

“China is credibly preparing to potentially use military force to alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.”
Pete Hegseth
US secretary of defense at Shangri-La Dialogue

YOUR RIGHT
TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

DHAKA SUNDAY JUNE 1, 2025

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 133

JAISHTHA 18, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

ZILHAJJ 4, 1446 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

In 2002, Shah Cement began its operations on a small piece of land in Mukterpur, a riverside village in Munshiganj Sadar Upazila. Two decades later, at least 24 acres of Dhaleshwari and Shitalakkhya river land are under the occupation of this massive industrial complex. The photo was taken in March this year.

A BLATANT RIVER GRAB

Confluence of Dhaleshwari and Shitalakkhya under siege from Shah Cement

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Piles of sand are stacked high, excavators are busy dumping loads, and trucks move in and out. The land is enclosed by towering concrete walls and fences. The skyline across the Dhaleshwari and Shitalakkhya turns hazy, as clinker dust first spirals into the air and then settles on the rivers, polluting both the air and water.

This sprawling complex, with its towering structures standing ominously at the confluence of the two rivers in Munshiganj, is a stark reminder of unchecked river grabbing in Bangladesh.

Much of this patch of land belongs to the Dhaleshwari and Shitalakkhya, but Shah Cement has occupied parts of the two rivers affecting the ecosystem and the natural flows of the two rivers, according to four separate government reports.

The Munshiganj district administration and the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) identified the cement factory as an “encroacher” in 2018, 2019 and 2023, documents show.

However, the government has yet to take any action to save the rivers.

Govt reports in 2018, 2019 and 2023 say the company grabbed river land

Shipping adviser, Munshiganj district admin vow actions

Shah Cement denies grabbing river land

In a written statement, Shah Cement, a concern of Abul Khair Group, denied that it grabbed any river land, but declined to share proof of its “ownership” of the land in the middle of two rivers.

ILLEGAL OCCUPATION
Shah Cement built the factory in 2002

and has expanded its operations deep into the two rivers over the years, according to documents and current and former officials.

According to the company’s website, Shah Cement is one of the largest cement factories in Bangladesh, with a capacity to produce 10 million tonnes per year.

During multiple visits in February, March and April 2025, The Daily Star found that parts of the massive structures, heavy equipment and a storage facility stand at the mouth of the two rivers.

Munshiganj Sadar Assistant Commissioner’s (Land) Office also confirmed that Shah Cement has occupied a huge swath of river land in Mirershari Mouza in RS Dag No. 184 and in Purbo Mukterpur Mouza across RS Dag No. 301-308.

“We have already completed the survey and will serve a notice [on Shah Cement] upon completion of the investigation,” Md Rezaul Karim, additional district magistrate of Munshiganj, told The Daily Star last night.

The Daily Star obtained the Revisional Survey (RS) records from the Munshiganj

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



“When I visited the Dhaleshwari and Shitalakkhya rivers [in December 2024], I saw that Shah Cement has encroached on the rivers. I immediately instructed the officials concerned to take effective measures.”

**BRIG GEN (RETD)
M SAKHAWAT HUSSAIN,
Shipping Adviser**

Budget to set 10 priorities

Govt puts inflation control, revenue reform, fiscal restraint at the heart of its economic plan

REJUL KARIM BYRON

Facing inflation fatigue and fiscal strain, Bangladesh’s interim government is betting on discipline over expansion in a new budget built around 10 priorities to stabilise the economy.

To be unveiled tomorrow, the budget gives top billing to inflation control, with a target of 6.5 percent in the fiscal year beginning July 1. That restraint is matched by a modest growth projection of 5.5 percent, reflecting a shift away from the expansionary stance of recent years as the government responds to prolonged economic pressures and warnings of rising poverty from global organisations.

This time, the budget steers clear of ambitious promises and outsized projections. In contrast to past years, the overall size of the budget will be slightly smaller — Tk 7,90,000 crore, down 0.87 percent from the current fiscal year. The development budget will be reduced by Tk 35,000 crore to Tk 2,30,000 crore, while the revenue budget will go up by Tk 28,000 crore to Tk 5,60,000 crore.

Fiscal policy will prioritise tighter coordination with monetary policy, and the budget is expected to reflect recommendations from key reform commissions and task force reports. Crucially, securing external budgetary support, particularly from the International Monetary Fund, will hinge on the government’s willingness to meet conditions, including a lower deficit, better subsidy targeting and more transparency.

A large chunk, 57 percent, of the revenue budget is earmarked for salaries, subsidies, incentives, and debt servicing. Allowances and salaries alone are expected to reach Tk 82,000 crore. The budget may also introduce

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Tax-free income ceiling to stay the same

Govt set to bring a slew of tax reforms

MD ASADUZZAMAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The interim government is set to introduce a wide range of tax and duty reforms in the upcoming fiscal year to facilitate the country’s smooth graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status and drive economic growth.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed is likely to present the national budget for 2025-26 on June 2, outlining measures to ease the cost of doing business.

The tax-free income threshold of Tk 3.5 lakh will be unchanged in the next fiscal year.

In order to increase revenue, the government is likely to reintroduce a 30 percent tax rate for high-income earners.

Value Added Tax will be raised for construction firms, online businesses, plastic goods, duplex boards, synthetic fibres, cotton yarn, blades and several other items. In addition, advance income tax (AIT) on commercial imports is set to increase, along with higher customs duties on mild steel products.

To encourage the use of essential and environmentally friendly products, VAT exemptions have been proposed for eco-friendly utensils, liquefied natural gas (LNG), diapers, liquid milk packages, and ballpoint pens.

Manufacturers and importers of cold storage equipment, paper products, buses, newsprint, cancer treatment devices, and raw materials for pharmaceuticals and “green industries” will benefit from these measures.

To provide relief to small depositors, the government may raise the threshold for excise duty exemption on bank

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Political divide deepening over polls timing

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh’s political landscape is becoming increasingly polarised over the timing of the next election, with some parties aligning with the BNP to push for polls by December, while others are willing to wait until key reforms are implemented.

The BNP accuses the government of deliberate delay. In a virtual address to a youth rally in Nayapaltan on Wednesday, its acting chairman Tarique Rahman said, “The national election must be held by December.”

Framing the deadlock as a government tactic to cling to power, Tarique called the delay a betrayal of promised reforms and national unity.

His remarks drew sharp responses from across the political spectrum.

Around the same time, Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus, during his visit to Japan, said that only one party was demanding polls in December.

Though he had previously floated the idea of a December election, the interim government has since settled on a broader timeline, suggesting polls would be held anytime between December 2025 and June 2026.

For the BNP, that window is vague — and far too distant. Despite several high-level meetings between Yunus and the political parties, the government has not budged.

A spokesperson for the chief adviser recently reaffirmed June 2026 as the cut-off time for elections — a response that has further entrenched political fault lines, especially

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A toddler bursts into tears as his father bids him farewell at Kamalapur Railway Station. While the rest of the family departs for their hometown to celebrate Eid, the man will remain in the city for a few more days.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

FUNDING CUTS Education of 2.3 lakh Rohingya children under threat Says UNICEF, seeks urgent action to mitigate disaster

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education of nearly 230,000 Rohingya refugee children in Cox's Bazar is under threat due to an acute and deepening funding crisis, UNICEF warned in a press release yesterday.

The UN agency said that without immediate and sustained financial aid, it may be forced to scale back or suspend critical educational services in the world's largest refugee settlement -- potentially leaving an entire generation of Rohingya children behind.

In recent months, UNICEF has faced a significant decline in humanitarian funding for its operations in the Rohingya refugee response, affecting the education of 83 percent of school age children in the camps, who are enrolled in UNICEF-supported learning centres.

Despite exhaustive efforts to attract new resources and reprioritise activities, funding gaps have forced UNICEF to take painful decisions, including suspending support for host community volunteer teachers working with kindergartens to grade 2 learners.

A total of 1,179 host community volunteer teachers will see their contracts end with UNICEF's implementing partners by June 30, 2025.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



High officials of the government receive Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus upon his return at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from Japan early today.

PHOTO: CA PRESS WING

Investor confidence

FROM PAGE 12

hesitant," he said while addressing a pre-budget debate for the 2025-26 fiscal year, organised by Debate for Democracy at the Film Development Corporation in the capital yesterday.

Expressing regret over the lack of dialogues between the interim government and political parties regarding the national budget, Debapriya said, "Such discussions could have assured investors of a long-term policy continuity."

According to him, the government should pursue fiscal discipline, restore stability in the banking sector, and engage in cross-party dialogue to assure investors of a predictable policy environment.

"Only then can the budget become a tool for recovery, not mere survival."

Debapriya's comments come at a time when the interim government is preparing to announce the national budget for the next fiscal year on Monday amid economic uncertainty and political transition.

He criticised the interim government's reliance on borrowing from local banks and noted that high interest rates and a weak banking system are undermining private investment.

"Investment and employment are interconnected," he said, adding that macroeconomic stability will falter if confidence in long-term policy continuity is not ensured.

Expressing concern over the present state of revenue mobilisation, Debapriya said Bangladesh's tax-to-GDP ratio has dropped below eight percent, which is among the lowest globally.

He highlighted the case of the neighbouring nation Nepal, which collects more tax than Bangladesh despite having a lower per capita income.

Debapriya cautioned against over-reliance on indirect taxes, saying it fosters inequality and disproportionately affects the poor.

To build a fairer system, he called for a shift toward direct taxation, particularly targeting luxury spending and wealth.

"Two-thirds of our taxes come from indirect sources. This must change," he said, suggesting new tax measures on second cars, high-value services, and digital transactions.

Debapriya also urged reforms in tax administration, including digitisation and the integration of tax identification numbers with national IDs, bank accounts, and social benefit cards to curb evasion.

Tax compliance is not just the government's job. Citizens must also demand receipts, avoid cash deals, and stop enabling the culture of evasion."

He criticised the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IME) for its narrow focus on financial expenditure rather than performance-based outcomes, stating, "Budget accountability must shift from inputs to impacts. Otherwise, taxpayers lose faith."

Regarding budget financing, Debapriya proposed seizing and monetising illicit assets to fund next year's budget.

"This could be a breakthrough -- using laundered, untaxed, and defaulted funds as a source of budgetary finance."

Despite some achievements, like repaying \$5 billion in foreign debt and maintaining exchange rate stability, he warned that the upcoming budget risks being a "repackaged version of the past" without structural change.

While moderating the pre-budget debate, Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiran, chairman of Debate for Democracy, said, "Corruption, inequality, and weak tax management will hinder budget implementation."

Kiran warned that political instability could deter investment and disrupt trade.

He urged the interim government to expose and prosecute corrupt officials and loan defaulters.

Without tax reform and increased allocations for health, education, agriculture, and social security, he said, the upcoming 2025-26 budget will be just "old wine in a new bottle".

A politically neutral tax structure is essential to restoring fiscal balance, he added.

Tax-free income ceiling to stay the same

FROM PAGE 1

account balances from Tk 1 lakh to Tk 3 lakh. Penalties for import-related misdeclarations are expected to be reduced to 200 percent from the current 400 percent.

As part of broader reforms, the budget will propose withdrawing or reducing supplementary duties on 622 products and grant duty-free access for 110 items. This step is aimed at enhancing trade competitiveness and expanding market access.

Officials at the finance ministry say these measures are needed for enhancing Bangladesh's global competitiveness after LDC graduation.

To enhance revenue collection while preparing the economy for LDC graduation, VAT on services rendered by construction firms has been increased from 7.5 percent to 10 percent while the VAT on commissions from online sales platforms has been sharply raised from 5 percent to 15 percent.

The VAT at the production stage of self-copy paper, duplex boards, and coated paper has been increased from 7.5 percent to 15 percent.

Similarly, all types of plastic tableware, kitchenware, household goods, hygiene products, and toilet items will now see 15 percent VAT, up from 7.5 percent.

The VAT on blade production has been raised from 5 percent to 7.5 percent, while wire cutters, screws, connectors, nuts, bolts, electric line hardware, and pole fittings will also

see their VAT increased to 7.5 percent from 5 percent.

On the taxation front, the specific tax on mild steel products is set to rise by approximately 20 percent. Additionally, the specific tax on cotton yarn has been raised from Tk 3 to Tk 5 per kg, and the same rate will apply to yarn made from man-made fibres or fibre blends. To support local industries, the AIT on raw material imports by manufacturers will be reduced from 3 percent to 2 percent.

US TARIFF RESPONSE
To meet trade challenges, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is set to propose zero import duties on an additional 110 products. The move is intended to mitigate the impact of a proposed 37 percent tariff on Bangladeshi exports by the US, following policy changes introduced by the Trump administration.

The list includes raw materials for the textile sector, military equipment, and industrial machinery. The government aims to expand duty-free imports to offset the impact of new tariffs and safeguard market access.

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY
To reduce healthcare costs, the budget is expected to expand duty exemptions on raw materials and medical equipment. An additional 79 items may be added to the duty-free list, particularly benefiting manufacturers of drugs for cancer, kidney, and vascular diseases.

Besides, the government plans to exempt duty on cold storage machinery, including compressors, to stabilise food prices and reduce post-harvest losses.

Duty cuts are also likely for raw materials used in toy and cricket bat production. The tariff value of imported toys may be set at \$4 per kg, while duty on willow wood, used in cricket bats, may be lowered from 37 percent to 26 percent.

