mahmood, director (planning and research) of DGHS, said the PWD, responsible for infrastructure development in the projects, has made little progress, making it difficult for other agencies to proceed with their work.

She further said that several posts of project director remained vacant for a long time, hampering project implementation. Besides, the interim government adopted a "go slow" policy for some projects.

"The vacant posts have been filled. We hope to see major progress in the next fiscal year."

The Directorate General of Medical Education (DGME) is implementing the other four projects.

Contacted, DGME Director General Nazmul Hosain said they lack the capacity to handle the procurement process, budget implementation, and other related issues.

To address this, a panel of experts comprising senior and mid-level doctors has been formed to provide training on budget implementation, procurement, and store management, he added.

## Help us build 'New Bangladesh'

FROM PAGE 1

said, "A good friend comes out in hard times, and that friend is Japan. I came here to thank you."

Prof Yunus said millions of Bangladeshi youths need cooperation to turn their dreams into reality. The interim government accepts responsibility for making the impossible possible, and Japan is Bangladesh's partner and friend in that effort.

"Together, our task is to create a new Bangladesh. With your support, it is very much doable, and we have already laid the foundation."

Expressing his gratitude to Japan for its support in developing Matarbari Deep Sea Port, Yunus said now Nepal, Bhutan and the seven sisters of India can access the rest of the world through Matarbari.

"Matarbari is the doorway to the rest of the world... we will keep the door open for all."

Shinji Takeuchi, Japan's parliamentary vice-minister of economy, trade and industry, said Bangladesh is a strategic point connecting Asia and has been playing an important role in developing the

region.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Japan has continued to support Bangladesh in its development, he said.

Shinji said the Japanese government is trying to enhance its strategic partnership with Bangladesh under the leadership of Prof Yunus.

He also said the Japanese government is encouraging Japanese companies to invest in South Asia, including Bangladesh.

Currently, there are about 350 Japanese companies operating in Bangladesh. More Japanese companies are eager to invest.

Prof Yunus said Japanese companies can help Bangladesh achieve sustainable growth by strengthening cooperation in various fields, utilising the investment-friendly atmosphere.

Stating that Japan's bilateral trade ties with Bangladesh are mainly centred on the textile industry, he called for diversification into a wide range of fields.

JETRO Chairman and CEO Norihiko Ishiguro said Bangladesh has seen remarkable growth and

## Youth stabbed to death in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A youth was stabbed to death in the Beparipara neighbourhood of Jhenidah town yesterday, allegedly by his friends.

The victim is Jibon Hossain alias Montu, 22, of Hamdah Mollapara area, said police.

Witnesses and police said Jibon was eating mangoes with friends around 5:30pm. Suddenly, an argument broke out among them. At one point, some of his friends stabbed Jibon and fled.

He was taken to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital, where the doctor on duty declared him dead.

Jhenidah Sadar Police Station OC Abdullah Al Mamun said they visited the scene and police were reviewing the CCTV footage to identify those involved.

The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

## Woman killed in elephant attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A woman died after a herd of elephants attacked her home in Nalitabari upazila of Sherpur early yesterday.

The victim, Surton Nessa, 60, was the wife of late Rangu Sheikh of the upazila's Batkuchi village.

Quoting locals, Forest Department's Madhutila Range Officer Dewan Ali said a herd of elephants entered Batkuchi village around 10:00pm on Thursday. Initially the villagers managed to drive them away, but the herd returned around 3:00am.

At that time, the elephants attacked Surton's house, killing her on the spot while she was sleeping alone inside the house, the official added.

On information, police recovered her body later in the morning and handed it over to her family without an autopsy.

Earlier, on the night of May 20, two people were similarly killed in an elephant attack in the district's Jhenaigati upazila.

The persisting human-elephant conflict is the result of deforestation and habitat loss.

Over the past 10 years, at least 124 elephants were killed across Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Mymensingh regions. Many fell prey to retaliatory killings, electrocution, poaching, and train accidents.

Conversely, at least 83 people have also been killed in elephant encounters during this period.





BNP leaders and activists offer prayers after placing wreaths at the grave of former president Ziaur Rahman in the capital yesterday, marking his 44th death anniversary. BNP and its various associate bodies have organised programmes over eight days across the country to observe the anniversary of the party founder.

PHOTO: STAR

## Azharul's acquittal 'a mockery of justice'

Says Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee, a civic platform, yesterday condemned the acquittal of Jamaat-e-Islami leader ATM Azharul Islam, calling the Appellate Division's verdict a "mockery of justice" and a result of political influence over the judiciary.

In a statement issued by its executive committee, the platform questioned how a convicted war criminal -- previously sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal -- could now be declared completely innocent.

"Acquitting a recognised war criminal as entirely

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## Build 'three zero clubs' to save the planet

Prof Yunus urges the youth

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged the youth to build "three zero clubs" to save the planet from destruction, saying the planet will not sustain under the current civilisation.

"The civilisation we are building today is a self-destructive civilisation that will kill [the planet]," he said while delivering his lecture at Soka University in Tokyo.

During the occasion, Prof Yunus received an honorary doctorate degree from Soka University.

He was conferred the honorary degree in recognition of his contributions to social



innovation and global development.

At the programme, Prof Yunus said human beings will not be able to survive under the current civilisation, as environmental destruction is going on all around the world.

Highlighting his "three zero theory" -- zero

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### HC JUDGES

## Writ petition seeks stay on appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer filed a writ petition with the High Court on Thursday seeking a stay on the effectiveness of the public circular that invited applications from candidates for the posts of its additional HC judges.

On May 28, the Supreme Court administration for the first time issued a public circular asking for such applications.

The circular was issued under Section 7(a) of the Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance, 2025.

The ordinance, issued by the law ministry on January 21, 2025, established the framework for appointing judges to both the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court.

As per Section 3 of the Ordinance, a permanent body known as the Supreme Judicial Appointment Council has been formed to assist the chief justice in recommending suitable candidates for judicial appointments. The Chief Justice serves as the chairperson of this council.

According to section 7 of the ordinance, the council has the authority to collect relevant information about potential candidates on its own initiative.

Additionally, it can publicly invite applications through a standard form to be submitted by interested

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### DRAINAGE DISASTER

# Why Dhaka drowns every monsoon

Encroached canals, lost wetlands, outdated drainage systems leave the capital submerged after every rain



HELEMUL ALAM

The poor drainage system of Dhaka was once again exposed during the recent heavy rainfall that inundated large swathes of the city.

Non-stop rain that began on Thursday morning and continued into early Friday submerged numerous areas, including Shantinagar, Kalshi, Mirpur, Shewrapara, Green Road, Neelkhet, various parts of Old Dhaka, Bhashantek, Utarkhan, and Dakkhin Khan.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, Dhaka received 196 millimetres of rainfall in the 24 hours beginning at 6:00am on Thursday.

Despite the two Dhaka city corporations investing more than Tk 262 crore over four years till 2024 in constructing 334.19km of drainage infrastructure, including box culverts and drains, the capital continues to suffer severe flooding during rain.

Experts blame indiscriminate filling of waterbodies and canals in the name of urban development, along with outdated and inadequate drainage systems, as the main causes of severe waterlogging in the city. They point out that the filling of flood flow zones has significantly reduced water-carrying capacity, intensifying the city's vulnerability to waterlogging.

A 2019 study by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) revealed that Dhaka has lost 3,440 acres out of 9,556 acres of designated flood flow zones, retention areas, and waterbodies since the publication of the previous Detailed Area Plan (DAP 2010).

Adil Mohammed Khan, president of BIP, said the main reason for this persistent waterlogging is unplanned urbanisation that has destroyed waterbodies, canals, and flood flow zones.

He said a liveable city should have at least 35 to 40 percent of its area comprised of

waterbodies and green spaces. In Dhaka, this has been reduced to around 10 percent.

According to BIP data, waterbodies covered 20.57 percent of Dhaka's central area in 1995. By 2023, this figure had dropped to just 2.9 percent. Similarly, green space has shrunk from 22 percent to only 9 percent over the same period.

Adil explained that while artificial drainage can reduce the duration of flooding, it cannot fully eliminate waterlogging if natural channels are destroyed.

Former BIP president Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon said although water receded faster this time due to recent cleaning efforts in canals like Manda, Zirani, Shyampur, and parts of Sutivola and Dumni, problems remain.

He said tertiary drains connected to these cleaned canals have not been upgraded to handle rainfall above 400mm.

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## 4 on 3-day remand over Moghbazar mugging

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed four people on a three-day remand each in a case filed over a recent mugging in Dhaka's Moghbazar, where a man was attacked with machetes.

The four are Md Sohel Rana, Md Jibon alias Hridoy, Md Shamim, and Mokbul Hossain.

Rana, Hridoy and Shamim took part in the mugging while Mokbul is a buyer of the mugged goods.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Israt Zenifer Zerín passed the order after Ibrahim Khalil, a sub-inspector of Hatirjheel Police Station, produced them with a five day remand prayer. According to police, the mugging took place on Greenway Lane in Moghbazar on May 18 when three assailants on a motorbike intercepted a man named Abdullah, a restaurant employee from Motijheel.



A man struggles to ride his bike on a waterlogged road near new market area of the capital yesterday. Non-stop rain that began on Thursday morning and continued into early yesterday submerged numerous areas. The major reason for the constant waterlogging woes is a combination of encroachment and waste-dumping in canals, alongside poor drainage systems. Pictured above, the clogged up Shuvadda canal.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PALASH KHAN

## Open Panthakunja for all, abandon ramp project

Mock trial directs govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mock trial yesterday directed the interim government to immediately abandon a ramp of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, stating it would damage Hatirjheel and Panthakunja.

Considering the overall situation, the public court declared Panthakunja Park open for public use.

The home adviser and relevant authorities were ordered to ensure unrestricted public access to Panthakunja and maintain law and order during the trial, which was held near the SAARC Foara intersection in the capital.

The court directed to suspend all activities related to the connector road until the verdict is implemented, as well as reconsider the contract with the foreign company.

Judges of the court were -- Prof Gitirara Nasreen, member of Media Reform Commission; Shamsi Ara Zaman, general secretary of July Martyrs Memorial Foundation; Prof Anu Muhammad, editor of Sarbojonkotha; Dr Iftekharuzzaman, head of ACC Reform Commission; and Jyotirmoy Barua, convener of Nature and Life Protection Platform.

In the Panthakunja case, the court asserted that the right to file a case in the environmental court must be made accessible to all.

The court also considered the recommendations of the Constitutional Reform Commission highly significant.

According to the commission's proposal: "The commission recommends that any agreement made with (a) a foreign state, (b) an international organisation, (c) a foreign government, (d) a foreign company, or (e) a majority foreign-owned company registered in Bangladesh must be presented in the lower house. Any international agreement that affects national interest or state security must receive prior approval by majority

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

## Mother fish release eggs in Halda river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Carp species -- including rui, katla, mrigal, and kalbaush -- released eggs in the Halda River yesterday, a significant moment for Bangladesh's freshwater fish breeding efforts.

The spawning began around 2:00am at 8-10 points along the river, according to fisheries officials.

Hundreds of boats reportedly gathered between 2-5 buckets of eggs each.

Earlier, egg samples were observed at multiple sites yesterday afternoon and on Monday night, with several collectors reporting small quantities gathered, ranging from 50-100 grammes.

Muhammad Shafi, an egg collector from North Madarsha village in Hathazari, said he collected 13 buckets using eight boats, while Md Kamal from Garduara village reported gathering 35 buckets using 13 boats, which he has since preserved in hatcheries for fry production.

The Halda's annual breeding season spans from April to June. Heavy rainfall and thunderstorms, combined with high tides or ebb tides, create optimal conditions for mother fishes to spawn.

This year, recent rainfall led to favourable spawning

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6





## Auto-rickshaw driver stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Moulvibazar

A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver was stabbed to death in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Shaheen Ali, 25, of the Joypasha area, police said.

Md Golam Apchar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kulaura Police Station, said an unidentified person attacked Shaheen with a lethal weapon in the Dakshinbazar area around 11:00am, leaving him critically injured.

Locals rushed him to the Kulaura Upazila Health Complex in a critical condition, where doctors declared him dead.

However, the reason behind the murder could not be known immediately.

Witnesses said another CNG-run autorickshaw driver attacked Shaheen before fleeing the scene.

OC Golam said drives are underway to arrest the accused.



A CNG-run auto-rickshaw moves along this risky, broken road, irresponsibly braving potholes that could lead to serious accidents. This particular road is notorious for accidents caused by vehicles falling into potholes. The photo was taken on the Daulatpur–Shahpur road near Amvita Bazar in Khulna city yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Pollution, sluice gates choke Gorai

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The Gorai river, a tributary of the Padma that flows through the country's south-western region, has turned into a narrow canal across Kalikapur, Auliapur, and Madarbania unions in Patuakhali Sadar upazila due to lack of water flow and rampant pollution and encroachment.

Multiple sluice gates installed on both sides of the river have drastically hindered its natural flow. Additionally,



waste discharged from a rice mill in Sharikkhali area of Kalikapur union has turned the water unusable, said locals.

As a result, nearly 25,000 residents of the three unions are suffering.

"The river once used to be 300 feet wide. Now, due to encroachment and pollution, it now resembles a canal only around 25-30 feet wide," said Mostafa Khan, a resident of Bara Auliapur village.

"The pollution has turned the water dark and toxic, making it unsuitable for irrigating farmlands," he added.

Kazi Monir Hossain, director of Kohinoor Auto Rice Mill, claimed that due to lack of water flow in the river, the extent of pollution exacerbated recently.

"Following directives from the Department of Environment, we are planning to install a water treatment plant inside the mill very soon. Once it becomes operational, we will discharge only treated water into the canal, and these issues will no longer persist," he said.

Contacted, Md Asaduzzaman, assistant director of the DoE in Patuakhali, said, "We will soon launch an investigation into the rice mill. If the allegations are proven, we will take legal action."

Md Arif Hossain, executive engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Patuakhali, said necessary steps will be taken after an on-site inspection.

## Paddle steamers set to return as heritage cruises

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

In a nostalgic nod to the past, the iconic paddle steamer is being prepared for reintroduction as a daytime "heritage cruise" in June, shortly after Eid-ul-Azha.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) currently has four paddle steamers in its fleet: PS Masud, PS Ostrich, PS Turn, and PS Lepcha. All four are around a century old and require extensive and costly refurbishment.

However, BIWTC plans to gradually restore the vessels for heritage cruise operations.

"The paddle steamer PS Masud, currently docked in Narayanganj, has been found in relatively good condition. With minor refurbishment, it will be sent for



survey approval by the director general (shipping). Once the survey is complete, the vessel is expected to resume operation on the Dhaka-Chandpur-Barishal route," said SM Ashikuzzaman, director (commerce) of BIWTC.

"However, the 98-year-old vessel is no longer viable for competitive daily operations. It may operate only once a week as a heritage cruise, subject to approval by the adviser to the ministry concerned,"

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

## Child drowns in septic tank in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gazipur

A six-year-old boy drowned after falling into an open septic tank in Sreepur upazila of Gazipur yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Md Swayat Hasan, son of Ariful Hasan.

The incident occurred around 11:00am in Dakshin Bhangnahati village under Sreepur municipality, confirmed Mohammad Abdul Barik, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sreepur Police Station.

The OC said that Swayat was playing with another child when he fell into the septic tank of a newly-constructed tin house that was submerged in rainwater. He died on the spot.



Homesteads and farmlands being devoured by the river Brahmaputra at Shukherbati village in Kurigram. Many have begun relocating to safer places before the river reaches their doorsteps. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## SUNDARBANS

## Three-month fishing, tourism ban from June 1

BSS, Khulna

Fishing in rivers and canals will be banned and tourist entry will also be prohibited in the Sundarbans for three months to boost the breeding of fish and wildlife.

The ban will remain in effect from June 1 to August 31.

This decision has been taken by the Sundarbans Forest Department, said forest officials of the Sundarbans.

Tanvir Hasan Imran, officer at the Sharankhola Forest Station, said from May 24, the issuance of entry permits (passes) for fishermen, honey collectors, and tourists to visit the forest has been suspended.

Talking to BSS, Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, divisional forest officer (DFO) of the East Sundarbans Division in Bagerhat, said the ban is a part of efforts to enhance the reproductive capacity of aquatic and wildlife resources.

He confirmed that no one will be allowed to enter the Sundarbans during this time.

The DFO also mentioned that a proposal has been submitted to the ministry to provide food assistance and incentives to fishermen who depend on the forest for their livelihood. The proposal is currently awaiting the ministry's decision.

## Woman hacked to death, husband on the run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A woman was hacked to death in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila on Thursday night.

The deceased has been identified as Kabita Begum, 28, of Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

Quoting locals, Muhammad Rashedul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mirzapur Police Station, said Kabita, a sewing operator at a garment factory, had a fight with her husband, Sujan Miah, on Thursday night.

At one point of the fight, Sujan allegedly hacked Kabita to death with a boti (a traditional cleaver used in the kitchen) and fled, according to the OC.

He has since been absconding.

On information, police recovered the body from their home and sent it to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the OC. The victim's father filed a case in this regard, he added.

## Two killed in road accidents

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Thakurgaon

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Thakurgaon and Dinajpur during the last two days.

In Thakurgaon, a tractor helper died after being run over by the vehicle on the Thakurgaon-Panchagarh highway in Awliapur Board Office area of the district's Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Sayed Hossain, 23, son of the late Jamsher Ali from Purbha Mallikpara village in Dinajpur's Kaharol upazila.

Quoting locals, Boda Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Hafijur Rahman told this correspondent over the phone that as the tractor driver lost control of the steering, Sayed tried to jump into a roadside ditch.

He died on the spot after being run over by the tractor he jumped from, said the OC.

In Dinajpur, an elderly man suffered injuries after a speeding Thakurgaon-bound truck hit his bicycle in front of the Ansar Club at Chehelgazi around 5:00pm on Thursday.

He died on the way to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, said Md Motiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Kotwali Police Station. Two separate cases have been filed with the respective police stations in these connections.

PRAYER TIMING MAY 31					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4-05	12-45	5-00	6-40	8-00	
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-45	8-30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

**প্রট বিক্রয়**

পূর্বচল প্রাইম লোকেশনে ৭৫ফিট রাস্তার উপরে ফরেস্টের সামনে ১০কঠার ১টি প্রট বিক্রয়। ক্রেতাদের যোগাযোগ করুনঃ ০১৭৭১-৫০৯৯৫৯/০১৮৩৩-৯৮৮৬১০

**ভিসা রিফিউজ**

ইউকে, কানাডা বা ইউরোপের যেকোন দেশের ভিসা রিফিউজ হলে আজই যোগাযোগ করুন। ব্রিটিশ ইমিগ্রেশন ব্যারিস্টার দ্বারা ভিসা আবেদন, আপিল ও জুডিশিয়াল রিভিউ করা হয়। ০১৮৮৬ ৩৩৫৫৪৪

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
Manikganj PWD Division  
Manikganj.  
www.pwd.gov.bd

Memo No- 2151  
Date : 29 /05/2025.

**e-Amendment/CorrigendumTender Notice-1**

e-Tender is invited in the e-GP System Portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>

SL. No.	Tender ID's No	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
01.	1119748, 1119749, 1119752, 1119746, 1119745, 1119639, 1119622 & 1119430	15-Jun-2025 11:00	15-Jun-2025 11:30
02.	1119782	15-Jun-2025 11:00	15-Jun-2025 12:30

This is an online Tender. Where will be accepted in the national e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System Portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> is required.

The fees for downloading the e-tender documents from the national e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any e-GP registered bank's branches within due time.

Further information and guideline are available in the Nationale-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk(helpdesk @ eprocure.gov.bd) or (email: ee\_manik@pwd.gov.bd) and call to 02-996610401) Interested person can be communicated with the undersigned during office hours.

(Bishaw Nath Banik)  
Executive Engineer  
Manikganj PWD Division  
Manikganj.

GD-1325



## US SC lets Trump revoke 'parole' status for migrants

REUTERS

The US Supreme Court yesterday let President Donald Trump's administration revoke the temporary legal status of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan, Cuban, Haitian and Nicaraguan migrants living in the United States, bolstering the Republican president's drive to step up deportations.

The court put on hold Boston-based US District Judge Indira Talwani order halting the administration's move to end the immigration "parole" granted to 532,000 of these migrants by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden, potentially exposing many of them to rapid removal, while the case plays out in lower courts.

As with many of the court's orders issued in an emergency fashion, the decision was unsigned and gave no reasoning. Two of the court's three liberal justices, Ketanji Brown Jackson and Sonia Sotomayor,



**A resident stands near buildings damaged by Russian military strikes during Russia's ongoing attack on Ukraine, in the frontline town of Myrnohrad, Donetsk region, yesterday. Turkey has proposed to host a meeting between the American, Russian and Ukrainian presidents in an effort to advance toward an end of the three years of war in Ukraine.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Pak, India close to completing border troop reduction

Says senior Pakistani general, warns the crisis increased the risk of escalation in future

REUTERS, Singapore

Pakistan and India are close to reducing the troop build up along their border to levels before conflict erupted between the nuclear armed neighbours this month, a top Pakistani military official told Reuters yesterday, although he warned the crisis had increased the risk of escalation in the future.

Both sides used fighter jets, missiles, drones and artillery in four days of clashes, their worst fighting in decades, before a ceasefire was announced.

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Pakistan's chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said in an interview that the two militaries had started the process of drawing down troop levels.

"We have almost come back to the pre-22nd April situation... we are approaching that, or we must have approached that by now," said Mirza, the most senior Pakistani military official to speak publicly since the conflict.

India's ministry of defence and the office of the Indian chief of defence staff did not immediately respond to Reuters'



requests for comment on the remarks by Mirza.

Mirza, who is in Singapore to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue forum, said while there was no move towards nuclear weapons during this conflict, it was a dangerous situation.

"Nothing happened this time," he said. "But you can't rule out any strategic miscalculation at any time, because when the crisis is on, the responses are different."

He also said the risk of escalation in the future had increased since the fighting this time was not limited to the disputed territory of Kashmir, the scenic region

in the Himalayas that both nations rule in part but claim in full. The two sides attacked military installations in their mainlands but neither has acknowledged any serious damage.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned Pakistan this month that New Delhi would target "terrorist hideouts" across the border again if there were new attacks on India.

The two countries have fought three major wars, two of them over Kashmir, and numerous armed skirmishes since both were born out of British colonial India in 1947.

India blames Pakistan for an insurgency in its part of Kashmir that began in 1989 and has killed tens of thousands. Pakistan says it provides only moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris seeking self-determination.

"This (conflict) lowers the threshold between two countries who are contiguous nuclear powers...in the future, it will not be restricted to the disputed territory. It would come down to (the) whole of India and (the) whole of Pakistan," Mirza said. "This is a very dangerous trend."

## Israel intercepts missile fired from Yemen

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli army said it had intercepted a missile launched from Yemen on Thursday evening after air raid sirens sounded in the centre of the country and explosions were heard over Jerusalem.

"Following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in several areas in Israel, a missile launched from Yemen was intercepted," said an army statement.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed they fired a "hypersonic ballistic missile" at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv.

"The operation successfully achieved its goal... forcing millions of occupying Zionists (Israelis) to flee to shelters and halting air traffic at the airport," they said in a statement.

The attempted attack comes two days after Israel said it intercepted a missile and another projectile fired from Yemen, which Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they had fired.

The Houthis have repeatedly launched missiles and drones at Israel since the Gaza war broke out in October 2023 following the Hamas attack on Israel.

The Yemeni rebels, who say they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians, paused their attacks during a two-month Gaza ceasefire that ended in March, but began again after Israel resumed its military campaign in the territory.

## IS claims first attack on new Syria forces

AFP, Beirut

The Islamic State (IS) group on Thursday evening claimed its first attack on Syria's new government forces since the fall of longtime Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, two war monitors said.

In a statement picked up by SITE Intelligence Group, IS said it had planted an "explosive device" on a Syrian forces' vehicle in the southern province of Sweida.

SITE and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said it was the first IS-claimed attack on Syria's new government. SOHR said that one person was killed and three members of the Syrian army's 70th division were injured when a patrol was hit by a remote control landmine on Wednesday.

The man killed was accompanying the Syrian government forces in the desert area, according to SOHR.

Once in control of large swathes of Syria and Iraq, IS was territorially defeated in Syria in 2019 largely due to the efforts of Kurdish-led forces supported by an international coalition. It has maintained a presence mainly in the country's vast desert.

Reported attacks by the group in areas controlled by the Islamist-led government, which took power after Assad's ouster in December, have been scarce.

However, they have continuously carried out attacks on Kurdish-led forces in the northeast.

## Revenue gets priority over public health

FROM PAGE 12

nicotine products more appealing, and protect public health, it reads.

Bangladesh is supposed to reduce tobacco use by 40 percent by 2030 as per the WHO's extended target and by 30 percent by 2025 as per the WHO Implementation Roadmap for Global Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Disease 2013-2030.

But, between 2009 and 2022, Bangladesh saw a 13 percent relative decline in tobacco use, meaning the country made only 30 percent progress towards the 2030 target and 40 percent towards the 2025 target, according to an analysis of six relevant surveys by the Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) published last month.

Recent data about tobacco consumption is not available. But according to a Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2017, 3.78 crore people aged 15 and above used tobacco, accounting for 35.7 percent of the population in that age group at the time.

According to research conducted by the Bangladesh Cancer Society and published in 2019, the economic losses due to tobacco consumption – covering treatment costs and productivity losses – amounted to Tk 30,560 crore in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

In contrast, the government earned Tk 22,810 crore in revenue from tobacco during the same period.

The Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act was enacted in 2005 to curb tobacco use in Bangladesh, with a ban on smoking in public places as one of its key features.

The law was strengthened in 2013 through amendments but anti-tobacco campaigners have been calling for further amendments to make the law more stringent and to close loopholes that tobacco companies exploit to promote tobacco use.

An amendment proposal for the

Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act was placed before the cabinet in October 2023 but was sent back for further review.

Another proposal was submitted to the advisory council in November last year, but it was not approved.

Instead, a committee led by Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed was formed to review it further.

According to estimates, around 35 percent of the country's population uses tobacco products, said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, while announcing the decision on November 7 last year.

"On one hand, tobacco use has many adverse health effects. On the other, the cigarette industry contributes significantly to revenue. So, a decision has been taken to revisit the law, considering all these perspectives," he said.

Nearly seven months later, no visible move to has been taken to amend the act.

The committee has yet to submit its report, said health ministry sources.

Sohel Reza Choudhury, head of epidemiology and research at the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute, said they have been demanding stricter tobacco laws for years to reduce tobacco use.

However, when the government moves to amend the law, tobacco companies argue that stricter regulations would reduce their income and government revenue.

"This is a delaying tactic, and they have been successful in postponing the amendments."

The impact of a stricter law would not immediately affect tax revenue as regular users may not quit despite price increases, but it would reduce the number of new users.

Tobacco use is a common risk factor for four major non-communicable diseases: cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancer and diabetes, Choudhury said.

Referring to research, he said that among people under 40 with

heart disease, 40 percent of cases are caused by tobacco use.

Over 250,000 people die from various NCDs annually, with 50 percent of these being premature deaths. "So, tobacco control is essential to prevent these premature deaths," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

### AMENDMENT PROPOSALS

The proposed amendment includes a prohibition on the sale of loose or unpackaged tobacco products and bans the sale of these products through hawking.

It also proposes banning the sale of tobacco and tobacco products without registration, without standard packaging and within 100 metres of educational institutions, hospitals, clinics, sports venues and children's parks.

The amended proposal calls for a ban on tobacco advertising through any internet platform, website, email or social media. It requires all tobacco products and their packaging to be kept out of sight at points of sale.

Activities by tobacco companies under the guise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes are prohibited.

The amendment recommends printing pictorial health warnings covering 90 percent of the surface area on all packaging, wrappers, cartons, bags, and containers – up from the current 50 percent.

Violations could lead to penalties including cancellation of production and sales licences.

The amendment would also prohibit any dedicated smoking areas, expand the definition of public places and include new products under the definition of tobacco products.

Increased penalties for all offences under the law have also been proposed.

Sheikh Momena Moni, programme director, and Md Akhteruzzaman, director general of the National Tobacco Control Cell, could not be reached for comment.

## Dozens of parties

FROM PAGE 12

to achieve this goal and said it was "unfortunate" that the blame was being shifted onto political parties instead.

At a presidium meeting, Gono Forum called for an immediate and concrete election roadmap.

The meeting observed that over the past nine months, the government has failed to take effective steps to restore law and order or bring stability to the public administration. It added that no visible reforms or actions have been undertaken to ensure a fair and acceptable election.

As a result, public confidence in the government is declining, and uncertainty is growing among political parties and the general population, the statement said.

In a joint statement, the Left Democratic Alliance echoed similar concerns, calling the chief adviser's comments "a blatant falsehood" and "intentionally misleading".

Such a false statement by the chief executive of the state is not only harmful to the country but also damaging to his own image and constitutes a violation of his constitutional oath, the alliance said.

The alliance leaders asserted that more than 50 registered and unregistered political parties, including their own, have called for parliamentary elections by December.

The statement further said, "Under the same agenda, a newly formed political party supported by the government – along with some radical communal groups and parties involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity during 1971 – is engaging in various destructive activities to destabilise the country and sabotage the election."

These actions are plunging the nation into a dire situation, the alliance warned.

The 12-Party Alliance, in a separate statement, said all democratic and patriotic political parties – not just one – have been demanding a December election for the past nine months.

They accused Prof Yunus of trying to extend his stay in power through "political trickery" and of aligning with fundamentalist, unpopular, and anti-liberation groups.

They warned that his actions could derail the electoral process and deepen the ongoing political crisis.

## Bulbul replaces Faruque as BCB president

FROM PAGE 12

after Faruque at the post.

"For the first time, I got a call from the NSC at the end of April. It was like, 'We will give you an opportunity, will you accept it?' After receiving that call, I didn't look back," Bulbul told reporters in a press conference in Mirpur after he was elected as the BCB boss during an emergency board of directors' meeting yesterday.

"I had a target to honour that call. Today, our honourable board of directors elected me as the president... We will try to take cricket in Bangladesh forward," he added.

Bulbul, who was not a running BCB councillor, was nominated a councillor by the NSC in place of Sheikh Hamim Hasan earlier on Thursday night, and ahead of yesterday's board meeting. Bulbul was nominated as a BCB director by the NSC in place of Faruque.

Later in the board meeting, he was elected as the president by the other nine board directors. Also, board directors Nazmul Abedeen Fahim and Fahim Sinha were elected as senior vice-president and vice-president, respectively.

"We received two letters from the

NSC yesterday [Thursday]. One was regarding the change of one of their councillors, naming Aminul Islam Bulbul as the new nominee. The other letter was the withdrawal of their previously nominated director, Faruque Ahmed," BCB's media and communication committee chairman Iftakhar Rahman Mithu said.

Meanwhile, Bulbul said that he came to the BCB to play a quick T20 innings as he is aware of the forthcoming election, and that he took up the job as a short-term assignment.

"As the time is limited, I'm here to play a quick T20 innings. I want to play a good T20 innings, which you all will remember.

"I don't want to comment on the past. I can say I'm not here for a long time. There is no exact timeframe, but I have a different agenda. As I work in cricket development, I want to continue it. I have taken this role as a short-term assignment," he said, adding that he would like to use his 19 years of knowledge of working at the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in Bangladesh cricket.

## UN warns all of Gaza at risk

FROM PAGE 12

and others already at odds with the country over its Gaza offensive.

London called the move a "deliberate obstacle" to Palestinian statehood, while UN chief Antonio Guterres' spokesman said it pushed efforts towards a two-state solution "in the wrong direction", reports AFP.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank are regularly condemned by the United Nations as illegal under international law and are seen as a major obstacle to lasting peace. In a separate development, an Israeli

far-right minister said yesterday it was time to use "full force" in Gaza, after Hamas said the new US-backed truce proposal failed to meet its demands.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that European countries should "harden the collective position" against Israel if it does not respond appropriately to the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

With international pressure mounting on Israel over the deepening hunger crisis, Macron said action was needed "in the next few hours and days".