CUTS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In an effort to ease traffic congestion, the import duty on buses with 16-40 seats is expected to fall from 10 percent to 5 percent and supplementary duty on microbuses with 10-15 seats from 20 percent to 10 percent.

The government is also likely to reduce the specific duty on refined sugar imports from Tk 4,500 to Tk 4,000 per tonne.

BOOST FOR SOFTWARE EXPORTERS

The government may reduce import duty on development tools, operating systems, databases, and security software from 10 percent to 5 percent.

Tariffs on lipstick and face wash may be doubled to \$40 per kg. A similar increase is expected for chocolates.

The duty on import of helicopters is expected to rise from 1 percent to 10 percent.

The government wants to lower energy costs for power generation and industrial operations by doing away the 15 percent VAT on its import.

He added that once a proper election roadmap is unveiled, political disagreements would ease.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh, while critical of the government's "inefficiency", said the BNP's firm stance could amount to brinkmanship. Its Ameer, Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, said political forces were now split between "patriots and power seekers".

The patriots are demanding reforms, justice, and polls, while the power seekers are only eager for a quick election," he told supporters at a rally in Bogra on Thursday.

Its Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary yesterday said, "What the BNP is saying -- that the election must be held in December -- is a threat to the government.

"If the BNP tries to topple the government or something, things will escalate into a conflict."

Backing the chief adviser's timeline, Patwary said that without reforming constitutional institutions, any election would merely replace Sheikh Hasina with another party figurehead.

Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami sticks to its preference for reforms and trial first and then polls.

Speaking at an event in Kishoreganj yesterday, its Nayeb-e-Ameer Mujibur Rahman said that while the people of Bangladesh want an election, they do not want one of "just any kind".

"We'll tell the government that justice must come first, then reforms, and only after that, the election can take place."

Downplaying the prospect of conflict, Jamaat's Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair on Friday said, "There might be a difference of opinion regarding the polls' timeframe ... But I don't think there would be any conflict ... The issue will be settled through political adviser's timeline."

Some are advocating a middle ground. Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis's Mamunul Haque suggested an election by March 2026 -- allowing space for essential reforms while avoiding Ramadan and the monsoon.

machinery, including compressors, to stabilise food prices and reduce post-harvest losses.

Duty cuts are also likely for raw materials used in toy and cricket bat production. The tariff value of imported toys may be set at \$4 per kg, while duty on willow wood, used in cricket bats, may be lowered from 37 percent to 26 percent.

CUTS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In an effort to ease traffic congestion, the import duty on buses with 16-40 seats is expected to fall from 10 percent to 5 percent and supplementary duty on microbuses with 10-15 seats from 20 percent to 10 percent.

The government is also likely to reduce the specific duty on refined sugar imports from Tk 4,500 to Tk 4,000 per tonne.

BOOST FOR SOFTWARE EXPORTERS

The government may reduce import duty on development tools, operating systems, databases, and security software from 10 percent to 5 percent.

Tariffs on lipstick and face wash may be doubled to \$40 per kg. A similar increase is expected for chocolates.

The duty on import of helicopters is expected to rise from 1 percent to 10 percent.

The government wants to lower energy costs for power generation and industrial operations by doing away the 15 percent VAT on its import.

wisdom and reality."

He added that once a proper election roadmap is unveiled, political disagreements would ease.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh, while critical of the government's "inefficiency", said the BNP's firm stance could amount to brinkmanship. Its Ameer, Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, said political forces were now split between "patriots and power seekers".

The patriots are demanding reforms, justice, and polls, while the power seekers are only eager for a quick election," he told supporters at a rally in Bogra on Thursday.

"Even the Indians are showing interest in a quick election, and some parties in our country are eager for the same... We know the past of those crying for polls. Under their leadership, Bangladesh became champion in corruption. After the July uprising, that opportunity should not be given to anyone again."

He insisted the interim government must first deliver reforms and justice for the July killings. "If there's any negligence, we will protest. But repeatedly calling for an election and making the country unstable is meaningless."

The party's Secretary General Yunus Ahmed said, "We say that if necessary reforms are not implemented and the killers of July are not brought to justice, the election will not be free, fair, or meaningful ... The BNP, from its partisan perspective, wants the election by December. But we support the chief adviser's timeline."

Some are advocating a middle ground. Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis's Mamunul Haque suggested an election by March 2026 -- allowing space for essential reforms while avoiding Ramadan and the monsoon.

Of the 58 ministries and divisions, the top 10 are expected to receive Tk 2,96,000 crore, roughly 38 percent of the total outlay. The largest share will go to the Secondary and Higher Education Division. The Local Government Division, which previously topped the list, will see a reduced allocation this year.

Among the proposals are an electronic platform for tax deduction at source and tighter VAT registration rules. Businesses with annual turnover above Tk 50 lakh will now be eligible for enlistment, down from the previous Tk 3 crore threshold, as part of an effort to broaden the tax base.

Misery persists in coastal areas

FROM PAGE 12

Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, and Netrokona districts within the next two days.

The BMD has advised lowering signals at the maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla, and Payra.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) also lifted the restriction on inland water transportation yesterday.

Meanwhile, a trawler on the Meghna river near Noakhali's Hatia capsized around 3:00pm yesterday, leaving a cop dead.

The trawler was carrying 39 passengers. Of them, 30 were rescued alive, and eight people, including a police officer, remain missing, said AKM Azmal Huda, officer in charge of Hatia Police Station.

Four Dhaka-bound flights were diverted to Chattogram yesterday afternoon due to bad weather. Engineer Ibrahim Khalil, a spokesperson for the airport, said the flights would return to Dhaka once conditions improve.

"Based on preliminary data, approximately 378 unions and municipalities were affected by the deep depression, leaving 259 houses completely damaged and 8,901 partially damaged," said Netai Chandra Dey Sarker, director of monitoring and information management at DDM.

He added that the final data would be compiled soon, and relief will be disbursed accordingly.

In Cox's Bazar, residents of St Martin's Island are facing acute food and water shortages and power outages, as boat services remained suspended for the sixth day due to inclement weather.

Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sheikh Ehsan Uddin said aid had been sent to tackle the crisis, and more relief would be dispatched once boat services resume.

In Patuakhali, a newly built section of Marine Drive near Kuakata beach collapsed due to tidal surges on Thursday.

Md Robiul Islam, UNO of Kalapara, said two-thirds of the 1,350m road was washed away, and a probe committee was formed amid allegations of substandard construction.

In Barishal, floodwaters have been receding in most southern rivers.

Budget to set 10 priorities

FROM PAGE 1

dearness allowances of 10 to 20 percent for government employees, adding further to recurring costs.

Subsidy expenditure, led by electricity and fertiliser, is projected to hit Tk 1,16,000 crore, inflated by rising arrears. Officials say the government will use the budget to outline a gradual subsidy reduction plan in line with IMF advice. Meanwhile, interest payments will account for around 22 percent of the revenue budget, a burden the government aims to reduce in phases.

To ease fiscal pressure, the government will lean more on foreign loans, especially for budget support, given their longer repayment periods -- typically 20 to 30 years -- compared to five years for domestic loans.

Still, limited fiscal space means large increases in spending on health, education, or social protection are unlikely. Even so, those sectors remain among the 10 priority areas, with the budget expected to protect core social programmes, including food subsidies for low-income groups.

Of the 58 ministries and divisions, the top 10 are expected to receive Tk 2,96,000 crore, roughly 38 percent of the total outlay. The largest share will go to the Secondary and Higher Education Division. The Local Government Division, which previously topped the list, will see a reduced allocation this year.

19 more pushed in thru two border districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtha*

DHAKA

ICT CASE Charges against Hasina to be pressed today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution of the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) is set to press formal charges against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina today in a case filed over crimes against humanity during the July mass uprising.

The ICT prosecutors confirmed the development yesterday.

On May 12, the Investigation Agency of the tribunal submitted its probe report against the deposed prime minister, bringing five allegations of crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

Former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun were named co-accused in the report.

Hasina is already facing two other cases filed with the ICT -- one over alleged involvement in enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings during the Awami League rule, and the other over killings during the 2013 Hefazat-e-Islam rally at Shapla Chattar in Motijheel.

Citing the probe report, ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam on May 12 said Hasina is directly responsible for ordering all state forces, her party, and

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8



Hundreds of patients are suffering as the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital remained non-operational for the fourth consecutive day yesterday, following a tripartite clash on Wednesday.

EC REGISTRATION

SC verdict
on Jamaat's
appeal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court is scheduled to deliver its verdict today on Jamaat-e-Islami's appeal against a High Court verdict that scrapped its registration with the Election Commission (EC) as a political party.

According to the Supreme Court website, the appeal has been listed as item No-1 in today's cause list of a four-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, for pronouncement of the judgement.

On May 14, the apex court bench fixed the date after concluding hearing on the appeal.

On August 1, 2013, the High Court cancelled Jamaat's registration with the EC following a writ petition. Maulana Syed Rezaul Haque Chandpuri, secretary general of the Bangladesh Tariqat Federation, along with 24 others, filed the petition on January 25, 2009, seeking a court order declaring the party's registration illegal.

The EC subsequently scrapped Jamaat's registration in October 2018, ahead of the 11th national election.

Jamaat later filed an appeal with the Appellate Division, challenging the HC verdict.

Japan eyes Bangladesh as key investment hub

Dhaka needs to improve environment, ensure stability, say foreign-policy and trade analysts

PORIMOL PALMA

Emerging from the initial uncertainty following last year's political transition, Japan has re-engaged with Bangladesh in a robust way, which was reflected during Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' recent visit to Tokyo, according to foreign policy and trade analysts.

During the trip, Japan agreed to provide Bangladesh with budgetary support alongside loans and grants worth \$1.063 billion, while eight other memoranda of understanding were signed covering human-resource development, worker recruitment, the business environment, and factory set-ups in the Bangladesh Special Economic Zone.

The chief adviser and his Japanese counterpart Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba also committed to signing an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in the coming months -- an indication of Tokyo's eagerness to relocate factories here under its China Plus One strategy, analysts said.

Japan is in the process of providing five patrol boats to the Bangladesh Navy, and the two countries have agreed in principle to sign an agreement on Transfer

of Defence Equipment and Technology as part of security cooperation.

"Since independence, Japan has been the largest development partner of Bangladesh. It wants to relocate many more factories

Since 1972, Tokyo has provided more than \$24 billion in loans and grants for infrastructure projects such as the metro rail, Dhaka airport's third terminal, Araihaazir Special Economic Zone and Matarbari Deep-Sea Port.

More than 350 Japanese companies currently operate in Bangladesh.

Abdullah, who is also executive director of Japan-based think-tank Pan-Asia Research Institute (PARI), said "Japan is usually reluctant to provide budget support".

"This must be a great relief to our economy that Japan this time is providing budget support to Bangladesh. It's a gesture of cemented relationship," he said.

"Under the China Plus One business strategy, Japan has been relocating many of its factories to other countries including in ASEAN and South Asian countries," he said, observing that Bangladesh has lagged behind Vietnam and Thailand in capturing Japanese relocation.

"Complicated procedures at the National Board of Revenue and ports, frequent changes of law, slow supply chain network became bottlenecks on the way of Japanese investments into Bangladesh," Abdullah said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Japan pledges \$1.063b in budgetary support, loans, and grants
- 8 new MoUs signed covering human resource dev, worker recruitment, factory setups
- EPA talks underway, aiming to boost trade, investment
- China Plus One strategy fuels factory relocations
- Japan to provide 5 patrol boats; pursue defence equipment transfer agreement

here, but faces different forms of bottlenecks. That's also true in the case of recruiting workers to Japan," said Abdullah-Al Mamun, associate professor of Japanese Studies, University of Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

Amend law for stronger tobacco control

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum yesterday said the government spends far more on healthcare than the revenue it earns from tobacco companies.

"If we can prevent the use of tobacco products, we won't have to spend so much on treating tobacco-related diseases such as cancer. If we want to focus on disease prevention, we must build a tobacco-free Bangladesh," she said.

She was speaking at a discussion at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital, marking World No Tobacco Day, according to a press release of the ministry.

The National Tobacco Control Cell organised the programme, with this year's theme being: "Unmasking the appeal: Exposing industry tactics on tobacco and nicotine products."

The health adviser said although Bangladesh has signed the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, government officials still hold positions on the boards of tobacco companies "to ensure their businesses run smoothly."

"This contradiction is completely unacceptable. We must speak out clearly about this. If we cannot speak now, we may never be able to," she said.

The health adviser added, "They [tobacco companies] exploit our labourers and poison our soil, air, and environment -- we can never accept this."

If we can prevent the use of tobacco products, we won't have to spend so much on treating tobacco-related diseases such as cancer. If we want to focus on disease prevention, we must build a tobacco-free Bangladesh.

Nurjahan Begum, Health Adviser

To effectively enforce the tobacco control act, it must be amended, and work is already underway in this regard, she said.

Tobacco companies are targeting teenagers and the youth in various ways and are creating numerous obstacles, she

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



A boy crosses a precarious makeshift bridge amid ongoing DPDC construction work in the capital's Kalyanpur area. With a blocked road causing prolonged disruptions for over a month, pedestrians and vehicles alike struggle to move through the congested site.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

NAT'L EYE HOSPITAL Services halted for fourth day, patients suffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gazi Mohammad Akhter arrived in Dhaka from Cumilla on Friday, expecting to be admitted to the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital yesterday for a surgery scheduled for today.

"The doctor fixed June 1 for the date [of operation] on March 23. But I found the hospital out of service today [Saturday]," Akhter told this correspondent at the gate of the specialised hospital.

At the time, he was asking an Ansar member deployed at the gate when the hospital might resume operations.

"I am a cancer patient, and my next course of treatment depends on this operation. What can I do now?" he said.

Neyamat Ullah Momin, a private service holder who had travelled from Rampura for a follow-up appointment, shared similar frustration.

"I had no idea about the situation... This is unfair to the patients," he said.

Like Akhter and Neyamat, hundreds of patients suffered as the 250-bed hospital remained non-operational for the fourth consecutive day following a tripartite clash on Wednesday.

The Daily Star could not reach Prof Khair Ahmed Choudhury, the hospital's director who is currently on leave, or acting director Zane Alam for comment.

Meanwhile, the health ministry issued a statement

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

'Murdered' in July uprising, man fights to prove he's alive

His brother filed murder case following 'dispute' over property

AMINUL ISLAM and
MUNTAKIM SAAD

Md Selim, a grocer from Beldoli Bazar in Mymensingh's Phulbaria, has been listed as dead in a murder case filed over last year's July uprising.

The case alleges that he was shot dead by police near Kajla Petrol Pump in Dhaka's Jatrabari on August 3 and was subsequently buried near a graveyard in Gopibagh.

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal were among 41 people named as accused in the case.

The answer, many

believe, lies in a bitter inheritance feud. After the death of their father nearly two decades ago, the four brothers had been locked in a dispute over ancestral property. With Selim having no sons -- only two daughters -- his brothers allegedly saw an opening.

And they took it.

To achieve this, Mostofa reportedly hatched a plan to

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

These days, Selim -- who had never even set foot in Dhaka before August 5 -- finds himself going from one government office to another, trying to prove that he is, in fact, alive.



Workers block road in Gazipur demanding arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Workers from a footwear factory staged a demonstration in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila yesterday, demanding payment of their unpaid salaries for April and May.

According to witnesses, workers of MK Footwear Limited began protesting inside the factory in Chakpara village around 10:00am.

They later moved outside and blocked the Maona Shailat regional road, halting traffic – particularly small vehicles – for nearly two hours. Traffic flow resumed around noon.

Abdul Latif Khan, inspector of the Gazipur Industrial Police (Sreepur Zone), said the protest erupted after factory authorities failed to clear the dues as promised earlier.

"The workers dispersed and returned home following an assurance that their wages would be paid," he said.

Mizanur Rahman, administrative manager of MK Footwear, said discussions with senior management were ongoing. "All dues will be cleared," he added.

Two killed in Ctg road accident



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two people were killed and two others seriously injured in a head-on collision between a CNG-run auto rickshaw and a microbus on the PAB road in Chattogram's Anwara upazila yesterday morning.

The accident occurred around 8:30am in Mazar Gate area on the Anwara-Banskhali PAB road, said Anwara Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Monir Hossain.

The identities of the deceased have not been confirmed yet.

OC Monir said the injured – Alomgir, 28, and Brisna Dash, 29 – were sent to a hospital. Md Azam, a local, said a city-bound auto rickshaw from Chambol in Banskhali collided head-on with a Banskhali-bound microbus at Mazar Gate, killing two passengers on the spot.



Blacksmiths are passing a busy time ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, with a surge in demand for knives, axes, and cleavers used in sacrificial rituals. Some customers are having their old tools sharpened at the shops. Currently, various iron items are being sold at Tk 350-900 per kg, depending on quality. The photo was taken at the Boyra Mostafa intersection in Khulna city yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Trauma centre lies abandoned for 7 years

TANJIL HASAN, Munshiganj

Built to save lives along the busy Dhaka-Mawa Expressway, a 20-bed trauma centre in Shologhar, Srinagar upazila of Munshiganj has stood unused since its completion in 2018.

Constructed at a cost of Tk 2.29 crore, the three-storey facility was intended to provide emergency treatment to road crash victims from nearby highways. But seven years on, the trauma centre remains locked, abandoned and steadily falling into disrepair.

When The Daily Star visited recently, the building was found in a dilapidated state. Walls are peeling, floors are damp with moss, and rust is eating away at metal fittings. Electrical and sanitary equipment have reportedly been stolen, while wild overgrowth surrounds the complex.

Locals allege the once promising facility has become a hangout for drug users. "This place was supposed to save lives. Instead, it has become a source of fear for us," said Shafiqul Islam, a nearby resident.



The trauma centre is one of 21 such facilities built across the country under government initiatives since 2004. Almost all remain non-operational, according to health department sources.

Each centre was designed to be staffed with at least 34 personnel, including 14 doctors alongside nurses, technicians and support staff. However, these posts were never filled.

Barun Kumar Biswas, executive engineer of the Public Works Department in Munshiganj, said the building's condition has worsened due to years of neglect. "We sought Tk 59 lakh for civil repairs and Tk 17 lakh for replacing stolen electrical equipment, but the ministry only approved Tk 20 lakh. That's not enough," he said.

Munshiganj Civil Surgeon Dr Manjurul Alam said they could not take over the building due to its incomplete setup. "Without staff recruitment and necessary equipment, the centre cannot be made functional. At this point, we don't expect it to open within the next few years," he told The Daily Star.

Lightning, electrocution kill 2 women

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

Two women died in separate incidents of lightning strike and electrocution in Kendua upazila of Netrokona yesterday.

Meem Akter, 14, a madrasa student, was struck by lightning while bringing cattle home during rain at Dumri village of Goradoba union around 2:30pm.

Family members rushed her to Kendua Upazila Health Complex, where the on-duty doctor declared her dead.

In another incident, Marufa Akter, 30, a housewife, died from electrocution after coming in contact with the wet floor of the bathroom, which was electrified from a snapped live wire through the tin roof. The incident happened around 6:30am at Roaibari village in Amtala union.

CITY Two sisters drown in B'baria canal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Swept away by the strong current of a canal, two sisters tragically drowned while they were bringing back cattle in Nasirnagar upazila of Brahmanbaria.

Their bodies were recovered yesterday morning from the Titas River, which flows through the Akashia Haor in Gokarna union of the upazila, after they went missing on Friday evening.

The deceased were identified as Maria Akter, 11, and Samia Akter, 8, daughters of Minar Ali from Gokarna village. Both were students of a local primary school.

Md Khairul Alam, officer-in-charge of Nasirnagar Police Station, confirmed the incident. The siblings were driving their cattle along the edge of the canal when the strong current swept them away. Villagers and relatives, along with police and fire service personnel, searched for them with boats throughout the night. Announcements were also made from the local mosque's loudspeaker.

Yesterday morning, Maria's body was found floating near the Gokarna embankment on the Titas River. Shortly afterwards, Samia's body was found entangled in a fishing net nearby.

Python rescued near CU



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 10-foot-long Burmese python weighing around 18 kilograms was rescued from outside a residence in Jamtal Dolai Para, near the Chittagong University yesterday afternoon.

Members of the Society for Snake and Snakebite Awareness, a student-led initiative at the university, responded to a call from residents who spotted the snake near their home.

The group safely captured the python around 1:30pm and released it into the forest near the Faculty of Biological Sciences.

According to the organisation, residents of the house became alarmed upon spotting the python near their premises and immediately alerted the team.

"We rushed to the scene to ensure the residents' safety and successfully captured the non-venomous python," the group said in a statement.

This is the second python rescue reported near the campus this month.

Amend law for stronger tobacco

FROM PAGE 3
said, adding, "We must overcome these challenges together."

Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akther said although the import of e-cigarettes is banned, tobacco companies are trying to produce them domestically.

She said workers in their factories are being exploited.

"They try to portray as if the Bangladesh government runs on money from tobacco companies – this is false. Our government runs on the people's money," she said.

these companies, it is unfortunate that textbooks contain nothing about the harms of tobacco.

With Health Services Division Secretary Saidur Rahman in the chair, the programme was also addressed by Railways Secretary Fahimul Islam, Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services Prof Abu Zafar, Deputy Representative of the WHO Country Office in Bangladesh Rajesh Narwal, and National Tobacco Control Cell Programme Director Sheikh Momena Moni.

বাংলাদেশ এনজিও ফাউন্ডেশন (বিএনএফ)
(আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠান বিভাগ, অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়)
বাংলাদেশ ইনসিওরেন্স একাডেমি ভবন (৫ম তলা), ৫৩, মহাখালী বা/এ, ঢাকা-১২১২

নিরোগ বিভাগ

বাংলাদেশ এনজিও ফাউন্ডেশনে নিম্নোক্ত পদে নিরোগের নিমিত্তে দরবার্ষত আহবান করা যাচ্ছে;
পদের নাম : ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক (চুক্তিভিত্তিক)।
শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা : প্রাথমিক শীক্ষার্থীকে স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে ন্যূনতম ৫৫ বছর এবং অনধিক ৬২ বছর হতে হবে।
বয়স : ৪১ জুলাই ২০২৫ তারিখে বয়স ন্যূনতম ৫৫ বছর এবং অনধিক ৬২ বছর হতে হবে।
নিয়ন্ত্রিত তথ্যের জন্য ফাউন্ডেশনের ওয়েবসাইট (www.bnfonline.org) ভিত্তিক।
দরবার্ষত পৌছানোর শেষ তারিখ : সোমবার, ৩০ জুন ২০২৫ (বিকাল ০৫:০০টা পর্যন্ত)।
ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক
বাংলাদেশ এনজিও ফাউন্ডেশন

Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital

26 & 26A, Road # 10/B, Sector # 11, Uttara, Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh

SMAMCH/05/2025/292

Recruitment Notice

S/N	Designation	No of Posts	Criteria
01	Assistant Director (Hospital)	01	1. (a) MBBS and MPH from a recognized institution. (b) Updated BMDC registration certificate. 2. Minimum 10 years of experience as an Assistant Director (Hospital) in DMP area.
02.	Assistant Director (Sales & Marketing)	01	1. MBA in Marketing from a reputed university. 2. Minimum 10 years of experience as an Assistant Director (Sales & Marketing). 3. The applicants should have experience in the following business area(s): Hospital; Direct Selling/ Marketing Service Company.

Read before to apply:

- Applicant must attach a pay order (Non-refundable) of BDT 500/- (Five hundred taka) in favor of "Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital".
- A cover letter (Attention to Director) with a passport size photo, a complete CV, Photocopy of NID, Updated BM&DC Registration (only for serial no.- 01), Photocopy of all educational certificates and experience to the application.
- The application must be sent by courier or hand to the office of Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital, Uttara, Dhaka- 1230.
- For viva T/A or D/A will not be provided.
- Deadline of application: 25-06-2025.

Director (Hospital)

Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
High Court Division
(Statutory Original Jurisdiction)
Company Matter No. 848 of 2025
In the Matter of
Sayed A K Anwaruzzaman Petitioner
Versus-
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms ---- Respondent
Notice is hereby given that an application under section 81(2) read with section 85 (3) along with section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was moved before the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division for condonation of delay in holding the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th Annual General Meeting of 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 of the company namely Marina Park & Resorts Limited. Upon preliminary hearing Honorable Justice Ahmed Sohel was pleased to admit the application on 22.05.2025 and given direction to submit affidavit in compliance by 29.06.2025. Anyone desirous to contest the said application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either personally or through duly authorized Advocate. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of prescribed fees.

Jagadish Chandra Saha

Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Room No. 4048, Sohrwardi Bhaban (3rd Floor)
Supreme Court Bar, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000

Planning and Development Division Khulna University, Khulna			
Tender No : KU/PD-189/2017-			Date : 29/05/2025
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of			
Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of the Work	Online Tender Closing and Opening date
1120341	KU/PD-425/2025	Procurement, Supply and Installation of Necessary Equipments for Ophthalmology Department of Medical Centre, Khulna University	Date : 22-Jun-2025 Time : 03:00 PM
1119395	KU/PD-415/2025	Procurement of Engineering and Other Equipments for Khulna University (Lot-02) (Re:)	Date : 22-Jun-2025 Time : 03:00 PM
1119351	KU/PD-422/2025	Procurement of Chemical and Necessary Laboratory Equipment for Central Laboratory of Khulna University	Date : 22-Jun-2025 Time : 03:00 PM
1119089	KU/PD-427/2025	Procurement and Supply of Book/Journals for Central Library of Khulna University	Date : 22-Jun-2025 Time : 03:00 PM
1118252	KU/PD-423/2025	Procurement and Installation of 100 Nos Brand Computer (i3) for Laboratory of Different Discipline of Khulna University (Lot-2)	Date : 22-Jun-2025 Time : 03:00 PM

This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank branches upto banking hours on e-GP system. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Prof. Dr. Kazi Saiful Islam)
Director (In Charge)
Planning & Development Division
Khulna University

GD-1328

We need an efficient healthcare system

Unimplemented health budget remains a major concern

At a time when healthcare experts are urging the government to increase the allocation for the health sector to 15 percent of the national budget or five percent of the GDP, it is deeply concerning that the two government divisions responsible for healthcare delivery have not even been able to utilise their Annual Development Programme (ADP) allocations. Reportedly, over the past 10 months, these two divisions—Medical Education and Family Welfare Division and Health Services Division—spent only a small portion of the funds allocated to them, making them the poorest performers in utilising their development budget. One of them spent only 2.34 percent of its Tk 2,283.16 crore budget by April this year—the lowest among all ministries and divisions—while the other used 14.9 percent of its Tk 5,673.51 crore budget, also nearing the bottom of the list. Unless the government addresses the factors behind such dismal performance and seriously considers the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission, the much-needed change in our health sector will not come.