## Govt must stop abuse of justice system

Dubious cases keep eroding police, judicial credibility

It is deeply regrettable that even now—nearly 10 months since the August 5 political changeover—dubious cases filed in connection with the atrocities committed during the July uprising continue to make a mockery of our justice system. The latest victim to face the guillotine of such a case is Dr Anowara Begum, a retired professor of Jagannath University and a freedom fighter. Reportedly, Anowara was sent to jail by a Dhaka court on Thursday, following her arrest the previous day. She, along with 192 others, faces the charge of attempted murder in a case filed by former JnU Chhatra Dal General Secretary Sujon Molla, who was injured during clashes in July. Filed about seven months after the incident, the case naturally raises questions not only about the motive behind its lodging but also the lack of evidence linking the accused to the alleged crime.

In fact, all such cases can be distinguished by their mass listing of accused and the incredulous nature of the allegations themselves. And as we have argued before, the lumping together of those who aided or committed the July atrocities and those who merely extended moral support to the Awami League regime is not just legally tenuous; it also opens the door to exploitation, complicates the trial process, and invites question marks over the outcome of ongoing trials. The implication of Anowara, who has no known history of violent activism, further reeks of personal/political vendetta as evidenced by the list of the accused, which includes, among others, 10 teachers and five officials from JnU itself. Only fair investigations may reveal whether their selection was random or carefully orchestrated to settle old scores.

The question is, why do police keep accepting or acting on cases that clearly exhibit such red flags? We understand that the current process for filing cases does not require officers to verify claims at the outset, allowing anyone to lodge complaints. But officers were instructed not to arrest innocent individuals implicated in such cases. Why, then, did they arrest a 69-year-old retiree who could not possibly have been involved in the crime she's accused for? Why did the investigation officer demand in court that she be denied bail? Why did the magistrate concerned accept it and send her to Kashimpur? Why could the home or law ministry not intervene over the two days when this saga played out? We cannot just blame the justice system or those filing dubious and retaliatory cases if those involved in the system itself keep failing to do their jobs properly.

We talk about these failures mostly when people of some repute are implicated in dubious cases, but what about the many ordinary citizens and professionals whose lives are being disrupted? All the talk of police and judicial reforms would be meaningless if such injustices are allowed to persist unchecked. Reforms must begin with mechanisms to prevent the misuse of legal provisions, ensure accountability of law enforcement and court officers, and guarantee that no citizen is denied justice or protection from legal harassment. The interim government can no longer look the other way.

## Hospitals need doctors, not just beds

Long-vacant posts at Barguna hospital exposing healthcare failures

As in many other sectors in Bangladesh, it often takes little time to undertake projects to build or expand infrastructure in the health sector, but properly staffing these facilities can take years, sometimes even a decade or so. The Barguna General Hospital, upgraded from a 100-bed to a 250-bed facility in 2013, has been suffering from this ailment—a chronic manpower shortage lasting 12 years.

According to a report, nearly half of the 233 sanctioned posts at the hospital—including doctors, consultants, nurses, medical officers, and mortuary staff—remain vacant. Most of the unfilled positions are among medical officers, doctors, and senior consultants. Alarming, there is only one senior consultant—an anaesthesiologist—despite there being 10 sanctioned posts. This means departments such as cardiology, orthopaedics, gynaecology, medicine, paediatrics, pathology, surgery, ENT, and ophthalmology have no senior consultants. Ironically, patients usually require a specialist's consultation for issues involving the heart, bones, reproductive health, and other critical areas before they ever need an anaesthesiologist.

There is also a dire shortage of medical officers (with 22 out of 29 positions vacant) and doctors (with 39 out of 55 vacant). Even basic medical consultation has become difficult to obtain, and patients are frequently referred to hospitals in Barishal or Dhaka. What, then, is the point of expanding a hospital if it cannot serve the local community? We have consistently emphasised the importance of decentralising healthcare to make it more accessible and affordable. But how can this be achieved in the absence of sufficient recruitments, or when medical professionals avoid serving in towns and rural areas? While it is true that such locations often lack the amenities found in major cities, these areas will never develop if essential public services, like healthcare, are not provided. The lack of access to proper, timely care often pushes patients towards private clinics, where they must pay exorbitant fees.

Bangladesh already has one of the lowest doctor-to-patient ratios in South Asia, and the uneven distribution of medical professionals worsens the situation for those living outside cities. The health sector also suffers from chronic underfunding and underutilisation of allocated resources. Against this backdrop, the need for a comprehensive overhaul of public healthcare cannot be stressed enough. Achieving this will require more than just government policy or political will; it demands the sincerity and commitment of medical professionals, too. Those who take the Hippocratic Oath must also rise to the occasion.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Netanyahu elected as Israel's PM

On this day in 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres was narrowly defeated in national elections by Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu. Peres, leader of the Labor Party, became prime minister after Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing Jewish extremist.



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### KALLOL MUSTAFA

The fourth chapter of the report by the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC), constituted by the interim government, offers crucial recommendations on reforming the behaviour and mindset of public service holders. The commission underscores that to help achieve the government's policy goals and uphold democratic values at the same time, a set of core professional values must be instilled in civil servants. To this end, it recommends the formulation of a Civil Service Code incorporating these values. The proposed values include: people-centric attitude, accountability, transparency, integrity, leadership and innovation, equity, and professionalism.

It remains unclear whether the interim government is in the process of formulating a Civil Service Code based on these recommendations. However, it recently amended the Public Service Act, 2018 and issued the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, which emphasises ensuring the subordination of government employees. This amendment is not in line with the original vision of PARC, because while the commission emphasised accountability and transparency, the new ordinance defines a vague and undefined concept—"insubordination"—as a punishable offence.

Under a new provision concerning misconduct and disciplinary measures, the 2025 ordinance stipulates that any act of insubordination, incitement of insubordination among peers, disruption of discipline, or obstruction of official duties by a civil servant will be deemed as misconduct, punishable by demotion, dismissal or termination. Government employees fear that this ordinance will force them to follow unfair orders from their superiors in the office. If they don't, they will risk losing their jobs. They have launched a movement against this ordinance.

There are laws and regulations already in existence that provide sufficient grounds to penalise insubordination, corruption or negligence. The problem here is the slow, improper, and inadequate implementation of these laws and regulations. It is unclear what role the promulgation of a new ordinance, with provisions for punishment for vaguely defined "insubordination," will play in resolving this issue. It is necessary to ensure transparency and accountability among government employees and to make them provide public services promptly, without bribery and corruption. It is not clear why it is necessary to ensure blind obedience in this case. PARC has made

many important recommendations to eliminate irregularities, corruption, and negligence among government employees, but I have not seen any recommendation to enact a law to terminate employees from their jobs for insubordination.

According to the Government Employee (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 2018, misconduct is one of the grounds for which serious punishment can be given to government employees, ranging from temporary suspension to dismissal from service. This rule also clearly explains what is meant by "misconduct": i) disobedience of lawful orders by superiors; ii) negligence of duty; iii) ignoring government orders, circulars or directives without a lawful



Employees from various ministries and departments have been staging a demonstration inside the Secretariat premises for several days in protest of the Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

reason; iv) filing frivolous, baseless or false complaints against other employees; and v) any action defined as misconduct under any other existing laws or rules.

Importantly, the rules only penalise disobedience of lawful orders, not any order. In contrast, the new ordinance criminalises "insubordination" without clarifying what it entails. Insubordination to whom: the government, the state, or one's superior officer?

This opens the door to abuse, where senior officials or political authorities might compel subordinates to act unlawfully under the threat of punishment for insubordination. Conversely, public servants could also use this clause as a shield to justify illegal actions—such as electoral fraud—by claiming they were merely being "loyal."

Under the Government Employee (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 2018, as misconduct is defined as "disobedience of lawful orders by superiors," such justifications would not hold.

Another concerning aspect of the new ordinance is the disciplinary procedure it outlines. Under the existing rules, punishment follows a multi-step process with proper safeguards: (in order) i) framing of charges; ii) show-cause notice; iii) reply; iv) hearing; v) formation of an inquiry committee; vi) inquiry findings; vii) another show-cause notice based on the findings; viii) consultation with the Public Service Commission; and ix) final decision.

The new ordinance trims down this process to (in order): i) framing of charges; ii) show-cause notice; iii) reply; iv) hearing; v) show-cause based on the hearing; and vi) final decision.

There is no provision for an investigation or mandatory consultation with the Public Service Commission. While excluding the latter may help expedite cases, the elimination of investigation into the charges is troubling. It creates a risk of politically motivated or personal vendetta-

introducing online service tracking systems; simplifying service processes; adopting token-based systems; enforcing service delivery timelines; and evaluating the performance or failure in delivering services.

The commission also recommends establishing an institutional grievance redress system in all ministries and departments, following the formation of the ombudsman's office. Community-based feedback collection systems could help assess public satisfaction and improve responsiveness. Citizens wronged by service failure should be entitled to compensation.

To evaluate government officials' effectiveness, PARC calls for the introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a new Annual Performance Evaluation (APE) system to replace the outdated Annual Confidential Report (ACR). Officials would submit Annual Work Plans (AWPs), and evaluations would be conducted at the year's end through a discussion with superiors. Employees' performance can be evaluated in four categories: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, and excellent. Financial benefits, training, and other amenities may be provided to the employees based on their performance.

To ensure neutrality of public administration, the reform commission also recommends abolishing the practice of seeking political background information for promotions, and limiting police checks to verifying pending criminal charges only during recruitment. It proposes banning civil servants from attending political programmes, restricting appointments of private secretaries from outside the civil service, setting clear boundaries for political intervention in administrative decisions, and prohibiting changes to official decisions without written instructions.

Over the past five decades, Bangladesh has seen 26 commissions and committees for public administration reform (Public Administration Reform Commission Report, January 2025, Pg 2). But they were not fully implemented and sustained for two main reasons. First, the political leadership did not accept all the recommendations, neither were they sincere or determined to implement the recommendations they did accept. Second, the concerned bureaucrats did not cooperate in their implementation due to conflict of interest.

To avoid repeating this cycle, the government must act with conviction and foresight. Hastily issuing flawed and undemocratic ordinances could backfire, inviting criticism and eventual retraction under pressure. Broad consultation with political parties, civil society, and stakeholders is essential to build consensus and ensure the sustainability of meaningful reforms.

Bangladesh needs a bureaucracy that serves its citizens with professionalism and integrity, not one driven by blind obedience. Real reform lies not in enforcing subordination, but in ensuring proper service.

## A dangerous surrender



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### SUBRATA ROY

commissioner's office and issued a 48-hour ultimatum for her removal.

The very next day, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education officially transferred Yeasmin. Local Hefazat officials expressed satisfaction with the move.

This series of unnerving developments brings a handful of disturbing questions to mind. Do the threats of pressure groups still wield the power to manipulate authority? Should any educator, writer, artist, rights defender, or journalist who dares think critically and voice their opinion be wary of such treatment? Does it make sense for their career, dignity, and safety to hinge on the whims of hardliners?

This is not just a transfer order. It's a dangerous surrender. With this, the government has legitimised an extrajudicial demand. By reacting to this demand without an investigation or giving the teacher a chance to defend herself, the state has undermined its own institutions and authority. Speaking to Prothom Alo, Yeasmin said, "From the very beginning, Nari Angan has operated with sensitivity to religion, society, and the times we live in. We

have never considered ourselves above accountability. Given the accusations raised, we feel it is important to clarify our stance. Nari Angan believes—as do I—that when the public demands accountability from a person or organisation, it often stems from a place of expectation and hope, not hostility.

"If anyone had approached us with a spirit of dialogue and cooperation before things escalated, we would have gladly engaged in conversation. Even now, I truly believe the entire situation has arisen from a misunderstanding. We see no one—certainly not religion—as our adversary."

Yeasmin was involved in last year's July uprising, standing with students against injustice, just as teachers before her did during the Language Movement, the Liberation War, and countless other struggles that shaped Bangladesh's democratic aspirations.

It's no wonder her sudden transfer has sparked outrage online and triggered a conversation about the shrinking space for women's freedom of speech in Bangladesh. Samantha Sharmin, senior joint convener of the National Citizen Party (NCP), said, "I strongly protest the decision to transfer Nadira Yeasmin by surrendering to mob violence. This decision should be reversed immediately." Social media group Bangladesh Feminist Archives condemned the government's move, saying it went against the values of democracy and principles of free speech. "Nadira Yeasmin 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 group said. "The state's duty was to protect her, not surrender to mob pressure." Academic Tanveer Hossain Anoy warned that "what begins as a protest against one woman's voice ends as a warning to every woman who dares to speak."

Nadira Yeasmins are the moral and intellectual backbone of a nation. They educate, challenge, and inspire the next generation. They are a voice for progress. When the government gives in to extremist pressure, it silences progressive voices—like teachers, activists, and critical thinkers. Soon, fear takes over open discussions, and democratic values start to crumble. The government's role is not to appease such threats but to uphold justice, just as the role of educators is not to parrot conformity but to provoke thought and lead society.

Promoting equal rights isn't just about fairness—it's a strategic necessity in an interconnected world. A country that empowers both men and women thrives politically, economically, and socially.

The future of this country depends on how we respond to this moment. Will we defend our teachers and thinkers? Or will we allow mob pressure to write the rules of our republic?

The government should reverse this transfer—if only to show the courage to stand with its teachers, not against them. Because a nation that silences its educators is a nation that jeopardises its future.



# Rising crime, institutional failure, and the bystander effect



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza  
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Social psychologists refer to this phenomenon as the “bystander effect.” In a moment of crisis, a victim is likely to get less support in the presence of a group of individuals or witnesses. The bystanders simply assume that someone else in the crowd will intervene. This diffusion of responsibility reinforces mutual denial, allowing the perpetrator to thrive.

I was trying to make sense of the endless pixelated images on social media where young men are seen carrying machetes in the open, snatching mobiles or personal goods from cars or rickshaws. They prowl like hyenas in the city jungle. Yet, there is no visible intervention from the bystanders, and little follow-up by police. Our urban experiences have taught us that interventions may prove to be costly and are unlikely to change anything. This reflects in our defence mechanism: while I can risk my life to apprehend one of the perpetrators, they will likely return to the streets due to legal loopholes. Therefore, it’s safer to share my dashcam footage, video recorded on mobile phones, or CCTV clips than to act.

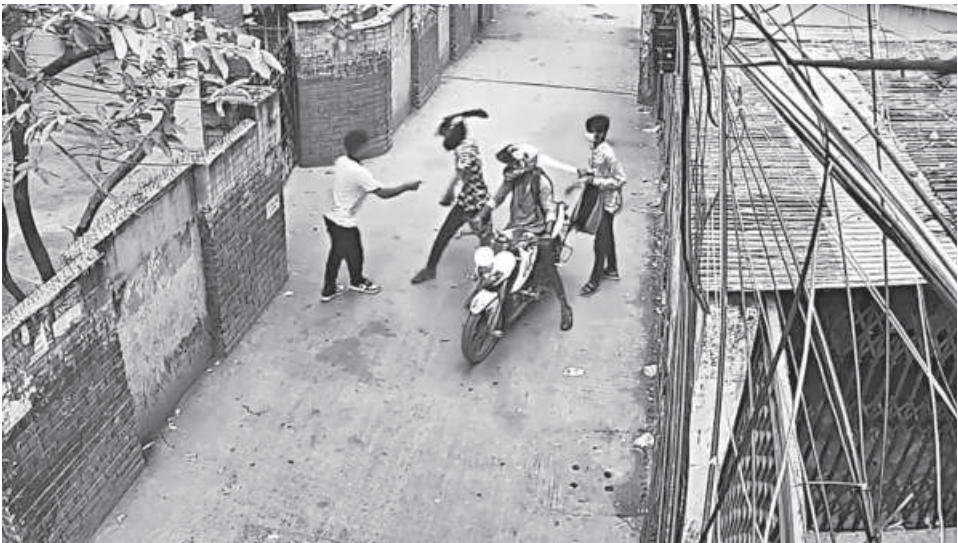
The collective numbness contradicts the spirit with which the masses stormed the streets in July last year. Now, we pray: dear God, let me not be the next victim, the one to bleed or die in public or lose my gadgets that store my privacy. Our silent prayers take the form of a hapless sigh or an emotional social media post or comment. We scroll, hoping our digital virality will conjure some police action.

Our moral muscle has atrophied. We are back to a Darwinian maxim: survival of

the fittest. The foundation of civility, the social contract of solidarity, is in danger of disappearing. With survival as the dominant civic impulse, democracy and its paraphernalia are at risk. Law and Order is a press conference that premiered at 3am at the home minister’s theatre. The number of crimes is on the rise. Even official figures by the police depict a dismal scenario. The dull stats and numbers get some human faces when video footage becomes available.

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Nothing in the country moves without public outrage. Law enforcement agencies don’t react unless a protest is significant enough to capture the government’s attention. The actors who have entered the political stage after the fall of the Awami League regime are



SOURCE: VIDEOGRAB

Failure to check rising crime is eroding public trust and emboldening criminals.

reading from the old script. The government occasionally apprehends a few low-level criminals, neglecting the underlying causes of chaos. Even the much-hyped Operation Devil Hunt brought little relief to public fear.

Some blame the rise in crimes on the 700 prisoners out of the 2,200 who escaped on and after August 5. Officials also accuse the fallen regime of conspiring to harm the reputation of the interim government. But when organised crimes occur in broad daylight, we need to question the impunity with which these criminals operate. Claiming that organised crime networks are taking advantage of temporary fragility in governance is an argument without substance. The government has had enough time to address the political vacuum that reportedly weakened institutional checks. It is the job of the authority to uplift the morale of its forces and give them a clear directive on deliverables.

We have already seen how some high-density urban corridors in Mohammadpur,

Mirpur, Jatrabari, Farmgate, Gulshan, and Khilgaon have become crime hotspots. Attacks frequently target the blind spots under the Hanif Flyover, metro stations, and the elevated expressway. The pattern of attack in locations that act as choke points in the city’s mobility grid signals the operational control of the criminals. They are deliberately targeting places with lower police visibility, crowd fluidity, or symbolic value. Most of these muggers and attackers are in their teens and early 20s. Many of them were probably protected earlier by some Awami League bosses. In the absence of patrons, these muggers and attackers have now opportunistically switched their allegiance. Their motivations are more economic than ideological.

The use of narcotic substances is another issue. The porous border allows drugs to become easily accessible. With law enforcement agencies focused on mitigating bigger political problems, drug culture among the youth gangs is on the rise. Reports

suggest that these gangs are even using police as their agents. Several reported incidents have implicated law enforcement agencies or former uniformed men in robberies, muggings, and kidnappings. Corrupt police officials have become a part of the problem.

Even when victims go to report muggings or thefts, police seem more worried about the spike in their reported statistics. Social media posts become substitutes for formal complaints. It is a shame that the police only act when a footage goes viral or when the media speaks out. Those running the country should realise that their inaction undermines the state’s moral legitimacy.

Is it, then, appropriate to hold the general public accountable for their bystander effect? Our expectation of someone else acting in the face of an ongoing crime symbolises both our delusion about the legal system and our own defence mechanism. Often, the criminals nabbed by police get bail and return to the streets. Such judicial leniency or loopholes can frustrate and discourage the police, who often risk their lives to nab criminals. Without fast-track trials or stronger prosecutorial arms, deterrence is practically null. And for juvenile offenders, correction centres often serve as incubators for future crimes rather than being places where they are reformed.

Let us also not lose sight of the sociological drivers. The economy is still in a state of despair. Unemployment is at a record high. Soaring commodity prices push the youth to survival crime. The disillusionment following the uprising has left many of them feeling rudderless. They observe how one group of their peers with political connections receives preferential treatment over the other. With the disappearance of the former regime, old patronage networks are dissolved. Many of the foot soldiers are now on their own. In summary, we have entered a period where survival takes precedence over civics. We want to be bystanders with a prayer on our lips: dear God, let not the next victim be me!

## Don’t let Israel forcefully deport Palestinians



Yousef SY Ramadan  
is the ambassador of Palestine to Bangladesh.

YUSEF SY RAMADAN

Israel’s genocide in Gaza has now been going on for over 600 days. The Israeli government’s larger vision is clear: erase the demography of Gaza and all of Occupied Palestine, and seize the geography. The intentions have been demonstrated by Israel through both actions and words. Its finance minister recently said the government was planning to “apply sovereignty” to the West Bank, Occupied Palestine in the near future, and within half a year, the population of Gaza would be “concentrated” in a “humanitarian zone,” essentially a fenced-off piece of land in the destroyed Gaza Strip.

So the genocidal regime’s plan goes like this: use evacuation orders and intense bombardment to trap Palestinians in Gaza in a concentration camp, then starve them there to a state of hopelessness so that they want to leave themselves. And then they will claim Palestine from Palestinians. We have seen this before during the Nakba in 1948 and the Six-Day War in 1967.

Israel’s latest mission is executing an arrangement and threatening the people of Gaza—manipulating them into leaving on their own “will” through the shutdown Israeli border. Earlier in March, its Defence Minister Israel Katz released a video statement warning Palestinians in Gaza, “Take the advice of the US president. Return the hostages and eliminate Hamas, and other options will open



Palestinians, displaced by the Israeli military offensive, shelter in a UNRWA school in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on May 28, 2025.

PHOTO: REUTERS

for you—including going to other places in the world for those who wish. The alternative is complete destruction and devastation.”

Two bordering nations, Egypt and

Gazans through the Israeli border. In March, the security cabinet launched “Voluntary Emigration Bureau for Gaza residents interested in relocating to third countries”

**Since the development of this ‘voluntary exit plan,’ the Palestinian citizens in Gaza—young, old, injured, and starving—have received messages from Israeli numbers, including law firms based in Tel Aviv, offering them paperwork to ‘safely’ travel out of Gaza. News reports have revealed that Israeli agencies are persuading Gazans to give them ‘extensive assistance,’ to travel to Ramon Airport in Israel from where they are. In reality, they are being deported.**

to facilitate this goal with COGAT, which blocked 3,000 trucks of humanitarian aid from entering Gaza through that same border for 11 weeks to starve the children in Gaza to death. The images of their skeletal bodies are being circulated all throughout social media as I write this.

Since the development of this “voluntary exit plan,” the Palestinian citizens in Gaza— young, old, injured, and starving—have received messages from Israeli numbers, including law firms based in Tel Aviv, offering them paperwork to “safely” travel out of Gaza. News reports have revealed that Israeli agencies are persuading Gazans to give them “extensive assistance,” to travel to Ramon Airport in Israel from where they are. In reality, they are being deported. Israel’s Interior Minister Moshe Arbel said on April 7 that Palestinians had been deported to various destinations in at least 16 flights by then. The term “deportation” implies they will not be allowed to return, further cementing that the goal of this policy is to simply empty the Gaza Strip of Palestinians.

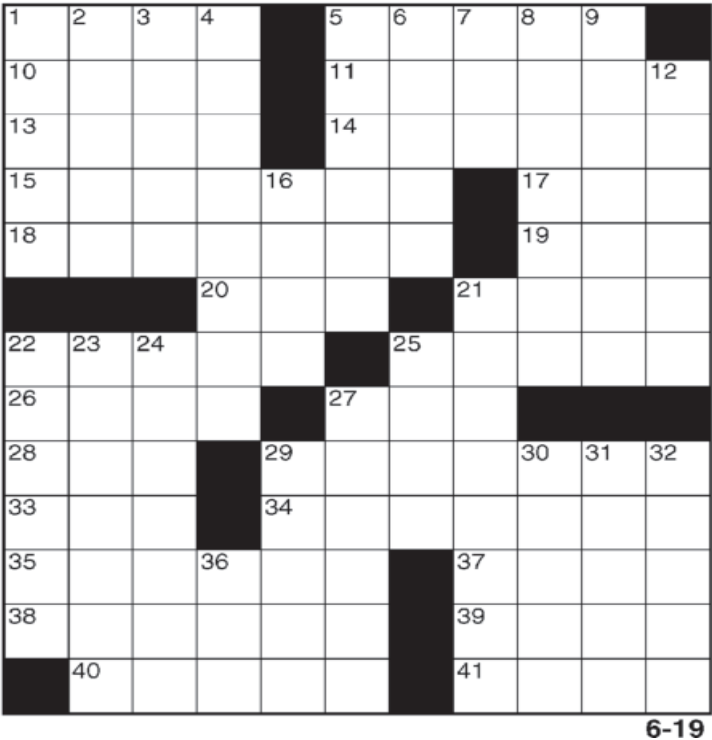
Israel’s rationale for “voluntary exit” under the premise of “humanitarian assistance” also collapses under international law. As upheld by international tribunals, particularly the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, “It is impermissible to use forced displacement as a response to a disaster that one has created.”

It has come to our knowledge that some entities—including in parts of the world that have demonstrated solidarity to Palestinians—are knowingly or unknowingly helping Israel expel Palestinians from Gaza under initiatives that appear humane on the surface. We must not fall into this trap after seeing with our own eyes what Israel has done to the Palestinians in Gaza over more than 600 days.

We must understand that “helping” Palestinians by hosting them as refugees forced out through the border of Israel undermines the Palestinian cause. I appeal to the people of conscience in Bangladesh as well as the decision-makers to not allow such heinous acts to take place under the pretext of protecting Palestinian lives in the Gaza Strip. Bangladesh should not be an alternative refuge for pushed-out, exploited citizens in Gaza under any circumstances. Israel’s deceitful plan has also been criticised by UN officials who emphasise the Palestinians’ right to live in their own land, and warn that forced migration is directly fostering Israel’s vision to annihilate Gaza. It is imperative that the world realises that, especially the people of Bangladesh, who have set standards of humanity by unwaveringly standing beside Palestine throughout its history and shown historic solidarity for the Palestinians during Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

CROSSWORD  
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Sharif of “Dr. Zhivago”  
5 San Antonio landmark  
10 Lose color  
11 New Orleans school  
13 Neeson of “Taken”  
14 Writer Alice  
15 Poet Maya  
17 Greek vowel  
18 Hoe users  
19 Bro’s sibling  
20 Pen fill  
21 Silent performer  
22 Church parts  
25 Mentioned  
26 Swedish singer Jenny  
27 Knee protector  
28 Yale rooter  
29 Bean-filled food  
33 Coat rack part  
34 Writer Ralph  
35 Poet Langston  
37 Stadium rooters  
38 Do some film editing  
39 Destiny
- DOWN
- 1 Court — (legal venue)  
2 Bangor’s state  
3 Wise saying  
4 Corrected  
5 Busy  
6 Island feasts  
7 Maximum amount  
8 Succeeds  
9 Former  
12 Made blank  
16 Eye part  
21 Torso parts  
22 First Hebrew letters  
23 Major collisions  
24 Fish for eels  
25 Poet Sandburg  
27 Throbs  
29 Hardwood tree  
30 Writer Asimov  
31 Scout’s rider  
32 Start  
36 Wallop



### YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR  
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# BANGLADESHI ‘KEN’ IN DHAKA

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

From riding around in a CNG while wearing a lungi to walking the red carpet at the Prothom Alo Awards—Ramzan Miah’s short trip to Dhaka was anything but boring. The Bangladeshi ‘Ken’, known for his appearances in major Hollywood productions like *Barbie*, *Wicked*, and *Aladdin*, continues to make the country proud as he juggles acting, dancing, and interviewing some of Hollywood’s biggest names.

“Originally, my trip to Dhaka was meant to be short—I came to relax. But a skincare brand reached out, and I ended up working for it,” said Ramzan Miah. “I was happy to meet friends and explore the city by CNG and rickshaw. I’ve been sightseeing in Old Dhaka, learning about the history behind the buildings. I even visited a mosque here for the first time. Dhaka feels magical—busy, yes, but full of love and respect. Everyone works so hard, and I just feel content being here.”

Recently, two of Ramzan’s videos went viral—one of him roaming the streets of Dhaka in a lungi, and another wearing a sherwani in the UK.

“Lungi is part of my tradition and my community,” he explained. “If I don’t embrace and share that, I feel like I’m losing something important. I’m not trying to be someone else—I’m trying to represent my roots. The lungi, the sherwani—they’re all part of who I am. When I posted the sherwani look a month ago, it went viral. People saw someone they could relate to—‘Ramzan bhai’ in a way that reflects their own lives. I wear lungis regularly, so I thought, why not normalise that here? Representing our culture abroad is vital. We’re a minority, and we need to highlight our culture as much as we can.”

Despite the love and support online, Ramzan has also faced hate and racism. “I get a lot of abusive comments—people calling me things like ‘Black monkey’ or using racial slurs like the N-word. Some say, ‘He’s a CNG driver, why is he a model?’ Sadly, I get these kinds of comments daily. But I’ve learned it comes from insecurity—people who lash out because they see someone like me doing things they never imagined possible. I’ve grown a thick skin, but it’s disheartening to know that racism still exists, sometimes even from people within my community. I try to change the narrative by being more visible. The more I work, the more the negativity has started to fade.”

Dance has been a key part of Ramzan’s journey to Hollywood. “I started with Bangladeshi *natoks* when I was young, and as I grew older, I fell in love with dance. I trained seriously, and that helped me land roles in *Wicked*, *Barbie*, and *Aladdin*. For *Barbie*, they needed a dancer who could act, move, and embody a ‘Ken’. I ended up filming for three months. I even had to learn fight choreography for a fight scene between the Kens—something I had never done before.”

*Wicked* was another milestone. “That one was

special,” he said. “I auditioned while I was in Dhaka for *Barbie*’s premiere. I always carry my camera and tripod with me. My agent called and said, ‘Ramzan, we need an audition tape now.’ I told him, ‘Send me the scene,’ and I filmed it right there in the hotel room. I’m always ready for a challenge.”

Given the availability of limited roles for South Asian actors and the growing competition, Ramzan believes that visibility is key. “Social media plays a huge role. It connects you with directors, casting agents, and fellow creatives. Friends are important too—if you surround yourself with other creative people, you can produce your own films, create your own dance pieces, tell your own stories.”

One of his roles even came directly through social media. “I was cast in Ed Sheeran’s music video *Aziam* because of my online presence. They found my profile and thought I was stylish, a strong dancer, and could act—so they cast me. That’s the power of digital visibility.”

Beyond acting and dancing, Ramzan also loves to interview big names in Hollywood. “Film premieres in the UK have become more inclusive—they’re inviting social media influencers as part of their marketing strategy. I’ve had the chance to interview the cast and directors of *Lilo & Stitch*, and even the director of *Thunderbolts*. They wanted someone from the South Asian community as a representative, and it’s also a great way for me to connect with directors and learn what they look for during casting. It’s another way to help my community and see the possibilities.”

When asked which interview stood out the most, Ramzan didn’t hesitate, affirming, “Interviewing Auli i Cravalho, the voice of Moana, was amazing. She was super cool, got my name right, and even said she wanted to visit Bangladesh! I asked her how *Moana* connects to culture, and she loved that question. I told her I’m Bangladeshi and love embracing my culture. I asked if there’s a journey she’d love to experience more, and she said, ‘I’d love to experience Bangladesh.’ Next time I interview any director or producer, I’ll ask them a question like, ‘Can we shoot the next part in Bangladesh?’”

Ramzan has earned the nickname ‘Bangladeshi Ken’, a title he embraces with pride. “Everywhere I went in Dhaka, people asked, ‘Oh my God, are you Ken from *Barbie*?’ I think it’s going to stick—and honestly, I love it. It’s amazing to see people so proud to see a Bangladeshi in a big Hollywood film. I don’t mind being called Bangladeshi Ken because it gives people hope. If they can see me, maybe they can imagine themselves there too. That’s what makes it special. I want to inspire others to write their own stories and chase their dreams.”