Reportedly, the factors identified by experts for poor ADP execution include the implementing agencies' lack of capacity, inexperienced project directors, dependence on the Public Works Department for construction, outdated budgeting methods, and leadership changes following the July uprising. In addition, government agencies often lack the necessary managerial and administrative capacity and experience to implement projects in the health sector. Many implementing agencies also lack financial autonomy, requiring them to seek the ministry's intervention, which is often a lengthy and bureaucratic process.

One crucial health project that has been delayed over the years is the one to establish fully fledged treatment centres at eight divisional headquarters for cancer, heart, and kidney patients. The project, approved in July 2019 and originally scheduled for completion by 2022, has undergone several revisions but still remains unfinished. Many other infrastructure development projects—for hospitals, medical colleges, universities, diagnostic facilities, and medical research centres—as well as the procurement of medical equipment are also facing similar delays. This means that the budget allocated for these projects remains unutilised.

While successive governments' neglect has completely crippled our health sector over the years, the situation has sadly remained the same during the interim government's tenure. We urge the government to address the issues hampering the health sector budget utilisation. The health budget must also address sector-specific needs, ensuring that adequate funds are allocated for the most-needed areas. The health sector must also have efficient leadership to ensure these projects are designed properly from the very beginning. The reform commission has put forward some pragmatic recommendations to overhaul our healthcare system, which should be implemented to make it efficient, pro-people, and accessible to all.

Dhaka still not prepared for the rains

Free the canals and flood flow zones, stop encroachment

The ordeals faced by many Dhaka dwellers on Thursday and Friday, who experienced heavy rainfall due to a depression at the Bay, give an idea of the suffering we may face in the coming days. Many commuters were stuck in traffic jams throughout the city for hours, while others had to navigate the precarious roads that became waterlogged. Continuous rain submerged many areas such as Shantinagar, Mirpur, Shewrapara, Green Road, Nilkhet and parts of Old Dhaka.

Dhaka's horrendously poor drainage system has continued to be a bane for its dwellers despite the ambitious Tk 262 crore investment by the two city corporations over four years (till 2024) to solve the waterlogging problem. The project included constructing 334.19 km of drainage infrastructure, including culverts and drains.

But the main reason for Dhaka to experience such debilitating waterlogging is the indiscriminate filling of water bodies and canals, a result of unplanned urbanisation and corruption of authorities responsible for preventing encroachment. Flood flow zones have been filled up, so there is nowhere the water can be held during heavy rains. A report published by this daily cited a study that revealed Dhaka has lost 3,440 acres of its designated flood flow zones, retention areas, and water bodies. Although some canals have been cleaned recently, the problem still persists as tertiary drains connected to them have not been upgraded.

Experts have stressed that the WASA 2015 Drainage Master Plan needs to be revised in keeping with the changing rain patterns caused by climate change. We urge the authorities to prioritise the cleaning and desilting of canals and other water bodies and making sure that whatever flood flow zones remain are free from encroachment. The drainage network also needs to be expanded to cover all areas. Both city corporations must devote their efforts to carry out these cleaning drives.

Future infrastructure development, moreover, must be more resilient and should include elevated roads, flood barriers, and efficient drainage systems. All urban development in the future must be in alignment with flood risk management. The authorities must also create awareness among the public about not littering water bodies. Fines should be introduced for littering and blocking drains and canals. As residents of the city, we also have a responsibility to keep it clean and free from waterlogging.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

CNN launched

On this day in 1980, the Cable News Network, popularly known as CNN, the world's first 24-hour TV news network, made its debut. The network signed on from its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia in the US, with a lead story about the attempted assassination of civil rights leader Vernon Jordan.



Jamaat leader's apology and the bigger question

WINKERS AWEIGH!

Tanim Ahmed
is digital editor at The Daily Star.

TANIM AHMED

It was during the Third Crusade that Richard the Lionheart fell dangerously ill. His condition worsened and the news reached his enemy, Muslim commander Salahuddin Ayyubi. Instead of taking advantage of the situation, Salahuddin sent his doctor to treat Richard and also sent snow to cool his fever. Salahuddin, who had liberated Jerusalem in 1187, said about Richard, "He is a noble foe. Let him not perish needlessly."

In another instance, the last Khwarezmian emperor, Jalal al-Din, made a defiant stand on the banks of the Indus (in what is now modern-day Pakistan) despite being vastly outnumbered with no hope of victory against Genghis Khan's army. Refusing to surrender to the Mongol onslaught, Jalal dived into the river with his horse and swam across under a hail of arrows. Watching the whole scene from a hilltop, Genghis, the great Khan, said, "Such a son is worthy of a father." (Baaper beta, as we often say in Bangla.)

History is replete with such instances of warriors admiring their worthy adversaries. There is a strange code of honour among soldiers who return from the battlefield. They seem to develop a strong sense of camaraderie not just with their comrades but also with their foes from battle. But the enemy within, who side with the invaders, have no such code. I realised this a long time ago from something my uncle once said.

He was among the first batch of officers to be inducted into the Bangladesh Army. Like many others from the First War Course (Murti Commission), my uncle soon found himself at the front, leading men to battle. He had learnt to kill almost as soon as he had learnt to shave. He had not even turned 20 when the war was over. Chachchu once said, "I don't mind sitting down to tea and a chat with those I fought against on the battlefield. But I will never be able to tolerate these people." He was referring to the vile collaborators who abetted the Pakistan Army in 1971.

It is well-established in documents

and widely reported events that Jamaat-e-Islami, as a party, devoted itself to defeating the liberation forces in 1971. The party's leadership met with the Pakistani military commanders during the Liberation War pledging whole-hearted support for a unified Pakistan.

Jamaat and like-minded parties joined forces to set up vigilante militias like the Razakars, Al-Badr,

and Al-Shams to act as auxiliary forces of the military junta. Jamaat leaders spearheaded the Razakar units, while the erstwhile Islami Chhatra Sangha's leaders were put in charge of Al-Badr units. It was the atrocities of these vigilantes against unarmed civilians and non-combatants that evoke the strong sense of betrayal we still feel. Despite being born here and despite being Bangalees, they turned and sided with the Pakistani military junta. In many areas of Bangladesh, it was these groups who helped identify the families and homes of the liberation forces and Hindus who would later be taken away, tortured and, often, executed.

Fast forward 54 years, a recent verdict from the apex court clearing Jamaat leader ATM Azharul Islam of charges related to crimes against humanity has caused jubilation among certain quarters.

The current Jamaat chief seized the moment to apologise unconditionally if his party or its members had hurt or caused harm to anyone, anywhere. But the manner in which Jamaat members still hero-worship their past leaders, who firmly stood against Bangladesh, does not convey a sense of their realisation of their crimes. Also, "hurt or caused harm," as the Jamaat chief put it, does not even begin to address the

party's role in 1971.

While even the vague apology is a step in the right direction, it is difficult to fathom why the Jamaat chief refrains from owning up to his party's questionable past and addresses the issue directly. After all, today's Jamaat-e-Islami leadership does not have the baggage of a blemished past like their predecessors. A more direct approach would also establish the party's commitment to Bangladesh and reassure, at least to some extent, the people. Instead, Jamaat and its student wing continue their attempts to undermine the Liberation War and nullify 1971.

My support for the July uprising stems from the ideals of the Liberation War. The resistance against injustice, the resolve to speak up, and the courage to stand the ground despite



In this photo taken on April 6, 1971, then Jamaat-e-Islami chief Ghulam Azam, far left, is seen at a meeting with Gen Tikka Khan of the Pakistan Army, sitting on the left of the large couch, and Nurul Amin, right, who was the chairman of Pakistan Democratic Party.

SOURCE: ARCHIVE

the risk were like a rejuvenation of the spirit of independence. My heart went out to the protesters of July. With them, I too rejoiced when Sheikh Hasina fled Bangladesh.

But ever since July, there have been subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, attempts to deride and disparage the spirit of the Liberation War from the same quarters that had opposed us in 1971. If it ever transpires that the July uprising is used to wash away the past, then that is where I will draw a line. I hope that day never comes. But if it should, I will not hesitate a moment.

Without a flicker of doubt, without a shadow of retreat, I will stand for 1971.

The case for a prompt election



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Dr Abdullah Shibli
is an economist and employed at a nonprofit financial intermediary in the US. He previously worked for the World Bank and Harvard University.

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

As Bangladesh awaits the date for the 13th parliamentary election, there seems to be a growing consensus among the major political parties and opinion makers that the election date ought to be announced sooner rather than later. Over the last nine and a half months, various reform commissions, advisory committees, and task forces have offered their views on what has to be done to clean up the mess left behind by the 15 plus years of Awami League's rule. There is no doubt that a consensus on the immediate need to restore democracy and the national election exists. However, there is still some disagreement among the various vocal entities, including the interim government, the army, and the most popular political parties, on the timetable for the election.

The existing uncertainty in the country revolves around mainly three tasks that the interim set out to accomplish: reforms, trials of those responsible for the July killings, and the election. It was obvious from the outset that the reforms and the trials might take longer than a few months, or even a year or two, to complete.

On the other hand, the election could be held while the reforms and trials were in progress if all the

parties involved agreed. This view was expressed succinctly by Mujahidul Islam Selim, former president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, who said the reform process should engage people, and the interim government might not have enough time to implement the reform proposals. He suggested that the interim could address some "necessary reforms" and leave the "fundamental issues" to the elected representatives. Other discordant voices have even questioned the legitimacy of reforms and administrative measures undertaken by the unelected government.

The discussions that are now taking place, be it in the print or social media, are: the offer made by the chief adviser to resign; the decision or proposal to establish a humanitarian corridor to Rakhine; the timeline for the July killing trials and the judicial process; priorities of the new budget; and clarity in the decision-making process within the government. Without a national parliament with elected members, speculations are also rife about the motives behind each move undertaken by our neighbouring countries as well as the big powers. The guesses, rumours and conjectures are abundant and widespread. As a result, there is

a lot of discussions and uncertainty regarding these issues, leading people to make predictions or assumptions without sufficient evidence.

We heard that the interim government's cabinet, i.e. the advisory council, requested the chief adviser not to resign. He got a vote of confidence from them. Several hypotheses have emerged regarding

The recent actions taken by the government have cast the spotlight on the twin issues of transparency and accountability. Political scientists and management theorists have consistently raised the need for a system that meets these two criteria. Decisions made behind closed doors must be transparent, and those involved must be accountable.

the background for his move.

However, the question remains: what made him decide to consider resigning? There's still a lot of fog, but we don't know yet what prompted him to state that "the country is in a state of war." Nonetheless, seeing that he handled it the right way is comforting. However, the nation needs to know what is happening in the nation's corridors of power.

The army chief's speech to the brass is now in the mix. He appeared to have

anticipated the feeling among the masses when he expressed his dismay at "being kept in the dark" on critical national matters.

The recent actions taken by the government have cast the spotlight on the twin issues of transparency and accountability. Political scientists and management theorists have consistently raised the need for a system that meets these two criteria. Decisions made behind closed doors must be transparent, and those involved must be accountable. Accountability means that those making decisions are answerable for the choices they make and the subsequent actions taken.

Now, imagine a hypothetical scenario. If we had a democratically elected parliament that represented divergent political views, the questions and the conjectures mentioned above could have had a fair hearing. MPs would have raised a point of order or filed a similar motion and drawn the concerned cabinet member's or the prime minister's attention to hash it out in parliament. Other members would have debated it, and things would have been laid to rest rather than allowed to simmer for weeks.

To sum it up, there is an urgent need for an announcement on a deadline for the election. An elected government may not lead us to El Dorado, but it is the better option in the current state of affairs. Democracy is messy, but to paraphrase Winston Churchill, it is not the worst form of government if you consider the alternatives. Elections will not only bring about accountability and transparency but also restore people's representation and the government's legitimacy.

How is the NCP's 'new political settlement' faring?



Sadi Muhammad Alok
is a journalist at The Daily Star.

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

With the promise of a "new political settlement," the National Citizen Party (NCP), a political party formed under the leadership of July uprising coordinators, was launched on February 28 this year. Having been freed from more than 15 years of autocratic rule, the people of Bangladesh dreamt of a new nation—an equitable one. In this context, NCP's emergence carried a special significance. At NCP's debut, thousands of people gathered at Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka. Addressing the event, NCP Convener Nahid Islam declared his party would be democratic and equality-based—a party that would represent the people. That message sparked a new sense of hope even among the "apolitical" educated middle class.

Three months have passed since then. During this time, the NCP has been working to form committees at district and sub-district levels. Some leaders have held public gatherings in their respective localities. The party has already launched youth and labour wings, and efforts are underway to form more professional wings, including for doctors and engineers. It is also working on forming the NCP Diaspora Alliance to include expatriates. Membership drives and other party programmes are taking place across the country.

But in these three months, has there been any sign of a new political settlement?