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix  
Forget You Not



Apple TV+  
Fountain of Youth



Bongo  
Mirza



Chorki  
Gulmohor



Hoichoi  
Bohemian Ghora



## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Nazrul Concert  
May 31 | 5 pm onwards  
Manik Mia Avenue



Play: Dilnawaz  
June 3-4 | 7 pm-8 pm  
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Printmaking Workshop: Bhashajog  
June 13-21 | 10 am-6 pm  
National Art Gallery

# ‘THE STUDIO’ Where Hollywood gets roasted



## TV TALKIES

*The Studio* is a whirlwind comedy that hides its cleverness behind nonstop jokes and a dazzling visual trick: every episode unfolds in extended, uninterrupted takes.

Seth Rogen plays Matt Remick, a film executive thrust into a high-stakes promotion just as he’s losing faith in Hollywood’s soul. While Rogen’s signature clueless charm brings laughs, it can grow repetitive. Still, the show’s true strength lies in its technical brilliance—cinematography, editing, and direction combine to pull off bold comedic stunts with flair.

The supporting cast, including Catherine O’Hara and Bryan Cranston, deliver hilarious performances that keep things lively even when the satire softens. With slapstick chaos, inside-industry jabs, and nods to cinema’s golden age, *The Studio* blends old-school glam with modern absurdity.

Though its gimmick sometimes wears thin, the show remains visually inventive and riotously funny. Ultimately, it’s a loving roast of Hollywood—a chaotic dreamland where even the dumbest jokes are executed with precision.

## WHAT’S PLAYING

### ‘What I Want’ by Morgan Wallen & Tate McRae

In *What I Want*, Morgan Wallen and Tate McRae deliver a simmering collaboration that fuses the rugged intimacy of country with the glassy introspection of contemporary pop. The track, anchored by hushed guitars, atmospheric production, and aching vocal interplay—feels like an elegy for a relationship caught between longing and resignation.

Drawn from Wallen’s juggernaut album *I’m the Problem*, the song offers a rare emotional vulnerability from both artistes. Wallen’s gravelled voice folds into McRae’s crystalline falsetto as they trade confessions, unraveling the delicate choreography of a romance undone by mismatched desires.

Released without an official music video (save for a minimalist lyric video), *What I Want* nevertheless made a seismic chart debut. It entered the Billboard Hot 100 at No 1—Wallen’s fourth time at the summit, McRae’s first. In its debut week, it drew over 31 million streams and made Wallen the first country artist to claim the Hot 100’s top three spots.





# Thousands still marooned

# Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Jail Superintendent

Jhenaidah District Jail

www.prison.jhenaidah.gov.bd

Memo no-58.04.8800.142.03.046.25-2384/2(2)

Date: 29.05.2025

## e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal for the procurement of following goods, details are given below.

S.N	Tender ID NO	Name of Work	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
01	1120847	Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ka-Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16 Jun 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
02	1120865	Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ka-Package-02 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16.Jun. 2025 11:00 AM	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
03	1120896	Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ka-Package-03 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun 2025 11:00 AM	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
04	1120903	Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ka-Package-04 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16 Jun 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
05	1120989	Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ka-Package-05 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16 Jun 2025 11:00 AM	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
06	1121015	Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetables) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Kha-Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
07	1121024	Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetables) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Kha-Package-02 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
08	1121098	Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetables) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Kha-Package-03 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
09	1121099	Dietary Articles (Different types of Vegetables) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Kha-Package-04 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
10	1121102	Dietary Articles (Different types of oils, spices, food ingredients and accessories) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ga-Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
11	1121103	Dietary Articles (Different types of oils, spices, food ingredients and accessories) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ga-Package-02 for the period of July 2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
12	1121188	Dietary Articles (Different types of oils, spices, food ingredients and accessories) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ga-Package-03 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
13	1121255	Dietary Articles (Different types of oils, spices, food ingredients and accessories) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ga-Package-04 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
14	1121294	Dietary Articles (Different types of oils, spices, food ingredients and accessories) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ga-Package-05 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
15	1121325	Dietary Articles (Different types of oils, spices, food ingredients and accessories) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ga-Package 06 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16. Jun. 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM

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**Prasanjit Saha**  
 Assistant Commissioner  
 and

Jail Superintendent (Acting)  
 District Jail, Jhenaidah  
[jailsuperjhenaidah@gmail.com](mailto:jailsuperjhenaidah@gmail.com)

GD-1326

S.N	Tender ID NO	Name of Work	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
01	1120847	Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) Category-2 Tender Schedule-Ka-Package-01 for the period of July/2025 to December/2025	16 Jun 2025 11:00 A.M	16.Jun.2025 12:00 PM
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GD-1326



INTERVIEW

# An evening at Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay and Dhaka Sessions

On the topic of community, one thing I would like to add is that classical music has seen a decline in interest among people nowadays. Practicing the arts, in general, is always treated like an extracurricular activity in most families. Communities have a responsibility to make practicing art be perceived less as a niche activity and more as

RAIAN ABEDIN

In one of their most recent episodes, Dhaka Sessions featured three young artists from Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay to perform in the intimate and literary, lush space of Bookworm Bangladesh. The ensemble featured sisters Ilham Fuljhuri Khan and Isra Fuljhuri Khan on sarod, along with Nusrat E Jahan Khushbu on tabla, and the piece performed was titled “Raga Bhimpalasi”—a nearly 17-minute-long performance filled to the brim with a sort of wonder and whimsy that only seasoned musicians in their prime can deliver.

Star Books and Literature sat down with the three artists, who have all been scholars of Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay—an institution under Bengal Foundation offering training in Indian classical music to students from a young age completely free of cost. Joining them were Maitri Sarker, senior programme coordinator of the Sangeetalay, and Chotu Khan, the curator cum founder of Dhaka Sessions.

You all are still in high school and somehow manage both music and your studies. How have you found



PHOTOS: DHAKA SESSIONS

in most families. Communities have a responsibility to make practicing art be perceived less as a niche activity and more as something that is meant for everyone. Our music is a part of our culture and we don't want that to be erased. There is a lot to be said about how our country does not appreciate its artists—and frankly, I think that's due to the fact that we lack a community that treats art with the love it deserves. Our culture, our art, rarely gets the spotlight it deserves.

**Chotu:** I think Bookworm here deserves a lot of credit for the space they've provided. When I wanted to start Dhaka Sessions, they immediately agreed to provide me with the space. The way a bookshop allowed the convergence of musicians from Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay, Dhaka Sessions, and themselves is something I'm very grateful for. I think they allow it because they understand how important this is—art, books, culture—we are all intertwined.

**What do you think of the importance of communal spaces where different forms of art can converge?**

**Ilham:** Dhaka Sessions, I will say, serves as a platform for different forms of art to come together. With so many different genres of music being played at a bookstore, I can't help but think of the many ways this helps an audience to a wider range of art.

**Chotu:** All of us have this tendency of separating our art from each other. Some say they're a musician while others say they're a writer. But the truth is, we are all artists. And we need to connect with each other to evolve as artists.

**On that note, Chotu Bhai, what are your plans for Dhaka Sessions moving forward?**

**Chotu:** Our primary aim with Dhaka Sessions is to archive our culture via performances that are present mainly on YouTube and Facebook. It's a platform for musicians of all kinds. From what I've experienced, fans of music in Bangladesh are dedicated to one particular genre or style, for instance, band music lovers typically don't cross over into classical music; folk music lovers don't necessarily listen to pop music much, so on and so forth. With Dhaka Sessions, I want to create a community of people who are ready to appreciate art of all kinds. Somewhere down the line, we hope to have a festival where all these artists of varying genres can come together and perform. The ultimate goal with art is to connect with people through it.

**Raian Abedin is a poet, a student of Biochemistry, and a contributor to The Daily Star.**



something that is meant for everyone. Our music is a part of our culture and we don't want that to be erased.

the balance, and how long have you been a part of Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay?

**Ilham Fuljhuri Khan:** For my sister and me, it's been almost 10 years since we've been a part of this institution, and we've made it a significant part of our lives. For so long now, we've spent long hours at Bengal dedicating ourselves to our music. While we do have our education to worry about, it's very much like a side hobby for us. Our music takes up most of our time and we wouldn't want it to be any different than the way it is now.

**Isra Fuljhuri Khan:** This has mainly been possible thanks to the support we receive from our family. Being a part of a family that has a history of professional musicians has been a blessing, and as the sixth generation of musicians in the family, we are

honoured to follow through with the legacy. Our first ever exposure to music was thanks to our parents. So without them, we really wouldn't be here.

**Nusrat E Jahan Khushbu:** My journey has been very different. I've been playing the tablas for around 11 years now, and along with my sister, I am a first-generation musician in my family. My parents have always been very supportive of our effort to learn and play music, which is really how I've managed to balance both my education and my music.

**Maitri Sarker:** Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay recruits gurus to mentor our students. We make sure to put a lot of care into the growth of our musicians and are ready to provide everything free of cost to make sure they can dedicate themselves fully to their music.

**How did you come into contact with Chotu bhai? What was the arrangement like?**

**Chotu Khan:** It was actually I who contacted Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay. When I first approached them, we had a conversation about how many songs we wanted the artists to play. I insisted that it should be five, as is usual of all Dhaka Sessions episodes. But Maitri disagreed. I'm not much into classical music, so it never occurred to me that the song they would be performing would be nearly 17 minutes long.

**Maitri:** The Ragas, which literally mean mood, are selected very carefully. There are certain Ragas that are to be

played for specific moods, and specific to the time of the day. Ragas can be very long and elaborate.

**What sets Indian classical music apart from western classical music?**

**Ilham:** A lot of western classical music is dependent on memorising compositions. How we perform, on the other hand, depends a lot on improvisation and on-the-spot communication with your fellow performers.

**Isra:** Another thing to note here is that while this style of music is often called Indian classical music, it is very much a part of Bangali culture. We have been performing this style of music for generations now. Ragas function more like guidelines to establish within which the performer is free to express themselves as they wish.

**Chotu:** They are closer to jazz in many ways where improvisation is the primary mode.

**What was the experience like playing in Bookworm? Did the atmosphere of being surrounded by books create an impact on you?**

**Khushbu:** Both Ilham and I have always been massive readers. Gorging on books whenever I get some free time is another passion of mine besides music, and having the opportunity to perform at Bookworm has become a core memory for me. Both Ilham and I would look at each other and then at the books, thinking about when we'd get to finish up with our performance and get to browse the books.

**Ilham:** Some of my favourite authors

include Saratchandra Chattopadhyay and Kafka; I'm constantly awed by literature and its ability to create new worlds. I read with the same passion that I study music with. I think Bookworm is an amazing place for musicians to gather and perform. Music and storytelling, after all, go hand in hand.

**This brings me to the idea of community. How important do you think community has been to your growth as an artist?**

**Isra:** I think community is how we're able to pursue any form of art at all. Without the community present here at Bengal, we wouldn't be the musicians we are today. And furthermore, without the sense of community we find within the audience who enjoy our classical music, as well as our parents, we really wouldn't be able to be here. There were times when I performed even with injuries simply because of how empowered I felt by my community.

**Khushbu:** When I think about community, I think about my sister and my father. The tablas are traditionally perceived to be very masculine, which is why my sister and I chose to challenge that notion. To support us, my father picked up the tablas himself, just to play along with his daughters.

**Ilham:** On the topic of community, one thing I would like to add is that classical music has seen a decline in interest among people nowadays. Practicing the arts, in general, is always treated like an extracurricular activity

POETRY

# What do you want to be when you grow up?

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

I remember the first time someone asked me that question

Moments after I had walked down the steep, red stairs into the garage where they kept grandma's body, with balls of cotton in her nostrils and her face more welcoming than I had ever seen when her skin was still flush with the flow of blood

and I didn't have it in me to hide the flash of anger sweeping across me when I turned to the lady digging into my shoulders with her red nails

But the anger wasn't at her or her nails but at the child that I had been who wanted to watch the monarch butterfly on my parents' big screen television instead of answering their grandma's calls from the other room to speed up the fan

And it was at my father for slashing me open with a knife in front of his mother turning me into the helpless little girl he had wanted his mother to be,

One that she could never love.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

In that dusty library surrounded by books on the Russian Revolution and post-colonial fascism in the midst of discussing the Katyas and Darias of his dreams,

he had slipped in the question, an expectation gleaming in his eyes, almost bordering on hunger

And I knew what I should say but the child

in me who had not been appeased for so long leapt out of their bones and settled into his lap, hands clasped tight with excitement

But the lap froze into a block of ice because I couldn't be the Katya he wanted or even the Daria he detested and his hunger dissolved into nothingness before fading to indifference

And I was scared of the love that I never got the chance to receive.

Now, I cannot tell you that I want to be intoxicated, inebriated, and stashed away for the rest of eternity while holding your hand at the mediocre fair in the middle of the crowd of ill-mannered school-children who grew up too soon and listless adults who never got the chance to grow up

I cannot tell you that I just want to exist in the ridges on the tips of your fingers or curl up and fall asleep in the dips of your collarbones till you forget I am there, a part of your body that you will take for granted until it is gone

And I cannot tell you that all I crave is normalcy in the form of peeling tangerines at the kitchen counter while you stir the

chicken curry that is too spicy for you and too bland for me

Because that is not something you can ever give me, and my heart is not muscles and tendons the way yours is;

it's made from a metal wire that has been stretched and stretched for far too long for it to maintain its elasticity anymore.

That child in me wants to tell you that I want to grow up to be a person that people can just love

Or that I don't want to grow up at all

But I am too tired

To speak in metaphors or wrap my emotions up in gauze and imagery

So you can take pride in being with someone intellectual and feel better about yourself.

So, I just kiss your chest and say goodbye.

**Adrita Zaima Islam is a half-fledged person trying to be a full-fledged yapper. Send them your condolences at [zaima2004adrita@gmail.com](mailto:zaima2004adrita@gmail.com).**



## THE FARUQUE SAGA

**August 21:** Former national skipper and chief selector Faruque Ahmed was appointed president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) following Nazmul Hassan Papon's resignation during a board meeting at the Secretariat. Nazmul Abedeen Fahim also joined the board as a director, nominated by the National Sports Council (NSC) alongside Faruque. They replaced Jalal Yunus, who resigned, and Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby, whose directorship was revoked by the NSC after he refused to step down.

**May 28:** Amid growing criticism, Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud reportedly asked Faruque to resign during a meeting at the adviser's residence.

**May 29:** Former skipper Aminul Islam Bulbul, who recently arrived in Dhaka for family reasons, confirmed to The Daily Star his agreement to assume the BCB presidency. Faruque, however, insisted he would not resign. Later that day, eight BCB directors sent a letter of no confidence in Faruque to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, requesting the revocation of his board membership. Only Akram Khan — Faruque's brother-in-law — did not sign. At around 11:00pm, the NSC revoked Faruque's directorship, citing majority board opposition and his failure to maintain normal BCB operations, referencing the BPL fact-finding committee report. His exit came just nine months into his tenure. Late in the night, the NSC nominated Bulbul as its new councillor, replacing Sheikh Hamim Hasan.

**May 30:** Ahead of an emergency BCB board meeting, Aminul Islam Bulbul received NSC's directorship. Following the meeting, he was elected as the BCB's 17th president.

## The curious case of BCB directors' no-confidence motion

BISHWAJIT ROY

Faruque Ahmed ascended to the presidency of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after the July uprising, with the onus of reforming the board from the inside. But his tenure ended in a little over nine months before the reform initiatives could even begin.

Plenty of whispers and theories surround his departure, but what truly led to his premature departure remains a question with no clear answer and the official explanation only deepens the mystery rather than providing clarity.

Nine months into his presidency, managing the board's day-to-day affairs had seemingly become too much for Faruque; let alone delivering on the long-term vision he had promised.

The situation, both on and off the field, was dismal. The national team was struggling, allegations of match-fixing were circulating, and administrative disarray was widespread in domestic cricket— all reminiscent of the dysfunction Faruque had vowed to fix.

Were these the reasons behind his downfall?

One must put aside the speculation and drama, and turn to the official version.

The National Sports Council (NSC) cited two reasons for cancelling Faruque's directorship:

1. A no-confidence motion submitted by eight current BCB directors.
2. The need to maintain the smooth operation of the BCB following the findings of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) fact-finding committee report.



So, two issues: the no-confidence motion and the BPL controversy.

The no-confidence motion accused Faruque of autocratic leadership, repeated constitutional violations, misuse of power and unilateral decision-making. Furthermore, the directors claimed his conduct created administrative chaos, worsened team performance, and caused serious reputational harm to Bangladesh cricket.

The eight directors who signed the letter sent to the ministry were: Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, Fahim Sinha, Saiful Alam Swapan Chowdhury, Iltekhar Rahman Mithu, Mahbub Anam, Kazi Enam Ahmed, Manjur Alam and Mohammad Salahuddin.

The irony? Except for Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, who joined the board with Faruque after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024, the rest were part of the previous BCB regime under long-serving president Nazmul Hassan Papon.

Did any of these individuals ever speak out against Papon's administration the way they now have against Faruque?

Take Mahbub Anam, for instance — often referred to as “a man for all seasons” — who has been a fixture in BCB governance under almost every government. Has he ever publicly opposed the wrongdoing of any previous administration?

Some might argue that Faruque accomplished more — or at least shook the status quo harder — in nine months than Papon did in over a decade.

It is also worth noting that within Faruque's board, BCB Tender & Purchase Committee Chairman Mahbub and BCB Finance Committee Chairman Sinha were both signatories authorising banking transactions.

This raises a fundamental question: why should only one individual be held solely responsible for alleged misdeeds, especially when others were actively involved in the decision-making process?

Governance— particularly in a complex organisation like the BCB—is a collective responsibility. If missteps occurred, surely those who participated in or endorsed key actions must also be held accountable.

Singling out Faruque while exonerating others who were part of the very same system points to selective justice — and possibly a political maneuver rather than an objective evaluation of performance.

For the first time in BCB history, board directors openly rebelled against their president. And tellingly, those leading the charge were deeply embedded in the previous regime.

The irregularities and unethical practices Faruque was accused of were embedded in the system during the previous regime, of which majority of the current directors were a part of. If Faruque is being held culpable for it, why not them?

Even more ironically, the current authority acted against its own nominated president based on allegations made by directors from the former board.

Then there's the BPL issue. If the controversy surrounding the tournament was serious enough to bring down a president, why was Faruque the only one held accountable? Why was Nazmul Abedeen Fahim—BPL's member secretary—not implicated?

Instead, Fahim was promoted to vice-president under new BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul.

Why were two individuals involved in the same matter treated so differently?

The question that continues to loom large is whether Faruque received fair treatment from the higher authorities. Because, despite the seriousness of the charges, no detailed explanation or concrete evidence was ever made public before his dismissal.

## PSG's modern flair faces Inter's grit

AFP, Munich

PSG have their sights fixed on finally winning the Champions League but a rugged and battle-hardened Inter side stand in their way in Saturday's final in Munich.

The climax to the European season has thrown up a mouthwatering clash of opposing styles and ideas. It is a contest between one of the continent's old guard and one of the state-owned modern superclubs.

Despite enormous spending, PSG have never won the most glamorous prize in European club football and this is just their second final since the transformative Qatari takeover of the team from the French capital in 2011.

In the absence of star footballers Kylian Mbappe, Neymar, and even Lionel Messi, Luis Enrique has transformed PSG into a thrilling young side (an average age under 24) with the onus on collective displays rather than individual priorities and has taken Europe by storm this season.

When they last came to Munich in November and lost 1-0 to Bayern, they were in danger of being knocked out during the league phase but a brilliant comeback win

in January against Manchester City was the catalyst for a superb run.

Ousmane Dembele has been the standout with 33 goals in all competitions, ably assisted by fellow forwards Desire Doue, Bradley Barcola and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

Others like Achraf Hakimi, formerly of Inter and perhaps the world's best full-back, and Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma have also been superb for the French league and cup double winners.

Inter, meanwhile, are bidding to win a fourth European Cup to add to back-to-back triumphs under Helenio Herrera in the 1960s, and the 2010 victory against Bayern in Madrid, under Jose Mourinho.

Coach Simone Inzaghi was already in charge when the Nerazzurri got to the final two years ago and lost narrowly to City.

As many as eight of the team that started that night in Istanbul could do so again here.

Inter will set up in a 3-5-2 formation that contrasts sharply with the 4-3-3 of PSG, and it will be fascinating to see how they respond to losing out to Napoli for the Serie A title on the last day of the season.

Winning would be the crowning achievement of a great job that started four years ago. We are desperate to make our fans really happy. We will give it our all; we will play the final lots of respect [for the opposition], but absolutely no fear.

Simone Inzaghi, Inter coach



I feel great with myself, I feel complete as a manager and as a person. I believe that this team and these players deserve to experience this final. The Paris fans and the club deserve to be Champions League winners.

Luis Enrique, PSG manager

- ⚡ This is the first ever competitive meeting between PSG and Inter, and is only the second European Cup/Champions League final between a French and Italian side, after Marseille beat Milan 1-0 in 1993. Incidentally, that final was also held in Munich.
- ⚡ While PSG are appearing in their second European Cup/Champions League final, while this is Inter's seventh appearance in the showpiece match.
- ⚡ Inter have scored 26 goals in Europe this season;

their joint most ever in a major European season, also scoring 26 in 2002-03.

⚡ Inter have trailed for just 1.2% of their Champions League matches this season, falling behind in only three games but never for more than 370 seconds in any of them.

⚡ PSG have already won their most games (10) and scored their most goals (33) in a single major European campaign.



## Women footballers face Indonesia today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's football team will look to display a better performance as they now have the senior players present for their game against Indonesia in a Tri-Nation Series at King Abdullah II Stadium in Amman, Jordan, today.

The match will kick off at 8:00 pm (Bangladesh Time).

Bangladesh, sans most of the senior players who were part of the SAFF Women's Championship-winning squad, played two FIFA friendlies against the United Arab Emirates in March following a rift between senior players and English coach Peter Butler.

However, now that the crisis is over, the girls are eager to play their natural game against 94th-ranked Indonesia, who played a 1-1 draw against Jordan in the series on Wednesday.

"Bangladesh are now a stronger side than the squad that played against UAE because of a good combination of senior and junior players. So we are hoping to perform better on the back of our hard work in the training camp," said captain Afeida Khandokar.



## Shambolic batting sees Tigers lose Pakistan series



Bangladesh batter Tawhid Hridoy looks dejected after being trapped in front by Pakistan leggie Abrar Ahmed, leaving the Tigers in a spot of bother in chase of a 202-run target in the second T20I of the three-match series in Lahore on Friday. Things only went downhill from there, as Bangladesh lost the plot in the middle, losing five wickets for just 23 runs in a space of as many deliveries. Despite Tanzim Sakib's (50 off 31) late flurry, Bangladesh were restricted to 144 in 19 overs to lose the contest by 57 runs. Pacer Shoriful Islam did not come out to bat, having suffered an injury while bowling. Pakistan's Abrar shone with the ball, claiming his career-best figures of three for 19, as the hosts clinched the series 2-0 with a game in hand. PHOTO: PCB

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## Bulbul replaces Faruque as BCB president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former national skipper Aminul Islam Bulbul was elected as the new president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday, ending weeks of speculation about him replacing former president Faruque Ahmed.

Following the National Sports Council's (NSC) decision to revoke Faruque's BCB directorship on Thursday night -- which came after the majority of the board directors expressed no confidence in him, and the review of the BPL fact-finding committee's report -- it was quite evident that Bulbul would take the job.



Bulbul, who played 13 Tests and 39 ODIs between 1988 and 2002, was recently offered a role in the BCB by Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud and after a series of incidents at BCB in recent times, he became the 17th BCB president and only the second cricketer

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



Palestinians evacuate following an Israeli strike on a house in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 71 more pushed in through four border districts

STAR REPORT

At least 71 more people were detained by BGB yesterday after they were pushed into Bangladesh allegedly by India's Border Security Force (BSF) through various border points in Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Khagrachhari, and Lalmonirhat.

Fifty-one of them were identified as Bangladeshi nationals, according to BGB and local administration officials.

They could not confirm the identities of the remaining 20 till the filing of this report last night.

In Moulvibazar, 19 Bangladeshis were detained near Champa Para border and Baghichhara border area in Kamalganj upazila in the morning.

Lt Col ASM Zakaria, commander of BGB-46 Battalion, said, "The detainees are residents of northern regions. The BSF reportedly brought them to near the borders and pushed them back into our territory."

The individuals were apprehended around 7:30am, while attempting to enter Bangladesh. Of them, 14 were detained near Champa Para border and five near Baghichhara border, he said.

Besides, BGB detained 10 others, including women and children, near the border in Juri upazila in the morning.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

## ANTI-TOBACCO LAW AMENDMENT Revenue gets priority over public health

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The move to strengthen the anti-tobacco law has stalled for the authorities' greater emphasis on revenue generation from tobacco sales than on public health, according to anti-tobacco campaigners.

The amendment to the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act has yet to see the light of day despite being placed before the cabinet twice in the past two years.

The development comes at a time when anti-tobacco campaigners have expressed concern over the slow decline in tobacco use, suggesting that Bangladesh is unlikely to meet the UN-set target for 2030.

### AMENDMENT PROPOSALS

- Stop sale of loose or unpackaged tobacco products
- Ban retail sale of tobacco products without registration
- Ban tobacco advertising in digital, social media platforms
- Don't allow CSR events by tobacco companies

Citing surveys, they pointed out two alarming trends: the age of smoking initiation has become lower and the use of e-cigarettes has significantly increased during this period.

Against the backdrop, the country as well as the world is observing World No Tobacco Day today with the theme "Unmasking the appeal: Exposing industry tactics on tobacco and nicotine products".

This year's WNTD campaign aims to reveal the strategies employed by the tobacco and nicotine industries to make their harmful products enticing, particularly to young people, according to the World Health Organization.

By exposing these tactics, the WHO seeks to drive awareness, advocate for stronger policies, including a ban on flavours that make tobacco and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

## Dozens of parties want polls by Dec Say Gono Forum, leftist parties; term Yunus's polls claim 'misleading'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum, the Left Democratic Alliance, and the 12-Party Alliance have strongly reiterated their demand for holding the national election by December.

In separate statements yesterday, the parties rejected recent remarks made by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in Japan that "no one except one party wants elections in December".

They criticised the chief adviser's claim, terming it "false, misleading, and damaging to the political atmosphere".

Gono Forum described the remarks as "incorrect" and expressed concern that such statements from the chief adviser and others in the interim government were creating confusion and division among political parties.

The party said it has long called for necessary reforms and preparations to hold a free, fair, and credible election by December. It accused the government of failing to adopt a clear plan

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

## UN warns all of Gaza at risk of famine

Hamas says new US-backed truce proposal does not meet demands

AGENCIES

Gaza is "the hungriest place on Earth", the United Nations said yesterday, warning that the Palestinian territory's entire population was now at risk of famine.

Negotiations to end nearly 20 months of offensive have so far failed to achieve a breakthrough, with Israel resuming operations in Gaza in March, ending a six-week truce.

"Gaza is the hungriest place on Earth," said Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

"It's the only defined area -- a country or defined territory within a country -- where you have the entire population at risk of famine. 100 percent of the population at risk of famine," he said, rejecting claims to the contrary by Israeli authorities.

Meanwhile, the White House said Thursday Israel had "signed off" on a new Gaza ceasefire proposal submitted to Hamas, but the Palestinian group said the deal failed to satisfy its demands.

The White House said President Donald Trump and US envoy Steve Witkoff had "submitted a ceasefire

proposal to Hamas that Israel backed".

A source close to the Hamas said the new version "is considered a retreat" from the previous one, which "included an American commitment regarding permanent ceasefire negotiations".

According to two sources close to the negotiations, the new proposal involves a 60-day truce, potentially extendable to 70 days, and the release of 10 living hostages and nine bodies in exchange for Palestinian prisoners during the first week.

In central Gaza, Israeli forces had shot and wounded at least 20 people seeking aid at the newest distribution point set up by the controversial Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, reports Al Jazeera online.

Medical sources also said that at least 28 people had been killed by Israeli attacks yesterday. The casualties are mainly coming from attacks on the north, where the Israeli military issued a spate of forced evacuation orders earlier yesterday.

Israel announced Thursday the creation of 22 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, drawing sharp condemnation from Britain, Jordan

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



## 3,000-year-old Mayan city found in Guatemala

AFP, Guatemala City

Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of a Mayan city nearly 3,000 years old in northern Guatemala, with pyramids and monuments that point to its significance as an important ceremonial site, the Central American country's culture ministry said Thursday.

The Mayan civilization arose around 2000 BC, reaching its height between 400 and 900 AD in what is present-day southern Mexico and Guatemala, as well as parts of Belize, El Salvador and Honduras.

The city named "Los Abuelos," Spanish for "The Grandparents," once stood some 21 kilometres (13 miles) from the important archaeological site of Uuxactun, in Guatemala's northern Peten department, the ministry said in a statement.



A group of youngsters enjoy a game of football in the now-muddy cropland after all the paddy was recently harvested. The photo was taken yesterday in Godagari upazila in Rajshahi.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## US suggests student visa suspension to be brief

AFP, Washington

The US State Department indicated Thursday that a global suspension on visa processing for international students would be brief, as it ramps up scrutiny of applicants' social media activity.


State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce encouraged prospective students to seek visa appointments and said: "I would not be recommending that if this was going to be weeks or months."

"I can tell you that it's something that would happen perhaps sooner than later," she told reporters.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday ordered embassies and consulates to pause scheduling appointments for student visas pending new guidelines on checking applicants' social media postings.

It is one of a series of battles waged over education by President Donald Trump's administration, which has rescinded thousands of visas, sought to ban Harvard University from accepting any international students.

স্মরণ



এনসিসি ব্যাংক পি.এলসি. এর সাবেক পরিচালক, আবদুল মোনেম লিং এর প্রতিষ্ঠাতা চেয়ারম্যান মরহুম আবদুল মোনেম-এর ৫ম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকীতে তাঁর অবদান আমরা গভীর শ্রদ্ধায় স্মরণ করছি এবং বিদেশি আয়ের মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

পরিচালনা পর্ষদ এক ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্তৃপক্ষ

**এনসিসি ব্যাংক**  
আপনার সাথে সবসময়





The Senate Bhaban at RU.

PHOTO: FAHIM MUNTASIR RAFIN



A waterbody at RU.

PHOTO: NURAHSAN MRIDUL



Paris Road on the campus.

PHOTO: FAHIM MUNTASIR RAFIN



A road surrounded by trees.

PHOTO: NURAHSAN MRIDUL

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY

A haven for biodiversity amid urban sprawl

NURAHSAN MRIDUL

Tucked away in the heart of northwestern Bangladesh, Rajshahi University is more than just a place of learning -- it is a sanctuary where the natural world thrives alongside academic life.

Spread across 753 acres, the campus teems with lush greenery, tranquil water bodies, and a surprising richness of wildlife. Here, birds nest in classroom shadows, snakes slither quietly past footpaths, and squirrels dart through tree canopies -- creating a rare harmony between humans and nature that is becoming increasingly difficult to find elsewhere.

The campus is home to a remarkable array of flora and fauna that has, in recent years, drawn the admiration of conservationists,

**Northern Palm Squirrel, locally known as Pach Dora Kathbirali.**

researchers and nature enthusiasts alike.

Two large lakes and several smaller ponds dot the grounds, serving as vital watering holes and habitats for countless species. The mulberry grove near one such lake plays host to a notable number of local migratory birds, according to Save Wildlife and Nature, RU -- a campus-based environmental conservation organisation.

But this once-lively lake, which used to echo with the calls of diverse bird species, now stands quieter. The number of birds is gradually

sightings have attracted national and international birdwatchers, quietly transforming the campus into a discreet pilgrimage site for those who seek to witness the extraordinary.

Another avian resident, that has made the campus its home, is the green parrot, a species that once thrived in rural agricultural areas, but has increasingly found shelter in urban spaces like RU.