Already, allegations of some NCP leaders having a lavish lifestyle have sparked controversy. In some cases, said leaders have provided explanations, but doubt remains as to how credible those explanations are. During Ramadan this year, NCP hosted an iftar party at a five-star hotel in Dhaka. This raised questions as to where a newly formed party obtained the funds from to organise such a luxurious event. Questions have been raised regarding its expenses associated with the party office at Banglamotor. In both cases, the NCP leadership has not provided



The National Citizen Party (NCP) was launched three months ago with high expectations among the public for a changed, improved course in politics.

FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

any satisfactory explanation.

In three months of its existence, the party has yet to demonstrate what it has done differently from the traditional political framework.

NCP chief Nahid Islam has also been called out for his activities—or lack thereof. As the leader of a new political party, he was expected to engage broadly with the masses. Instead, he has mostly been seen either attending meetings at the party's Banglamotor office or posting on Facebook.

Sarjis Alam, NCP's chief organiser for the northern region, was criticised for staging a show of force with a motorcade of over a hundred vehicles in his hometown of Panchagarh. Dr Tasnim Zara, the party's senior joint member secretary, asked about the matter in a Facebook post. In

raised about why these two leaders chose to post on Facebook instead of discussing the matter in person. Some, however, took the public questioning positively as this has not been seen in Bangladesh's politics before.

Recently, Sarjis made Facebook posts mocking a statement by a senior BNP leader. NCP leaders have previously been seen putting up posts, counter posts on Facebook. Seeing as political rebuttals and derision over statements have been commonplace in Bangladesh—albeit not on social media platforms—is the NCP not following conventional practices?

One may disagree with someone else's opinion, and it is perfectly possible to express one's disagreement without resorting to sarcastic posts.

at Mongla port and his use of a luxury vehicle came under scrutiny as well. Regarding the car, he stated it was lent to him by a pro-Jamaat-e-Islami businessman.

Former NCP leader Gazi Salahuddin Tanvir was accused of influence peddling and corruption. NCP temporarily suspended him and served a show-cause notice to him in April.

All these incidents have negatively impacted the NCP's public image. A few resignations in such an early stage of the party have also sown seeds of doubt.

From the outset, NCP has positioned itself as a centrist party. Yet, there remains no clear indication of how leaders from differing political backgrounds or ideologies will operate together under one umbrella.

Recently, NCP's Senior Joint Chief Coordinator Abdul Hannan Masud drew flak for intervening and getting three individuals, who had been detained following an altercation with police, released. Later, the party issued a show-cause notice to him, but it was withdrawn when Hannan acknowledged his error. Previously, Hannan's formation of a committee

For example, criticism arose when two NCP leaders participated in a rally that opposed the Women's Affairs Reform Commission. At that time, there was no immediate response from the party. A statement was eventually released, but it failed to clearly articulate the party's stance. Moreover, the party has not expressed a strong position on recent social and cultural issues—despite public expectations that they would be among the first to raise their voice in resistance, given their commitment to building a fair and discrimination-free Bangladesh.

Varying positions of NCP leaders on different issues have further fuelled public uncertainty. For instance, at a Hefazat-e-Islam rally where controversial remarks were made about women, three of the six women who issued a legal notice against Hefazat were NCP members. Yet, two NCP leaders had also attended that same rally. Similarly, when Narir Dako Moiteer Jatra (Solidarity March at Women's Call) was held on May 16, some NCP leaders posted on Facebook opposing the event, while others supported it. These instances led to confusion regarding NCP's stance as a political party.

However, it is also possible that the party is attempting to establish a democratic practice in which no single view is imposed on anyone. From that perspective, it could be seen as a positive development. According to the NCP charter, which is set to be unveiled soon, the party is prioritising internal democracy.

Many have alleged that the two student representatives on the advisory council, Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan and Mahfuj Alam, are part of the NCP. However, Nahid Islam has repeatedly claimed the two have no connection with the party. However, NCP leaders have long-standing ties with both Asif and Mahfuj. They worked together during the July-August movement. When it comes to those who played intellectual roles behind the scenes during the movement, Mahfuj's name comes up first. According to NCP, if Asif and Mahfuj decide to participate in politics or the election, they will have to resign from their government jobs. If they contest the election, it will likely be under the NCP banner. So, no matter how strongly the party distances itself from these two student advisers, people have a fair understanding of

the real dynamics at play.

NCP must realise one thing: they won't garner public support across the board, regardless of ideology or party affiliation, simply because they are a political party. Yes, the current NCP leadership led the July uprising. But NCP did not exist back then. The movement wasn't carried out under any party banner, which is why people from all walks of life came together to take part in it. NCP leaders played a key role in the uprising, but so did nearly all other student organisations except Chhatra League, Chhatra Dal, Chhatra Shibir, Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, Chhatra Union, and other left-wing student groups. Also central to the movement was the public's accumulated anger from years of suppression by an autocratic regime.

Therefore, the NCP has no reason to assume that, like in July, the public will respond unanimously to their calls now. The proof of this was seen during their recently organised protest at the Election Commission. To survive in politics going forward, they must win the hearts and the confidence of the people.

More importantly, by invoking the idea of a new political settlement, the NCP has generated high expectations, which must be met with action—action that appears to be missing so far.

That said, the NCP still has time to engage with people. While the exact election date is still not confirmed, it is clear that it will take place between December, 2025 and June, 2026. Based on this time frame, the party should be far more active than it currently appears to be. NCP leaders must look beyond holding meetings at the party's central office or organising occasional rallies. To build the party, they must reach every corner of the country—even the most remote areas, if necessary. Otherwise, engaging in national politics will remain a difficult endeavour.

On February 28, in the presence of well-wishers, supporters, and leaders from other political parties at Manik Mia Avenue, Nahid Islam said, "Now is the time to dream anew, to chart a new path, and to build a new Bangladesh." The people of Bangladesh also believe in those words and are nurturing that dream in their hearts. But to lead to that new Bangladesh, the NCP must focus on truly building the new nation they speak of—not merely delivering eloquent words.

What we expect from a people-centric health budget



Dr Syed Abdul Hamid
is professor at the Institute of Health Economics at the University of Dhaka, and convenor of Alliance for Health Reforms Bangladesh (AHRB) and Network for Healthcare Excellence (NHE).

SYED ABDUL HAMID

The health sector in Bangladesh faces severe challenges due to a lack of strong political commitment and effective policies, inefficient management, weak governance, and a dire shortage of financial resources.

In this context, merely increasing the budget—which was equivalent to 0.74 percent of GDP in FY2024-25—is not enough; what's needed is efficient and accountable budget management. Funds must be invested transparently and strategically in areas that bring most benefit to people, and the concept of a "people-centric health budget" must now be part of national discourse. Such a budget requires increasing public spending on healthcare relative to GDP, ensuring equitable regional allocations, strengthening public health infrastructure, emphasising preventive and promotive services, and above all, reducing the burden of out-of-pocket expenses on citizens.

An analysis of the proposed, revised, and actual expenditures over the past decade reveals that revised budgets are consistently 20-30 percent lower than the proposed ones. Furthermore, actual spending falls short by 25-30 percent, meaning in most years, only 50-60 percent of the proposed health budget is spent. In recent years, the figure has dropped even further, and the spending that does occur often lacks effectiveness.

This is due to several structural barriers. For example, beyond the health ministry, apex ministries such as finance and public administration and the planning commission often

don't prioritise health as necessary. Even within the health ministry, there are limited institutional capacity, fragmentation, and a lack of decisive leadership.

A critical obstacle lies in the disconnect between different tiers of leadership. Secretariat-level officials typically possess general education backgrounds and extensive experience in public administration, whereas the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is largely staffed by professionals with medical training but limited expertise in administration and governance.

This disparity contributes to poor coordination, suboptimal decision-making, and frequent delays in the approval process. Moreover, there is a significant experience gap between senior officials at the DGHS and field-level health managers. This disconnect further undermines effective management, communication, and policy implementation at the grassroots level.

Due to inadequate training and capacity in field and hospital administration, procurement of medicines and medical equipment is not done efficiently or timely. This is one of the main reasons why the operational budget is not fully spent. Ambiguities in public procurement laws and regulations further complicate procurement and project implementation. Additionally, the inefficiencies and negligence of several relevant government institutions also play a role.

In the case of development

budgets, lack of spending is linked to factors like the incompetence of project directors, their frequent changes, inadequate staffing in project offices, insufficient support from the secretariat and other offices, political interference, and corruption, making it difficult to select competent contractors. The financial weaknesses of contractors

and Public Works Department.

Before increasing the health budget, certain prerequisites must be fulfilled.

For example, ensuring full and efficient utilisation of the current budget, filling vacant

positions and creating new ones as needed, ensuring availability of essential medicines and reagents, and launching new programmes

in nutrition. In rural areas, the current duplicated system (community clinics, family welfare centres, and health sub-centres) must be integrated into a unified platform, as recommended by the Health Sector Reform Commission. In urban areas, primary healthcare should follow the standard operating procedure developed by Dhaka University's

secondary care services (e.g. inpatient care and basic emergency care).

This will allow families to know what services and how much value they can receive for free, or at subsidised rates, each year.

Third, a national health fund (NHF) should be established under the Bangladesh Health Commission or National Health Protection Authority, as suggested by the Health Sector Reform Commission. The fund should have the capacity to mobilise resources from diverse sources, including compulsory contributions from mobile phone subscribers and through corporate social responsibility programmes. Adopting these changes will require granting financial autonomy to the eight old medical college hospitals and specialised institute hospitals—an initiative that also aligns with the reform commission's recommendations.

The primary purpose of the NHF would be to finance referred inpatient care, treatment of critical illnesses, emergency medical services, and rapid response mechanisms. A household-level annual coverage ceiling of Tk 500,000 could be set to ensure equitable access. This system would bring both public and private healthcare providers under a unified financial framework, enhancing service accessibility and reducing the burden of out-of-pocket expenses.

Implementing these reforms requires political will and a conscious and vocal public that demands good governance and transparency. The active participation of civil society, media, and academia is vital for this purpose.

As a new fiscal year approaches, we must strongly advocate for a people-centric health budget. Recognising that a sick nation can never be productive, it is time to advance the health sector sustainably and equitably through an inclusive and responsible budgeting framework.



The crisis in the health budget is not just about low allocations, rather an underutilisation.

also contribute to project delays.

Another major issue is waste and corruption in the health budget. Though reliable data is scarce, irregularities are often observed in procurement processes, patient records, drug supply and storage, and monitoring. Most critically, governance is very weak. Moreover, there is a lack of coordination among many cost centres both within and outside the health ministry such as the Health Engineering Department

to meet rising demands, with dedicated funds. Once these steps are implemented, the government will be able to credibly justify a larger health budget.

To implement a people-centric health budget, structural reforms are essential. First, preventive and promotive services should be prioritised within the primary healthcare system, such as basic outpatient care, immunisation, maternal and child health, and

Institute of Health Economics and implemented by UNICEF under the "Aalo Clinic" initiative.

Second, a universal family health card should be introduced to empower citizens to deliver easier and more equitable access to healthcare services. Under this card, the government should provide an explicit benefit package with a primary ceiling of Tk 100,000 annually for each household for referred outpatient departments and

A blatant river grab

FROM PAGE 1

land office. These documents show that RS Dag (plot) No. 184 and RS Dag Nos. 301 307 are earmarked as river and riverbanks and are "owned by the Bangladesh government."

We were unable to collect the land record for RS Dag No. 308.

Before the cement factory was set up two decades ago, the Dhaleshwari thrived as a lifeline, drawing locals who fished, bathed, and depended on its waters for livelihood.

Residents of Mollar Char, a riverside village in Munshiganj, said that when the factory was first built, it started on a small piece of land. But during the dry season every year, it kept expanding by filling the river with sand—even at night.

On March 4, 2025, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in a letter to the Munshiganj district administration said Shah Cement's sand-filling activities is creating navigation problems in the Shitalakkhya and Dhaleshwari route, obstructing the natural flow of the water and causing environmental damage.

"Several companies, including Shah Cement, are raising land by dumping sand and soil on the confluence, disturbing the rivers' flow. The navigability of the rivers has decreased, hindering vessel movement and raising concerns about environmental disasters," reads the letter.

Despite official instructions to remove the illegally dumped sand and soil, Shah Cement has yet to comply, it said, adding, "These activities violate the Port Act 1908, Port Rules 1966, and High Court orders."

The letter also cited a recent visit of Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain to the area when he "expressed dissatisfaction over the illegal occupation, and instructed the authorities to take action."

Contacted, Munshiganj Deputy Commissioner Fatema Tul Zannat, who took office in September 2024, said, "have come to know about the allegations of illegal occupation of some river land by Shah Cement. Currently, a thorough investigation into the matter is underway. Necessary legal actions will be taken after on-site investigation and verification of records."

A TOP GRABBER
This is not the first time that government authorities are speaking publicly and exchanging letters about the encroachment.

Two years ago, on February 15, 2023, the Munshiganj district administration prepared a list and identified Shah Cement as a river grabber.

The list, signed by the then deputy commissioner and revenue deputy collector, shows that 15 companies occupied 34.96 acres of the Dhaleshwari river. Of this, Shah Cement alone had 24 acres under its occupation, making it the top grabber.

Earlier on May 6, 2019, the Munshiganj district administration prepared a list and identified Shah Cement among 50 river grabbers, saying that the company occupied river land in Mirershari Mauza, under RS Dag No. 184.

"This list has been sent to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer concerned for necessary legal measures, including issuing notices, to evict the mentioned illegal occupants," reads the letter, signed by the then deputy commissioner.

The letter was sent to the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), the legal guardian of all rivers in the country.

The NRCC itself identified Shah Cement as a grabber of the two rivers in its 2018 and 2019 annual reports.

In its 2018 report, the NRCC said that Shah Cement "is gradually occupying and filling up river land and has put up signboard on river char."

The following year, the NRCC annual report said, "Shah Cement has filled up around 24 acres of river land in Mirershari Mauza, Munshiganj Sadar Upazila, under RS Khatian No. 1 and RS Dag number 184, effectively occupying the river land. The land classification has been altered by sand filling."

The report added, "The company

has constructed a massive factory, disrupting the flow of the Dhaleshwari River on one side and the Shitalakkhya River on the other, threatening to engulf both rivers."

The report also noted that the factory discharges liquid and solid waste into the Dhaleshwari.

"This has caused serious damage to the river's water, environment, habitat, and biodiversity. The polluted water flows into the river through a large pipe, about four meters in diameter, directly from the Shah Cement factory.... The fly ash pollution has reduced fish, dolphins, and migratory birds," it said.

Contacted, former NRCC chairman Muzibur Rahman Howlader said, "I

digital survey in the area is complete. Demarcation pillars will be installed soon."

'RIVER SHIFTED COURSE'

The Daily Star has been in touch with Shah Cement since January 26, 2025, when we first sent a set of written questions via WhatsApp. The company requested an in-person meeting instead, and we sat twice with the company representatives on February 5 and 18 at their Gulshan office and shared our findings. We also shared some land-related documents and selected portion of government reports, as requested by the company.

Upon repeated requests, the company finally responded to our

relevant Cadastral Survey (CS) and Revisional Survey (RS) records, which earmark the area as river land. We have also obtained the SA records, created between the CS and RS records. These SA records also classify most of the area as river land, with a small portion designated as house properties.

But the land ministry considers SA records "inauthentic as they were created based on information from the landlords, rather than through field survey."

Moreover, in a landmark verdict in 2009, the High Court concluded that river land-related disputes must be settled in line with the CS and RS records.

as we use foreshore near the adjacent rivers with due approvals from the authorities."

According to BIWTA sources, Shah Cement has been using foreshore land under a licence from the Narayanganj BIWTA Port Office since October 20, 2004, two years after the factory was set up. Currently, the company holds 11.28 acres of river foreshore land under the lease agreement, which expires in June this year.

Under the lease agreement, the company cannot fill up the river and its foreshore, cannot use additional river land, cannot change the riverbanks, cannot disrupt the navigability, cannot anchor ships haphazardly, and cannot dump waste into the river.

"Shah Cement is not complying with the terms of the agreement. They are gradually filling the river and foreshore by dumping waste, which is reducing the navigability of the river in that area. We occasionally visit the site, verbally instruct them to comply with the terms, and sometimes carry out evictions," a senior official of Narayanganj BIWTA Port Office told The Daily Star on April 13.

Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (retd) Sakhawat Hussain rejected Shah Cement's claim that it is not a river grabber.

"When I visited the Dhaleshwari and Shitalakkhya rivers [in December 2024], I saw that Shah Cement has encroached upon the river. I immediately instructed the officials concerned to take effective measures," he told The Daily Star in March.

Contacted again yesterday for an update, he said, "I instructed the officials concerned to start a survey to determine how much land Shah Cement and other factories have occupied there. I am not sure what actions have been taken so far, but I will definitely follow up on this matter."

Govt hires firm to remove sand, soil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) is going to hire a firm to remove the alluvial soil at the confluence of Shitalakkhya and Dhaleshwari and the sand and soil filled up in front of Shah Cement in Munshiganj.

On Thursday, the BIWTA primarily selected a contractor at its Narayanganj port office following a competitive tender process, officials said.

The firm has been selected from among three bidders to excavate about 15 lakh cubic feet of sand from the char area, said BIWTA officials, but did not disclose the name of the contractor.

"The necessary documents of the selected company are now under scrutiny, and a formal work order will be issued once the verification is done," said Mobarok Hossain Mozumder, Deputy Director of the Ports and Transport Department at the Narayanganj River Port.

Officials expect to start the dredging after Eid upon completion of all official procedures.

According to the tender notification dated March 5, 2025, sand must be transported at the company's own expense using boats to a designated distance under the instructions and supervision of BIWTA engineers.

The notification came a day after BIWTA wrote to the Munshiganj district administration, saying Shah Cement's sand filling activities is creating navigation problems in the Shitalakkhya and Dhaleshwari route, obstructing the natural flow of the water and causing environmental damage.

"Several companies, including Shah Cement, are raising land by dumping sand and soil on the confluence, disturbing the rivers' flow. The navigability of the rivers has decreased, hindering vessel movement and raising concerns about environmental disasters," reads the verdict stated.

Despite repeated requests, Shah Cement did not say how much land it "owns" there or how much of the river land it rented for use with government approval.

It only said Shah Cement is one of the "highest rental paying companies of BIWTA in the country



The massive industrial complex of Shah Cement in Munshiganj.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

The encroached parts of the river will be recovered soon. The digital survey in the area is complete. Demarcation pillars will be installed soon.

MOBARAK HOSSAIN,
Deputy Director, BIWTA's
Narayanganj River Port

queries on February 26.

Based on its response and claim, we gathered further documents and obtained new information, which we again shared with the company and sought clarifications and comments on the new findings throughout March. But the company did not respond.

In the February 26 written response, Sheikh Shabab Ahmed, Head of Corporate Affairs and Legal, said the company upholds the highest standard in adhering to all laws of the country.

"Most of the river encroachment claims are based on CS records. After that, several other land surveys, such as RS, SA, and BS were conducted both before and after independence

visited the area in 2019 and identified the factory as a river grabber. How does it continue to occupy the land for so long? The factory was set up by filling up two rivers. When I was NRCC chairman, I reviewed the CS and RS records and submitted a report confirming its illegal occupation."

Officials say the 2018 and 2019 NRCC annual reports and the 2023 list from the Munshiganj district administration were based solely on RS Dag No. 184, where Shah Cement occupies 24 acres of river land.

However, surveys conducted in December 2024 and early 2025 examined additional RS Dag numbers, suggesting that the total area of river land currently occupied by the company may exceed 24 acres.

Contacted, Supreme Court lawyer Manzill Murshid said that the High Court has declared rivers as living entities, which means the local administration has the authority to clear encroachments immediately.

"I don't understand why they haven't acted yet, especially after August 5," he said.

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan said the interim government has selected 13 rivers to free from illegal occupation within its limited tenure in office.

"If the encroachment of these rivers is on this list, you may see results during our tenure," she told The Daily Star.

BIWTA's Narayanganj River Port Deputy Director Mobarok Hossain said that the encroached parts of the river will be recovered soon. "The

Daily Star has collected the

changes. This is a terrible distortion of history, and a betrayal of the millions of martyrs of 1971."

"Therefore, it is the people's responsibility to protest against this and build resistance."

Prof Anu Muhammad said that Jamaat gained political legitimacy in the 1980s. "The alliances led by the Awami League and the BNP legitimised them as democratic forces during the anti-Ershad movement. Through this recognition, Jamaat-e-Islami was rehabilitated."

Prof Anu Muhammad said that in 1995, the Awami League and Jamaat conducted movements together, and when the BNP came to power in 2001, Jamaat members accused of war crimes became ministers as part of the Four-Party Alliance.

"It seems the goal was to declare him innocent," Prof Anu Muhammad said. "If such an identified war criminal is declared innocent, history

He criticised the lack of response to gender-based attacks, citing instances where girls were targeted and attacked, kicked, or subjected to hate campaigns, or where female college teachers were harassed. "We see no government action."

The former JU teacher further said that the mass uprising once ignited hopes for a new political structure among the people.

"But in reality, the government appears indifferent. Its presence is hardly felt. In some cases, there is even evidence of involvement by state forces in the attacks and repression."

Prof Anu Muhammad said that in 1995, the Awami League and Jamaat conducted movements together, and when the BNP came to power in 2001, Jamaat members accused of war crimes became ministers as part of the Four-Party Alliance.

"It seems the goal was to declare him innocent," Prof Anu Muhammad said. "If such an identified war criminal is declared innocent, history

He added that whenever women, students, workers, or teachers speak up for their rights, they come under attack. "And those who carry out

Yunus invites

FROM PAGE 12

"There was an inauguration in the first phase, then another in the second. Now again in the third phase, you have merged things together ... you are just showing us the 'banana of reforms,'" he said.

Referring to the latest call for talks, Salauddin said, "We've told you to compile what has already been discussed and present it to the nation. But instead, you're going through rituals with no real work being done. Why another fresh inauguration on June 2 for the third round? How many inaugurations does it take?"

He also criticised Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus for "backtracking on earlier assurances". "You told us there would be an election by December. But then you backtracked. That is unfortunate," he said.

"If merely speaking about reclaiming our democratic rights makes you uncomfortable, honourable chief adviser, that is truly disappointing. How much longer will you delay reforms using this excuse?"

Salauddin said justice for crimes against humanity committed by "fascists" must remain a top priority, even above reforms. He also highlighted the sacrifices made by BNP activists, stating that they shed blood, endured torture, and were sent to secret detention centres called Aynagar. "We didn't go through all that for nothing," he said.

"Our goal is to establish a democratically elected government, restore voting rights, and build a society free from discrimination. Reform is a continuous process, but it should not be used to justify election delays," he added.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's Adviser Mahdi Amin, the party's Executive Committee Member Tabith Awal, and other party leaders also attended the Krishak Dal event, chaired by its General Secretary Shahidul Islam Babul.

At a separate event at the Jatiya Press Club, BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury responded to Yunus's comments made during a question-answer session at the 30th Nikkei Forum in Tokyo on Thursday.

There, noting that some politicians want the election in December this year, Yunus had said, "We don't want to leave the country with the old institutions remaining as it is. If we need a good job at the reforms, we have to wait for six months more [for the election]. There are opinions that let's get the election done, but it is not all, just one particular party."

In response, Khosru said, "Only the parties formed after August 5 don't want elections. At least 52 parties want polls within December. If someone says only one party wants elections, is that a truthful statement? Is it directed at us? What does it imply?"

He added that those opposing a December election are "only four or five parties", not even registered, and lacking public support.

"The interim government has no connection with the people. Everyone's doing whatever they want. More will do so, causing further damage. This cannot continue," said Khosru.

He added, "Only an elected parliament, accountable to the people, can bring stability. After Sheikh Hasina fled, major changes took place. Any party that fails to recognise this has no future in Bangladesh."

The event was organised by the Zia Parishad and chaired by its Vice Chairman Md Shafiqul Islam.

Other speakers included BNP Chairperson's Adviser Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal and Jugantor Editor Abdul Hai Shikdar.

Mob kills two

FROM PAGE 12

marijuana were seized.

"A case was filed in this regard, accusing the duo and two others. The deceased Tanvir was one of the accused in the narcotics case."

Later, around noon, Tanvir and two other young men arrived in the Haddipatti area and started threatening the locals for tipping the police off, said the OC.

Locals said they were carrying machetes at the time.

At one point, during the heated exchange, an announcement was made over the local mosque's loudspeakers calling residents to gather and confront criminals.

Subsequently, locals chased down the men and beat two of them to death.

The OC said police were informed only about the drug-related allegations, not about the accused carrying machetes, mugging, or harassing women.

The bodies of the deceased were sent to the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College mortuary for autopsy.

Haddipatti, located near a canal and somewhat isolated from the main residential area, is home to at least 250 families.

Residents, mostly from low-income groups, report a rise in mugging incidents in the area recently.



Fishermen catch fish from the Shakbaria river, adjacent to the Sundarbans. They cast their nets during high tide and collect local varieties of fish -- including shrimp, bele, and tengra. By selling the catch in local markets, they earn Tk 400-700 a day. The photo was taken from the Jorshing area in Koyra, Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Japan eyes Bangladesh as key investment

FROM PAGE 3

Tokyo's plan to build an industrial value chain under the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B), centred on Matarbari and linked to Northeast India, Nepal and Bhutan, could be a game-changer for Bangladesh, he added.

After Bhutan, Japan will become only the second country to sign an EPA with Bangladesh, enabling Japanese firms to retain duty-free, quota-free benefits once Bangladesh graduates from LDC status next year.

"How much of this opportunity we can use depends on us. Our investment environment needs a

radical improvement," the professor said.

Maria Howlader, secretary-general of the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said apart from complexities at the customs, taxes and licensing issues, Japan wants political stability and security. "As we are making reforms, I am confident that more Japanese companies will be investing here in the coming days," she told The Daily Star.

She lauded the new MoUs aimed at training and recruiting Bangladeshis in Japan.

Restaurant group Watami has already announced a training centre in Dhaka.

Though only about 35,000 Bangladeshi skilled workers had gone to Japan as of 2024, Japanese authorities and firms expect 100,000 recruits over the next five years in caregiving, construction, farming, driving, factory and food sectors.

"Japan maintains 100 percent compliance and transparency in the system. We should maintain it at every step -- call it in quality of language and recruitment steps," said Maria.