Blue-throated Barbet, locally known as Nilgola Basantobouri.

Modern farming techniques and expanding human settlement have driven these birds away from their original habitats, prompting them to settle in the Gagan Sirish trees lining Paris Road. With their wide canopies and sturdy branches, these trees offer ideal nesting grounds. In the early mornings and late afternoons, birdwatchers and photographers gather along the shaded path, hoping to capture the parrot's colourful vibrance.

Sharing the same canopy, surprisingly, are the formidable Black Kites, locally known as Bhubon Chil, large raptors known for their soaring grace and keen predatory instincts. The

of their behavioural patterns to observe.

Adding to the chorus is the Brahminy Starling (Bamuni Shalik), whose striking appearance and melodic calls have made it one of the most beloved species among students walking through the campus. Their visible presence across the university signals a healthy ecological balance -- an encouraging sign in an age of rapid environmental decline.

The richness of biodiversity at RU extends beyond birds. The campus

is also home to various reptiles, including venomous snakes like the Monocled Cobra (Kheya Gokhra) and the Common Krait (Kalach). Non-venomous snakes such as the Water Snake and Whip Snake often appear near ponds and thickets, while the mildly venomous Brown Snake (Mete Shap), generally shy and non-aggressive, adds to the variety. Two species of monitor lizards roam the grounds as well: the common Bengal Monitor and the less frequently seen Golden Monitor. These reptiles serve as natural pest controllers, helping to keep rodent populations in check.

Whenever snakes or monitors stray into student dormitories or classrooms, they are carefully rescued by campus wildlife groups and relocated to safer zones like Motihar Garden. These groups

the 2017-18 session in the Department of Ceramics and current president of Save Wildlife and Nature, RU, remarked that Rajshahi contributes to 48 percent of Bangladesh's total biodiversity, with the university acting as a miniature sanctuary within that ecosystem.

According to him, student awareness has seen a dramatic shift. "Our student body has become increasingly aware and respectful of the wildlife around them. Whenever an animal needs help, the first reports come from students. This was not always the case. It's this small shift in awareness that can help us protect Rajshahi University's wildlife for future generations," he said.

Professor Saleh Reza noted that observing wildlife on campus requires more than just a walk -- it demands attention and curiosity.

"Some students stroll mindlessly while others observe deeply. If more people take the time to look up and around while walking, they'll see just how much this environment is offering them. Unfortunately, every day 30,000 to 40,000 people commute across the campus, and in the evenings, the crowd thickens. This heavy footfall disrupts the resting time of birds and other animals," he said.

The push for ecological sustainability is a growing concern among faculty and students alike. Many believe that introducing designated nature trails,



Eastern Barn Owl, known as Lokkhi Pecha.



Green Pond Frog



Golden Jackal, locally known as Pati Sheyal.

dwindling -- a stark signal of the impact that encroaching human activity and habitat disruption can have, even in places where nature once thrived undisturbed.

Among the most significant patches of greenery on campus is Motihar Garden, an area of social forestry that shelters rare and endangered animals. One elusive inhabitant of this zone is the Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (Dendrocopos nanus), a critically endangered species that has been sighted only once or twice in the entire country, and only within the bounds of Rajshahi University. These rare

coexistence of such contrasting species within the same tree line offers a rare glimpse into the resilience and adaptability of urban wildlife.

Professor Saleh Reza of the Department of Zoology has documented a total of 159 bird species across the campus in a detailed study. Some of the species he recorded are either extremely rare or have been documented only once in the entire country. His list includes the Chestnut-tailed Starling, Oriental Scops Owl and Brown-headed Barbet -- birds that require sharp eyes, immense patience and a deep understanding

have become vital in ensuring that human-wildlife encounters remain peaceful and mutually respectful.

The mammalian life on campus is no less diverse. Foxes, civets, fishing cats and squirrels move through the green corridors of the university. Near the Shahidullah Arts Building, the five-striped palm squirrel has become a familiar and almost endearing presence. Their swift movements across paths and effortless climbing often delight passers-by. At Amtola, the squirrels and students seem to co-exist effortlessly, as if acknowledging each other's right to belong.

Imrul Kayes, a student from

observation decks and controlled eco-tours could strike a balance -- preserving sensitive habitats while still allowing people to connect with nature. Small student-led initiatives have already begun: teams that monitor wildlife, install bird feeders and water bowls, and keep logs of rare animal sightings.

Rajshahi University is more than an academic institution. It is a living ecosystem -- home to birds, reptiles, mammals and humans. Each tree, pond and patch of grass contributes to a delicate balance. And within this shared space, the future of biodiversity quietly unfolds.





**The language of Old Dhaka is broadly divided into two types: the Sobbasi dialect and the Kutti dialect. Although both are urban dialects of Dhaka, they are distinctly different, with more differences than similarities in vocabulary and pronunciation.**

**MD. SAHABUDDIN SABU**

When Subahdar of Bengal, Islam Khan Chishti, entered Dhaka in 1608 or 1610, he was accompanied by a diverse group of North and North-West Indians, Afghans, Iranians, Arabs, and other foreign Muslims and Hindus. This influx of migrants continued for nearly 250 years. Many of them settled along the banks of the Buriganga River, in what is now Old Dhaka, and their descendants form the core of its original population.

From around 1610 onwards, a unique mixed language began to develop among these families — an amalgamation of Arabic, English, Gujarati, Turkish, Pali, Portuguese, French, Persian, Munda, Sanskrit, Bengali, and Hindustani (Urdu and Hindi). This creolised tongue became the regional spoken language of Dhaka's original inhabitants. Even today, many native families in Old Dhaka continue to use this language in their homes, communities, markets, and social gatherings.

However, the exact number of speakers has never been officially documented — perhaps because the language has not been taken seriously by scholars or authorities. Among the old Dhakaiyas, this linguistic tradition is now known as the 'Sobbasi' language, and its speakers identify themselves as

*Sobbas* or *Sobbasi*. Today, Sobbasis reside in various neighbourhoods under Sutrapur, Kotwali, Bongshal, Chawkbazar, Lalbagh, and Hazaribagh thanas of Old Dhaka.

The term '*Sobbas*' comes from '*Sukhbas*', meaning to live happily, which evolved into '*Sokhbas*' (happiness as '*sokh*'), and finally '*Sobbas*'. This linguistic shift mirrors other Dhakaiya transformations like '*Rai Saheb Bazar*' to '*Rasabazar*' or '*Takht*' to '*Takta*'.

One of the complexities of the Sobbasi language lies in the use of *a-kar*. There are two types of *a-kar* pronunciation: one with emphasis and another with a softer tone. For example, "cloud of sky" is expressed in Sobbasi as *asmanka abar*. In *asmanka*, each *a-kar* is pronounced with emphasis, while in *abar*, the *a-kar* is spoken softly. Those unfamiliar with the Sobbasi language may struggle with pronunciation due to this nuance. Sobbasis rarely use *chandrabinidu* and tend to speak quickly — for instance, *Chan Khar Pool* becomes *Changkhakapol*. Similarly, *u-kar*, *e-kar*, and *sh* sounds are less used, with both *sh* and *s* typically pronounced as *s*.

Although the Sobbasi language of Dhaka is a rich urban dialect, research

on its origins is scarce due to the lack of written records. As a purely spoken language, it has been passed down orally through conversation, stories, rhymes, and proverbs. Traditionally unwritten, it has only recently begun to be documented using the Bengali script. Notably, the Bangla Dhakaiya Sobbasi Dictionary was published on 15 January 2021, marking the first major effort to preserve and study this unique dialect.

Urdu expert Professor Kaniz-e-Batul notes that 18th-century Dhaka's rice trade brought together Bengali and Hindustani speaking Marwaris, shaping a mixed urban tongue that evolved into the Sobbasi dialect. Historian Sharif Uddin Ahmed adds that Hindustani—a blend of Hindi, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic—was the main conversational language in Dhaka. During the Mughal era, it served as the lingua franca across towns and cities, enabling communication among diverse communities.

The language of Old Dhaka is broadly divided into two types: the Sobbasi dialect and the Kutti dialect. Although both are urban dialects of Dhaka, they are distinctly different, with more differences than similarities in vocabulary and pronunciation.

For example:  
Bengali: *Kujor abar chit hoye ghumanor shokh*.  
Sobbasi: *Kujaka Fer Chet Hoke Soneka Saokh*.  
Kutti: *Gujarbi abar chit oya whiber sock*.  
Bengali: *Kukurer pete ghee hojom hoy na*.  
Sobbasi: *Kottaka Petme Ghi Hajam Hotani*.  
Kutti: *Kuttar pete gi ojom ohe na*.

In 1838, James Taylor listed 162 occupations in Dhaka, each group speaking its own language. However, in markets and on the streets, Hindustani served as the common tongue. The Sobbasis were part of this multilingual population. Even today, Dhakaiya Kuttis refer to Hindustani as *bazaira*

*vasha*, meaning "market language."

In early 19th-century Dhaka, the upper class spoke Persian, later shifting to authentic Urdu, which they continued using until 1971—and many still do. They excluded the Sobbasi dialect from their social circles. However, those unfamiliar with either authentic Urdu or the Dhakaiya Sobbasi dialect often find it difficult to tell them apart.

After 1947, the arrival of Urdu-speaking Muhajirs, or 'Biharis,' further influenced the Sobbasi language. This overlap has led to frequent confusion between the two speech forms, though they remain distinct.

Language is like water in a flowing river—it moves forward, carrying along whatever it encounters, with no turning back. In the Sobbasi dialect, new words are constantly being added while many old ones fade away. Still, it can be said that this urban dialect, now widely spoken among Old Dhakaiyas, began its journey with Hindustani in Dhaka around 1610. Over time, it has evolved under the influence of various languages and continues to thrive in the heart of the city.

**Md. Sahabuddin Sabu is a researcher and the author of the Bangla-Dhakaiya Sobbasi Dictionary.**

# “Don’t reduce garment workers to victims—recognise their struggles”

Dr Rebecca Prentice, Associate Professor of Anthropology and International Development at the University of Sussex, has studied garment workers' health and labour rights for over two decades. Her journey began with fieldwork in Trinidad in 2003, and most recently brought her to Bangladesh in April, in collaboration with the Ethical Trading Initiative. She spoke to The Daily Star about the current state of labour conditions and workplace safety in Bangladesh, and the evolving challenges garment workers face in the post-Rana Plaza era.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** How do you view the current situation of Bangladeshi garment workers?

**Rebecca Prentice (RP):** When I was doing fieldwork in Trinidad in the 2000s, the garment industry there was falling apart. With China and Bangladesh rising as export giants, small Caribbean countries found it hard to compete for lucrative North American markets.

What I saw in Trinidad was how workers who had devoted their lives to the garment industry suddenly found themselves with fewer and worse job prospects. Though my book emphasises workers' creative agency to build livelihoods and get by, they felt abandoned by an industry to which they had given the best years of their lives.

This sense of disposability is exactly what Lamia Karim writes about in her book on Bangladeshi garment workers, *Castoffs of Capital*. She tells us how workers in Bangladesh see their work opportunities vanish around the age of 35. Despite working in the industry for 20 years by that point,

these aged-out workers rarely have savings.

**TDS:** Could you tell us about your collaboration with the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), and how its work has the potential to improve conditions for garment workers in Bangladesh?

**RP:** The approach to improving labour standards that ETI favours is called social dialogue. It involves bringing together worker representatives and managers in a structured way to talk about issues of concern on a regular basis and create joint action plans. Social dialogue within a workplace can be used to address a range of problems, but it requires commitment from employers to give workers a voice and influence over their working conditions.

Not enough factories engage in social dialogue; I believe it is fewer than 100 garment factories in the whole country. According to Bangladesh's labour law, the practice should be widespread. ETI also promotes the formation of workplace trade unions, which significantly improves labour conditions.

**TDS:** As the garment sector in Bangladesh embraces environmental sustainability, how do these initiatives relate to workers' rights, wellbeing, and job security?

**RP:** The Bangladesh garment industry deserves recognition for its efforts toward environmental sustainability—improving



ILLUSTRATION: ANWAR SOHEL



Dr Rebecca Prentice

energy efficiency, reducing water usage, and managing waste responsibly. Certifications like LEED reflect these achievements, but they do not account for workers' rights or conditions, offering only a partial view.

As climate change intensifies, workers face new hardships: rising temperatures on factory floors, increased flooding that disrupts commutes, and higher home cooling costs that impact rest and recovery. While factories race to meet global brands' sustainability targets, the wellbeing of workers is often overlooked. Simultaneously, automation is displacing jobs, with machines housed in air-

conditioned rooms while garment workers endure stifling heat with only fans—insufficient during extreme weather.

To address this gap, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is piloting 'green social dialogue'—an approach that involves educating workers on environmental issues and giving them a platform to express how climate change is affecting their lives and workplaces.

**TDS:** What is your response to the concern that stronger labour rights could make Bangladesh less attractive to global brands?

**RP:** If raising wages and improving labour standards harms Bangladesh's attractiveness to multinational brands, that is an unjust situation indeed. But there is much that can be done about it.

One legacy of the Rana Plaza disaster is that there is greater awareness of the responsibility of global brands to engage in ethical sourcing practices. These obligations need to be legally enforced, not voluntary.

New legislation in the European Union (EU) will demand that multinational corporations identify and prevent environmental and human rights risks across their supply chains. These regulatory changes should prevent brands that import into the EU from profiting from a race to the bottom in labour standards.

**TDS:** How do global media narratives around tragedies like Rana Plaza shape perceptions of garment workers, and do they risk overshadowing workers' own agency and activism?

**RP:** Images of the suffering of Rana Plaza workers and families played an important role in raising public awareness of labour conditions in the global garment industry. However, what these images of suffering fail to convey is the huge role that garment workers themselves play in improving their labour conditions—through strikes, street protests, and demands for fair wages.

A spectacle of suffering falsely portrays workers as passive, as though they are waiting to be rescued by the very institutions and actors that have harmed them in the first place. It is important for people to understand that despite all their hardships, Bangladeshi garment workers are not passive; they are an active political force doing their best to improve their situation.

*The interview was taken by Shormila Akter.*





# CHOKING WATERS

## The dangerous decline of oxygen in Dhaka’s peripheral rivers

SHAFI MOHAMMAD TAREQ

Bangladesh, often described as a land of rivers, is criss-crossed by more than 230 major and minor waterways. These freshwater lifelines are vital to the country’s survival – fuelling agriculture, sustaining fisheries, supporting domestic needs, and powering industrial activities. But the very arteries that once nurtured its economy and ecosystems are now under siege. While most of the pollution choking Dhaka’s rivers is

garments, pharmaceuticals, tanneries, dyes, aluminium, batteries, pulp and paper, and a range of chemicals. Many of these factories discharge untreated effluents directly into the rivers, contaminating the surface water with a dangerous mix of pollutants. Every day, 60,000 cubic metres of hazardous liquid waste is discharged into the Buriganga River, which flows past Dhaka city and connects the Turag, Tongi Canal, Balu, Shitalakshya, and Dhaleshwari rivers. In addition, every day, one and a half million cubic metres of waste from industries along the river are discharged into the rivers around Dhaka. The majority of this waste is generated in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ), Narayanganj, Tongi, Hazaribagh, Tejgaon, Savar, Gazipur, and Ghorashal, which are major industrial areas.

Before being shifted to Savar Upazila, 15,000 tonnes of liquid waste, 19,000 kg of solid waste, and 17,600 kg of biodegradable waste were discharged into the Buriganga River from tanneries in Hazaribagh and Rayer Bazar in Dhaka every day.

In addition, Dhaka’s large population produces a significant amount of household waste daily. A large portion of this waste is dumped directly into the river. Due to the lack of a sewage system and an unplanned drainage system in the city, dirt and garbage end up in the river.

Plastic bags, bottles, and other solid waste used in different parts of the city are thrown into the river. Plastic waste disrupts the normal flow of river water and accumulates on the river bottom, reducing the depth of the river. Dhaka’s rivers are used for navigation. Oil and other chemicals released from these vessels mix with the river, further polluting the water.