Syed Masudur Rahman, director of Japan-Bangladesh joint venture Kokorazashi, said rising Bangladeshi presence in Japan will spur exports, "We should robustly work

to harness the Japanese market. Any lethargy means we will lose the opportunity."

Abdullah added under Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, Tokyo seeks "peace, stability and prosperity" in the region.

Supporting Bangladesh in security sector to achieve this objective as well as protect Japanese investments is also an important area of cooperation, he said.

"Bangladesh should pursue strongly to make the best use of Japanese interest in this region, especially Japanese investment and labour market," he said, adding that "it will boost our economy, remittance and jobs sector".

Services halted for fourth day, patients suffer

FROM PAGE 3

yesterday expressing regret to all patients who have been deprived of care due to the ongoing disruption.

The ministry said it had sent a delegation to the hospital to help resolve the deadlock. "At this moment, we are awaiting a positive outcome from the discussions. In the meantime, as an interim arrangement, patients requiring eye treatment are requested to seek necessary medical care at the ophthalmology departments of nearby hospitals," the statement added.

According to 2023 government data, the hospital serves around 1,800 outdoor and emergency patients daily, with approximately 40 new admissions each day. The current numbers are likely to be higher.

While visiting the hospital in Dhaka's Shyamoli area around 11:5pm yesterday, this correspondent found both gates locked, with several Ansar members stationed at one entrance.

Inside, seven to eight police personnel were present, alongside a few journalists.

The hospital wore a deserted look, with no doctors, nurses, or staff members visible.

Only one lift was operational.

While about 150 inpatients left the hospital

on Wednesday evening, some 80 patients -- mostly individuals injured during the July uprising -- remain admitted. They have been housed on the third floor, which serves as the hospital's dedicated care unit.

Kawsar Ahmed, 48, a small trader from Narayanganj, underwent a second surgery on his right eye on Tuesday. Following the procedure, doctors recommended several tests.

"I was under direct supervision of the doctor while waiting for the test results. But all services stopped from Wednesday," he said.

Kawsar said about 25 general patients were still staying at the hospital, while food services resumed yesterday morning after two days. "But there's still no doctor, nurse, or even a cleaner here," he said.

According to 2023 government data, the hospital serves around 1,800 outdoor and emergency patients daily, with approximately 40 new admissions each day.

The current numbers are likely to be higher.

While visiting the hospital in Dhaka's Shyamoli area around 11:5pm yesterday, this correspondent found both gates locked, with several Ansar members stationed at one entrance.

Inside, seven to eight police personnel were present, alongside a few journalists.

The hospital wore a deserted look, with no doctors, nurses, or staff members visible.

Only one lift was operational.

While about 150 inpatients left the hospital

on Wednesday evening, some 80 patients -- mostly individuals injured during the July uprising -- remain admitted. They have been housed on the third floor, which serves as the hospital's dedicated care unit.

He said over 50 injured persons of the July uprising were staying at the facility, and that none from the government contacted them over the past four days.

Akhter Hossain, a July protester, on Wednesday denied attacking hospital staff.

He claimed they were protesting irregularities at the hospital and negligence in their treatment.

He alleged eight protesters were injured when police charged batons on them.

Earlier, on Monday, four individuals injured in the July uprising attempted suicide by consuming poison during a meeting at the hospital.

They were later treated at Shahid Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital.

On Tuesday, the hospital director was reportedly confined to his office for about an hour and a half over alleged infighting between two groups of July protesters.

Charges against

FROM PAGE 3

its associated bodies to carry out actions that led to mass killings, injuries, targeted violence against women and children, the incineration of bodies, and denial of medical treatment to the wounded.

He said, according to the report, more than 1,500 individuals were killed, over 25,000 wounded, and countless others subjected to torture and other inhumane treatment.

Robbers loot

FROM PAGE 3

highway police station, sustained a bullet injury to his hand during the incident.

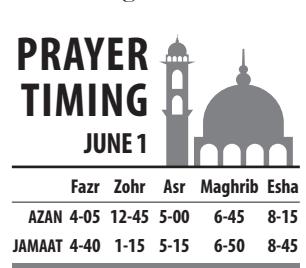
Mohammad Rasedul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mirzapur Police Station, said the expatriate and her relatives were rescued and brought to the police station.

Injured Tuhiun was admitted to Kumudini Hospital, he added.

Adibul Islam, additional superintendent of police (crime) in Tangail, said, "We are working on the case and hope to arrest the robbers soon."

Earlier, an oil-laden truck was hijacked on the same highway in Mirzapur on Friday. On May 21, a passenger bus of Al Imran Paribahan was robbed and female passengers were harassed. A similar incident occurred on February 17, when a Unique Royals passenger bus was robbed and female passengers were assaulted in Mirzapur.

Expressing concerns over safety and rising insecurity, both transport workers and commuters strongly demanded enhanced surveillance by law enforcers on the highway.



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়
রাষ্ট্রিয় এ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-১৪
আহুয়া বাইপাস, ময়মনসিংহ
তারিখ ২৮ মে ২০২৫ খ্রি

উন্নত দরপত্র বিভিন্ন

১। ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বর্ষে (০১ জুন থেকে ৩০ জুন ২০২৬ পর্যন্ত) রাষ্ট্রিয় এ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-১৪, আহুয়া বাইপাস, ময়মনসিংহ এর নিম্নরূপ কাজের জন্য দিবার নিয়মের দ্বারা দি

প্রকার প্রক্রিয়াজোট বিভাগ-১০০৮ অনুসারে নিম্নরূপ শর্ত সংগ্রহ করে দরপত্র অর্থ বর্ষে দ্বারা দিবার নিয়মের দ্বারা দি

১। মানবন্ধন/বিজ্ঞান
২। স্থায়ী
৩। স্থায়ী মন্দিরস্থলী/ক্ষেত্র
৪। কি করার প্রয়োজন আবশ্যিক
৫। স্থায়ী স্থান
৬। ভাস্তুর
কাজের বিবরণ
৭। স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট
অর্থের উৎস
৮। বাস্তুর ও অর্থের ব্যাপক
অর্থের উৎস
৯। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১০। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১১। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১২। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১৩। চিহ্নিত স্থান
অবস্থার নাম ও ঠিকানা
১৪। অর্থসেবা নাম ও ঠিকানা
১৫। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১৬। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১৭। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১৮। চিহ্নিত স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
১৯। স্থায়ী স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া
অর্থের উৎস ও খাতের বিবরণ
২০। অর্থের কোট ও খাতের নাম
দরপত্র মুদ্রা (প্রাক্ত) (অবেদনকোট)
দরপত্র জামানত (প্রাক্ত) কাজে সম্পাদন করার
সম্বন্ধে
১। ইঞ্জেনেরি প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১১১৭)
২। প্রক্রিয়াজোট ও প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২২১০৬)
৩। প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০৬)
৪। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০৫)
৫। চিহ্নিত স্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়া আবশ্যিক
৬। দ্রোবন্ধন প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১১)
৭। ক্ষেত্রিক প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৮। ক্ষেত্রিক প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৯। ক্ষেত্রিক প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১০। অন্যান্য প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১১। জলবায়ু প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১২। অন্যান্য প্রয়োজন (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৩। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৪। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৫। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৬। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৭। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৮। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
১৯। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২০। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২১। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২২। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৩। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৪। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৫। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৬। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৭। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৮। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
২৯। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩০। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩১। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩২। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৩। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৪। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৫। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৬। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৭। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৮। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট নং ৩২১৫০১০)
৩৯। বাস্তুর ও স্থায়ী প্রক্রিয়াজোট (কোট

Unmasking the sweet trap: call for global ban on flavoured tobacco to protect youth

On May 31, the World Health Organisation (WHO) marks World No Tobacco Day 2025 with a bold call: ban all flavours in tobacco and nicotine products to protect youth from addiction and disease. The theme, *"Bright Products, Dark Intentions: Unmasking the Appeal"* highlights how the industry uses appealing flavours and flashy designs to lure young people into addiction.

Flavours like menthol, cotton candy, and bubble gum make harmful products more palatable, masking their harshness and encouraging experimentation. These flavours not only increase the likelihood of starting but also make it harder to quit. WHO's latest report shows that flavour accessories—such as capsule filters and click-on drops—are designed to bypass regulations and hook new users, especially teenagers.

Currently, over 50 countries ban flavoured tobacco, while others restrict e-cigarette flavours or disposable vapes. But flavour accessories remain largely unregulated, giving the industry room to manipulate the market.

WHO warns that these tactics are fuelling a new wave of addiction. Paired with social media marketing and colourful packaging, nicotine products like pouches, heated tobacco, and disposable vapes are spreading rapidly among youth.

"This isn't innovation—it's manipulation," said Dr Rüdiger Krech, WHO Director of Health Promotion. "We are watching a generation get hooked on gummy bear flavoured nicotine."

With 8 million tobacco-related deaths annually, WHO urges all governments to act swiftly. The message is clear: flavours have no place in a healthy future.

Source: World Health Organisation



HYPERTENSION even children are not immune

DR ABDULLAHAMAAN &
DR KHAINOOR ZAHAN

Hypertension (HTN) is a leading global risk factor for death and disability, posing a serious and persistent public health threat. In the South-East Asia Region alone, more than 294 million people live with hypertension. Key risk factors include excessive salt intake, tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity, stress, and air pollution.

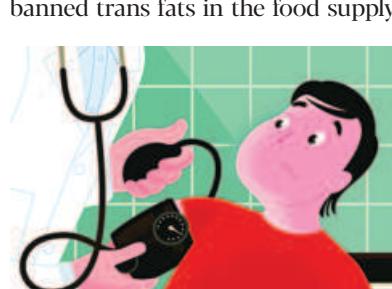
The disease remains a major contributor to premature deaths caused by heart attacks and strokes. Alarming, many individuals remain unaware of their condition. Among hypertensive adults, half do not know they have it, and nearly one in six fail to maintain adequate blood pressure control. Unchecked, hypertension can lead to heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, and early death.

Although hypertension is often considered an adult condition, children are not immune. Paediatric hypertension can be primary (essential) or secondary. Primary HTN, now the most common form in children, is often genetically influenced. Secondary HTN may result from identifiable causes such as kidney disease (accounting for 50–60% of cases), congenital heart disease, hormonal disorders, or side effects of medications like steroids.

Older children may develop HTN due to lifestyle factors similar to adults, such as being overweight, having a poor diet, and being physically inactive. Paediatric HTN often goes undiagnosed but has serious long-term implications for heart and kidney health.

According to the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP), blood pressure should be measured annually in children aged 3 years or older and at every medical visit for high-risk children. Risk factors include premature birth, low birth weight, congenital heart conditions, recurrent urinary tract infections, and a family history of kidney disease.

Lifestyle modification is the cornerstone of managing paediatric hypertension, especially in children with primary HTN or obesity. Key recommendations include



Others, including the US, Canada, and EU nations, have introduced nutrition labelling and calorie displays on fast foods to help young consumers make healthier choices.

With strong political will, community involvement, and practical interventions, the burden of hypertension can be reduced. This supports the global goal to cut premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030.

World Hypertension Day, observed annually on May 17, plays a critical role in raising awareness. This year, its 20th anniversary, is marked with the theme: *"Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer!"*

The writers are the assistant professors of neonatology at the Institute of Child & Mother Health (ICMH), Maitul, Dhaka. Email: abdullahelamaan@gmail.com, khainoorzahan@gmail.com

FROM 'MAMA' TO MUTE

The silent effect of screens on early speech development

MD MANJURUL IMAM LEON

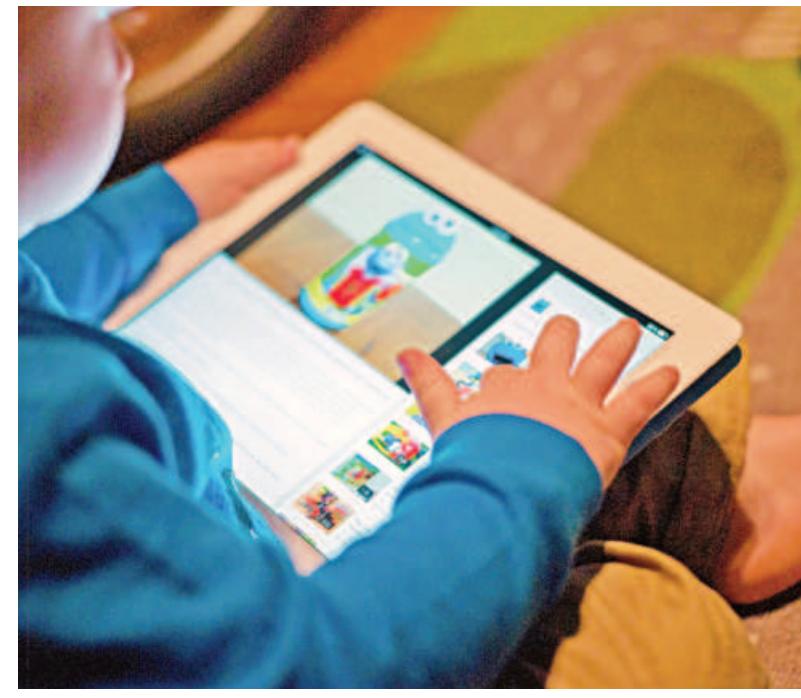
"He doesn't say 'Mama' yet, but he can unlock my phone." This statement has become increasingly common in therapy centres and among worried parents. A silent concern is growing: Why isn't my child talking?

Behind these questions, one digital culprit is gaining attention—screen time. While screens offer convenience, especially for busy families, their increasing presence in early childhood may be casting a shadow on speech development.

Recent studies highlight the link between screen exposure and speech delays. The Canadian Paediatric Society notes that higher levels of screen time in infancy are tied to weaker language skills at ages 3 to 4. A 2021 pilot study by the Institute for Paediatric Neurodisorder and Autism (IPNA) in Dhaka found that nearly 30% of children with speech delays had a history of excessive screen exposure—more than 3 hours daily.

The first five years are a critical window for speech and language development, which depend on interaction, imitation, and responsive communication. When these are replaced by passive screen viewing, children miss key opportunities to learn words, express emotions, and build the foundation of language. The concern is no longer isolated—it's becoming a public health issue.

A child's brain in early years acts like a sponge, absorbing sounds, expressions, and emotional cues. But passive screen use—where there is no back-and-forth interaction—can disrupt this process. A 2020 study in Paediatrics found that high screen exposure was linked to reduced brain activity in regions responsible for language processing and emotional engagement. The less children hear real voices, the harder it becomes for their brains to wire for speech—especially in children under two, whose language networks are



still forming.

The American Academy of Paediatrics warns that lack of face-to-face interaction during this sensitive period can hinder vocabulary, sentence formation, and overall communication. When screens become the main source of engagement, developmental milestones may be delayed.

In today's world, avoiding screens is difficult. But there are evidence-based strategies that can help. The World Health Organisation recommends no screen exposure for children under two and a maximum of one hour per day of supervised, high-quality content for ages two to five.

More importantly, it is the quality of interaction that matters. Activities like storytelling, reading, singing, and symbolic play stimulate brain areas essential for speech. Carers can also practise "serve-and-return" interactions—responding to a child's

gestures or sounds to encourage communication.

Creating screen-free routines during meals, commutes, and bedtime reintroduces valuable moments for bonding. Modeling healthy screen habits at home also reinforces balanced approach to digital media.

Technology can enhance learning when used wisely, but it cannot replace human connection. By being present, talking, and listening, carers lay the foundation for confident communication.

In a world full of digital noise, children still need one thing most: real voices, real faces, and real connection. Their first "Mama" or "Baba" is too precious to miss. Before handing them a screen, let's offer them our words instead.

The writer is a student of the Department of Communication Disorders at the University of Dhaka. Email: imammanjurul@gmail.com

HEALTH

starhealth@thedadlystar.net

BALANCING THE SCALES
Diet and lifestyle for corporate men

RAISA MEHZABEEN

In Bangladesh's corporate world, men are increasingly falling victim to sedentary routines, high stress, and poor dietary choices. With the economy growing, corporate demands are intensifying—often at the expense of health. As a result, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and mental health issues are on the rise.

A typical workday begins with a rushed breakfast, followed by long commutes, hours at a desk, and late-night meetings or heavy dinners. Caffeine and processed snacks fill the gaps, while physical activity remains rare.

A study by the Bangladesh Institute of Health Sciences found that 7 in 10 corporate men show signs of lifestyle-related illnesses. Most are preventable through simple, consistent changes in diet and routine.

Mindful eating is essential. Emphasising seasonal produce, whole grains, and lean proteins—while avoiding fried foods, sugary drinks, and excess red meat—can lower chronic disease risk. Even at the office, healthier snacks like fruits, nuts, or green tea are better alternatives.

Exercise must also be integrated—through walking breaks, using stairs, or pre/post-work workouts. Corporations should support wellness with health screenings, ergonomic workspaces, and movement-friendly policies.

Mental health matters too. The culture of overwork must shift. Work-life balance, access to counselling, and celebrating healthy habits at work can make a difference.

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads. Ignoring these red flags will strain both individual well-being and national productivity. The time for a health-conscious corporate culture is now.

The writer is the founder & CEO of Nutrition For Change. Email: raisameh20@gmail.com



Smart bedtime habits for better diabetes control

STAR HEALTH DESK

Managing diabetes effectively involves not just what you do during the day but also the habits you maintain before bedtime. A good nighttime routine can help keep blood sugar levels stable, prevent overnight complications, and support restful sleep. One of the most important things a person with diabetes can do before bed is to check their blood glucose levels. For many, the target bedtime range is between 100 and 140 mg/dL, though individual goals may vary depending on health status and treatment plans. If the level is too low, a light snack might be necessary to avoid hypoglycemia while sleeping. If the reading is too high, it is worth reviewing food intake, activity levels, or medication timing with a healthcare provider.

Some people with diabetes, especially those who take insulin or certain oral medications, may benefit from a small, balanced bedtime snack. This snack should ideally contain both carbohydrates and protein to maintain stable blood sugar throughout the night. Examples include a few whole grain crackers with cheese, a small apple with peanut butter, or a bowl of plain yoghurt. It is best to avoid sugary foods that could lead to blood sugar spikes and crashes.

Taking medications at the correct time is also crucial. Many diabetes medications are scheduled for evening or bedtime, particularly long-acting insulin. Forgetting to take them can lead to high blood sugar overnight and a difficult start to the next day. Setting an alarm or reminder can help ensure consistency. Those who experience frequent nighttime lows should prepare by keeping fast-acting glucose



—such as glucose tablets or fruit juice—near their bed. It is also helpful for bed partners to know the signs of nighttime hypoglycemia, which may include night sweats, confusion, or vivid dreams.

Nighttime habits can also affect blood sugar levels. Drinking alcohol close to bedtime can cause blood sugar to drop hours later, increasing the risk of overnight

hypoglycemia. Similarly, eating a large, heavy meal late in the evening can lead to blood sugar spikes and interfere with sleep quality. For better control, it is recommended to finish eating two to three hours before going to sleep and to avoid alcohol or keep it minimal and always consume it with food.

Stress and poor sleep are often overlooked in diabetes care, yet both can significantly impact blood glucose levels. Establishing a calming bedtime routine—such as reading, light stretching, or listening to music—can lower stress hormones and improve sleep. Reducing screen time before bed can also enhance sleep quality, as blue light can interfere with melatonin production. Ideally, adults should aim for seven to nine hours of restful sleep each night, as poor sleep can worsen insulin resistance and glucose control.

Finally, a bit of preparation can make mornings smoother. Laying out medications and diabetes supplies, planning breakfast, and setting up reminders can reduce morning stress and promote better blood sugar outcomes. For individuals living with diabetes, small changes in nighttime habits can make a meaningful difference in health. A consistent, thoughtful bedtime routine is not just good practice—it is a powerful tool for managing this chronic condition.

How can you manage Cortisol Belly?

"Cortisol belly" is a buzzword used to describe belly fat linked to chronic stress. While it is not a medical diagnosis, people often associate it with high cortisol levels—the stress hormone produced by your adrenal glands. However, experts caution that chronic stress alone is not a proven cause of belly fat.

Belly weight gain can be influenced by many factors—diet, physical activity, sleep, hormones, and medical conditions like Cushing syndrome or metabolic syndrome. In Cushing syndrome, excess cortisol leads to fat buildup in the belly and face, along with other symptoms like stretch marks and fragile skin.

So, what can you do to manage abdominal weight gain effectively?

1. Move more: Aim for daily steps and strength training. But do not overtrain—too much exercise can also raise cortisol.

2. Prioritise sleep: Stick to a routine, make your bedroom cool and dark, and aim for 7-8 hours nightly.

3. Manage stress: Try yoga, meditation, or deep breathing. Even 20 minutes in nature can help lower stress hormones.

4. Eat smart: Focus on anti-inflammatory foods like leafy greens, fish, nuts, and whole grains. Limit sugar, alcohol, and processed foods.

5. Skip the supplements: No pill melts away belly fat. Herbs like ashwagandha and lemon balm may reduce stress, but talk to your doctor first.

A healthy lifestyle—not cortisol blockers or trendy drinks—is the most effective way to manage abdominal fat and feel your best.



WHO recommends new tools to protect infants from RSV

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has published its first position paper on immunisation products to protect infants from respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), the leading cause of acute lower respiratory infections in children worldwide.

RSV causes an estimated 100,000 deaths and over 3.6 million hospitalisations annually in children under five, with half of these deaths occurring in infants under six months. Most fatalities (97%) occur in low- and middle-income countries where access to medical care is limited.

The position paper, released in the *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, outlines WHO's recommendations for two immunisation products: a maternal vaccine (RSVpreF) and a long-acting monoclonal antibody (nirsevimab). Both were endorsed by the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE) in September 2024. The maternal vaccine received WHO prequalification in March 2025.

The maternal vaccine is recommended for pregnant women from 28 weeks of gestation onwards, ideally during routine antenatal visits, to transfer protective antibodies to the baby. Nirsevimab, a single-dose monoclonal antibody, is administered

to infants at birth or before hospital discharge. In countries with RSV seasonality, it may be given to older infants before their first RSV season.

According to WHO, these products have the potential to significantly reduce RSV-related hospitalisations and deaths. Countries are advised to choose the product that best fits their healthcare systems, considering feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and expected coverage.

The position paper is intended to guide national immunisation strategies and inform funding decisions.

Source: The World Health Organisation





ICC has welcomed it [the decision to remove Faruque and bring in Bulbul]. The ICC is not unaware of the current situation of Bangladesh cricket. From that point of view, it has also welcomed the new leadership.

Youth and Sports adviser
ASIF MAHMUD

Faruque removed 'for performance, not corruption'

SPORTS REPORTER

Youth and Sports Advisor Asif Mahmud has clarified that the removal of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Faruque Ahmed was driven by performance issues, not allegations of corruption.

Talking to reporters during the prize giving ceremony of the 35th National (Men's) Handball Championship 2025 yesterday, Asif stated that the International Cricket Council (ICC) welcomed the change in leadership and the move followed due process in line with the BCB constitution and ICC guidelines.

"This is not some sort of punishment," Asif said. "We must judge based on performance, and that performance hasn't been satisfactory. Cricket is our main sport, and unfortunately, we've seen a steady decline. The BPL investigation committee report and the current state of cricket made it clear that a change was needed."

Faruque was replaced by former national captain Aminul Islam Bulbul after the National Sports Council (NSC) revoked Faruque's

directorship following a no-confidence motion by eight out of nine BCB directors. Asif emphasised that the removal was administrative and procedural, not personal.

"We did not remove the president per se. We withdrew his nomination as a director, which in turn vacated his presidency," Asif explained. "It's similar to how a player underperforms and gets dropped."

Addressing concerns about government interference, Asif said, "The government acted within its authority. There was no undue interference. And importantly, we've been in constant communication with the ICC. They've welcomed the new leadership."

Responding to Faruque's claim that he wasn't given a chance to defend himself, Asif noted, "I spoke to him personally. He couldn't answer some of the key questions. We tried to resolve the matter quietly, but when that failed, we had to take action."

Asif concluded by reiterating the goal: "Our focus is to improve cricket. This decision was made with that purpose in mind."

Caught in a perfect storm, Tigers grasping at straws

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

Consecutive defeats on the ground, chaos at the board and regression in the rankings – all have combined to create a perfect storm for Bangladesh cricket in the last few days, one that has left fans, and the players, grasping at straws to somehow keep their love for the game and the Bangladesh team from fading into oblivion.

The month of May began with the men's team dropping to 10th in the ODI rankings for the first time in nearly two decades in the first week, and it concluded with them falling to 10th position in the T20I rankings as well.

While Litton Das' team was getting outclassed by a Pakistan team that are going through a transition period, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) went through a change in presidency for the second time in nine months.

After weeks of speculation, Faruque Ahmed was removed as the board president following an unprecedented show of no-confidence from the majority of the board directors and the National Sports Council (NSC) rescinding his directorship.

Aminul Islam Bulbul replaced Faruque at the helm and promised to make positive changes, something his predecessor had also done after assuming power, but was ultimately dethroned from the BCB almost as dramatically as he had been crowned.

With dark clouds hovering all around and no silver lining in sight, Bangladesh cricket is going through its worst period in recent memory. The only thing that could lift the gloom, even momentarily, is if the Tigers pull up their socks and achieve a face-saving win over Pakistan



PHOTO: AI GENERATED

in the third and final T20I set to take place today.

The match, which will take place at the Gaddafi Stadium, is a dead rubber, as Pakistan have already taken an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

However, Bangladesh will not only be playing for pride today, they will also

be vying to make history by defeating Pakistan in Pakistan in T20Is for the first time.

But a victory seems far-fetched going by how Bangladesh have fared so far in the series, falling miserably short of chasing a target of 202 in both matches.

Bangladesh lost the first match by 37 runs, after losing momentum and wickets in the middle of the chase.

But the visitors did not learn from their mistakes at all, as even after getting off to a flying start, reaching 38-0 after three overs, they lost five wickets in just 23 balls and squandered any hopes of a series-leveling win.

Number nine batter Tanzim Sakib's maiden half-century pushed the total to 144 all out in 19 overs as they lost the game by 57 runs. After such defeats, the chances of a victory seem slim. But another meek surrender could potentially push many Bangladesh fans beyond their breaking point and push Bangladesh cricket deeper into the throes of despair.



JUNIOR ATHLETICS

BKSP blaze track with record-breaking run

SPORTS REPORTER