In addition, chemicals used during ship construction and repair are also harmful to the river. Due to illegal construction and the filling of rivers, the width of the rivers is decreasing, and this is further increasing water pollution.

A study conducted by the Hydrobiogeochemistry and Pollution Control Laboratory of Jahangirnagar University has revealed a picture of rapid urbanisation and its impact on the current state of water quality in rivers around Dhaka.

Dissolved oxygen is one of the most important parameters of water quality, and aquatic organisms, including fish, need sufficient dissolved oxygen to survive. Low dissolved oxygen concentration is dangerous and deadly for aquatic life.

Dissolved oxygen has been decreasing over time from 1973 to 2020. In the 1970s, the average dissolved oxygen concentration of the Buriganga River was more than 6 mg/litre, and until 2005 the concentration varied seasonally. However, after 2005, it decreased rapidly, and in 2015 it reached almost zero—far



Once a vital lifeline for trade and daily life, the Buriganga River now tells a tale of contrast—while boats still carry fresh produce across its surface, untreated industrial waste and sewage pour directly into its waters, turning it into a toxic channel threatening both livelihoods and ecosystems. PHOTOS: AMRAN HOSSAIN

below the recommended value of the Department of Environment.

The Turag River follows a similar trend. Its initial dissolved oxygen concentration was around 6 mg/litre but has decreased since 2003, reaching almost zero in 2011.

Likewise, the dissolved oxygen concentration in the Shitalakshya River was initially 6 mg/litre on average, like the other two rivers, but has been declining since 1994 and reached nearly zero in 2006.

According to a recent study, the

in the world—such as the Amazon, Thames, and Danube—generally have dissolved oxygen levels between 7 and 10 mg/litre.

The BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) of rivers around Dhaka is generally 20–80 mg/litre (higher in the dry season), which indicates serious pollution. In comparison, the BOD of other rivers in Bangladesh is 3–7 mg/litre, which is relatively safe, and in the cleanest rivers of the world, it is generally 2–5 mg/litre.

Water pollution poses serious

alternatives—are the most affected.

Environmentally polluted water is also extremely harmful to aquatic life, as fish and other aquatic organisms die due to a lack of dissolved oxygen. Additionally, the natural ecosystems of rivers and water bodies are being destroyed, negatively impacting the food chain. This is contributing to the decline of fisheries resources and the extinction of many fish species in the peripheral rivers of Dhaka. When polluted water is used in agriculture, crop production decreases, toxic elements enter the food chain, and soil fertility declines—posing long-term health risks for humans.

There are several important laws in Bangladesh to prevent river pollution, enacted for environmental protection and sustainable management. These include the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995/2023, the Bangladesh Water Act, 2013, and the National River Protection Commission Act, 2013. These laws contain strict provisions to prevent river water pollution.

According to the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, if any person or organisation engages in environmental pollution, there is a provision for various terms of imprisonment, fines, or both. Under the Bangladesh Water Act, 2013, if any person or organisation disrupts or pollutes the natural flow of a river, they can be punished with up to five years’ imprisonment or a fine of Tk 1 million, or both. The National River Protection Commission Act, 2013, empowers the commission to take strict action against river encroachment or pollution, and the guilty party can be punished for land encroachment and water pollution.

However, due to the lack of effective enforcement and the absence of proper monitoring systems, river pollution has not yet been controlled—posing a serious threat to the environment and public health.

It is necessary to take protective measures to prevent further degradation of rivers and to conserve water bodies. Water quality indicators are strongly correlated with the expansion of urban areas. As water bodies shrink, water quality deteriorates over time.

Water pollution in the rivers around Dhaka is a complex problem that requires the combined efforts of the administration, industries, civil society, and the general public. We can combat this pollution through legal enforcement, infrastructural development, public awareness, and sustainable development planning. We all need to work together to ensure clean and pollution-free rivers for future generations.

Dr Shafi Mohammad Tareq is a Professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences at Jahangirnagar University.



An oil tanker collision near Gabtali on March 11, 2023, released a thick oil slick across a 7km stretch of the Turag River, seriously polluting the water. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

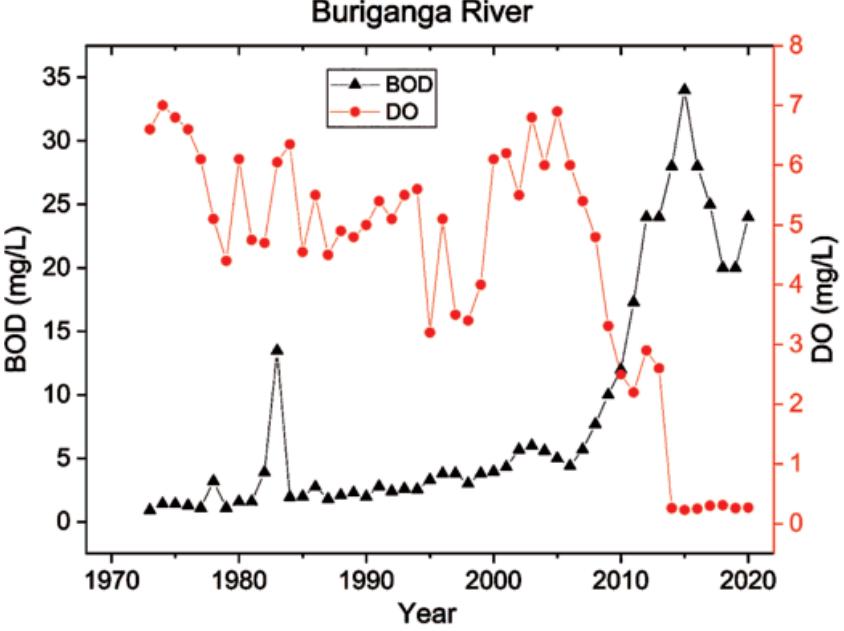
Dissolved oxygen has been decreasing over time from 1973 to 2020. In the 1970s, the average dissolved oxygen concentration of the Buriganga River was more than 6 mg/litre, and until 2005 the concentration varied seasonally. However, after 2005, it decreased rapidly, and in 2015 it reached almost zero—far below the recommended value of the Department of Environment.

driven by human activity, it doesn’t stop there. Shifting hydrological patterns, agricultural runoff, climate change, and erratic rainfall are all compounding the damage.

Rapid industrialisation — particularly in booming sectors like textiles, tanneries, pharmaceuticals, and ship-breaking — is placing immense strain on these rivers. Urbanisation in Bangladesh is also accelerating at a pace the landscape can barely withstand—often with little to no regard for environmental sustainability. The unchecked discharge of industrial effluents and municipal wastewater into river systems is introducing a cocktail of pollutants: heavy metals, dyes, acids, alkalis, and organic waste.

Yet, despite growing alarm, research has failed to keep up. Only a handful of studies have examined how rapid urban growth and unplanned industrialisation are reshaping the long-term water quality of the city’s rivers. And without a clear understanding of the scale and causes of the crisis, any hope for sustainable water management remains out of reach.

To grasp the full extent of this crisis, Dhaka’s peripheral rivers offer a revealing case in point. The Buriganga, Turag, Shitalakshya, and Balu rivers illustrate how unchecked industrial growth and poor planning are pushing urban waterways to the brink. The culprits are well known: industries producing soap, detergents,



Long-term changes in Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) in the Buriganga River (modified from Miah et al., 2025).

pollution levels of rivers around Dhaka are higher than those of other rivers in the world, as well as other rivers in Bangladesh.

The dissolved oxygen level in the water of rivers around Dhaka is generally 1.5–3.5 mg/litre, which is very dangerous for aquatic organisms. By contrast, the dissolved oxygen level in rivers elsewhere in Bangladesh—such as the Meghna, Jamuna, and Padma—is 5–8 mg/litre, which is relatively good. The cleanest rivers

risks to public health. Drinking and using polluted water increases the risk of diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, and other waterborne and water-based diseases. Heavy metals (such as lead, mercury, and cadmium) and toxic chemicals can enter the human body and cause nervous system damage, kidney failure, and intellectual development problems in children. Poor urban populations—especially those who use polluted water due to a lack of clean



# DIGITAL DREAMS

## Disconnected realities

Experts warn that unless rural areas are meaningfully brought online, Bangladesh's digital transformation risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than closing them

MAHMUDUL HASAN

In Ferighat, a remote corner of north-eastern district Sunamganj, stationary shop owner Md Sumon Mia fights a battle that millions of rural Bangladeshis face daily – the struggle for a reliable internet connection.

While Dhaka's cafes buzz with high-speed Wi-Fi, Mia's small shop, nearly an 8-hour drive from the capital, remains trapped in a digital dead zone, his repeated pleas for connectivity lost in the silence of neglected infrastructure.

His story is not unique – it's a glaring symptom of the widening chasm between Bangladesh's tech-savvy cities and its left-behind villages.

"We have no access to broadband internet. On top of that, mobile internet speeds are awful," he said.

While a local broadband provider technically operates in the area, Sumon said the speed it offers is so poor that most people simply avoid using it.

Bureau of Statistics (BBS) as of December 2024.

The data reveals stark disparities in access to digital tools and internet connectivity, particularly in rural regions, limiting their ability to participate in the digital economy.

The most glaring gap lies in computer and laptop usage. Only 3.8 percent of rural individuals use computers, compared to 20.7 percent in urban areas.

Similarly, laptop usage stands at 1.3 percent in rural regions versus 7.0 percent in cities. Tablet adoption is even lower – 0.9 percent in rural areas compared to 7.8 percent in urban settings.

Internet access also follows this trend. Only 37.8 percent of rural residents use the internet, far below the 68.4 percent urban rate.

While mobile phone usage is relatively high in both domains – 89.3 percent in rural regions and 92.2 percent in urban – ownership disparities persist, with 62.4 percent

own a computer, compared to 21.3 percent of urban households.

Nationwide, around 52.4 percent of households have internet access. However, 61.6 percent of urban households use the internet, compared to just 48.2 percent of rural households.

This persistent divide entrenches economic inequality. Urban residents, with greater device ownership and internet access, disproportionately benefit from digital banking, telemedicine, and online marketplaces. In contrast, rural communities – home to nearly 68 percent of Bangladesh's population – remain largely sidelined.

Farmers, small entrepreneurs, and students in these areas face reduced opportunities to innovate, upskill, or access broader markets. The lack of infrastructure, affordability issues, and low digital literacy further widen the gap.

"The widening digital gap between urban and rural regions in Bangladesh



He emphasised that closing the digital divide is not only about equity, it's a critical investment in the country's long-term progress.

Addressing Bangladesh's digital divide requires targeted interventions: expanding broadband infrastructure, subsidising devices, and implementing digital literacy programmes, said Syed Almas Kabir, chief executive officer of MetroNet Bangladesh.

Without bridging this gap, rural populations will continue to lag in contributing to and benefiting from the nation's digital transformation, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality, he said.

Policymakers must prioritise inclusive digital policies to ensure equitable growth in the evolving economy.

"The growing digital divide is deeply concerning, as it creates two distinct classes of citizens: one group that is IT-savvy and reaping the benefits of digital advancements, and another that is deprived of even basic government services," said Kabir, a former president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS).

"This inequality must be addressed urgently," he added.

According to him, internet transmission costs remain

disproportionately high in rural areas, compounded by severe mismanagement.

"The bandwidth transmission fees charged by Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Networks are also excessive. Despite significant government investment in expanding fibre optic networks, transmission costs in rural areas are still much higher than in urban regions," Kabir added.

### GENDER DIVIDE: THE DIGITAL GAP IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, the growing digital divide has a significant gender dimension. Despite the country's advancements in mobile phone and internet penetration, women continue to face substantial barriers to digital inclusion.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)'s Sample Vital Statistics 2023, gender inequality remains a crucial factor in perpetuating this divide.

While 51.9 percent of internet users are men, only 39.7 percent are women. This disparity is more pronounced in rural areas, where 38.3 percent of rural women use the internet, compared to 42.6 percent of urban women.

This gap is not simply a result of technological unavailability, but is deeply rooted in social, cultural, and economic barriers that women face, said Fahim Mashroor, CEO of bdjobs, the largest local job searching platform.

In rural Bangladesh, social norms and traditional gender roles often restrict women's access to the internet.

According to Mashroor, many women in rural areas are prevented from using the internet due to familial and societal constraints.

"In rural areas, many females are restricted from accessing the internet due to social reasons imposed by their parents or guardians," Mashroor explained.

These cultural barriers severely limit women's ability to engage with the digital world and gain the skills necessary to thrive in the modern economy.

The lack of digital access for women is also evident in the IT sector, where women make up only 12 to 13 percent of the workforce.

This underrepresentation in the digital professions further reflects the broader gender divide in digital skills development and economic participation.

Kabir emphasised that the low participation of women in the IT sector is a clear indicator of the gender digital divide that persists across the country.

Moreover, this divide extends beyond access to information and skills, it also impacts financial inclusion.

### A SNAPSHOT OF RURAL-URBAN DIGITAL DIVIDE

#### INTERNET USAGE

Urban 68.4%  
Rural 37.8%

#### COMPUTER USAGE

Urban 20.7%  
Rural 3.8%

#### CONNECTIVITY GAPS

#### SMARTPHONE-OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

Urban 79.2%  
Rural 69%

#### INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME

Urban 61.6%  
Rural 48.2%

SOURCE: BBS



Over the past decade, the country has witnessed a dramatic rise in smartphone adoption, internet penetration, and participation in the digital economy.

Yet, this transformation has left behind vast sections of the population, particularly rural communities and women, who continue to face systemic barriers to digital access, skills, and meaningful participation.

A deep-rooted divide in access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy separates them from their urban counterparts.

This gap limits their ability to participate in online education, remote work, e-commerce, and other emerging sectors of the digital economy.

As a result, rural farmers, students, entrepreneurs, and women are sidelined from digital opportunities that could boost incomes and improve livelihoods.

Experts warn that unless rural areas are meaningfully brought online, Bangladesh's digital transformation risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than closing them.

### THE CURRENT STATE OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide between urban and rural areas in Bangladesh remains a significant barrier to inclusive economic growth, according to the latest survey by the Bangladesh

of rural households owning mobile phones compared to 71.1 percent in urban areas.

This suggests many rural users rely on shared devices or face financial constraints.

Limited access to computers, laptops, and reliable internet excludes rural populations from critical digital economy activities.

E-commerce, remote work, and online education platforms often require devices beyond basic mobile phones. The low rural internet adoption rate of 37.8 percent exacerbates this exclusion, as even those with mobile phones struggle to engage consistently.

Internet usage frequency also reflects the divide.

While 74.1 percent of rural users access the internet daily, 7.0 percent do so less than once a week, compared to only 5.3 percent in urban areas.

Irregular connectivity hampers skill development, access to digital services, and participation in gig economy platforms.

At the household level, the digital divide also remains pronounced.

About 72.3 percent of all households in Bangladesh own a smartphone. Among them, 69 percent are rural households, while 79.2 percent are urban. Only 3.7 percent of rural households

underscores the enduring structural disparities in access to and effective use of digital technologies," said Zulkarin Jahangir, assistant professor at North South University.

He noted that while internet use in rural areas has plateaued, urban usage continues to climb, deepening the divide in access to essential services like education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Jahangir, who also advises UNDP Bangladesh on digital divide issues, explained that this gap is rooted in more than just access.

It reflects broader systemic barriers such as affordability, low levels of digital literacy, and the lack of relevant local content and services in rural settings. These obstacles tend to hit marginalised communities hardest, reinforcing cycles of social and economic inequality.

To bridge the gap, Jahangir stressed the need for a people-first strategy that expands essential digital infrastructure in rural areas.

"Policies must aim to lower costs through subsidies or community-led networks, improve digital skills via locally adapted training, and provide useful online services that address rural needs," he suggested.

### BARRIERS

- Poor infrastructure
- High internet costs
- Low digital literacy
- Gender & social constraints

### WHO ARE AFFECTED

- Farmers
- Students
- Entrepreneurs

### WHAT ARE NEEDED

- Expand rural broadband
- Subsidise devices
- Improve digital skills
- Incentivise women in tech



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN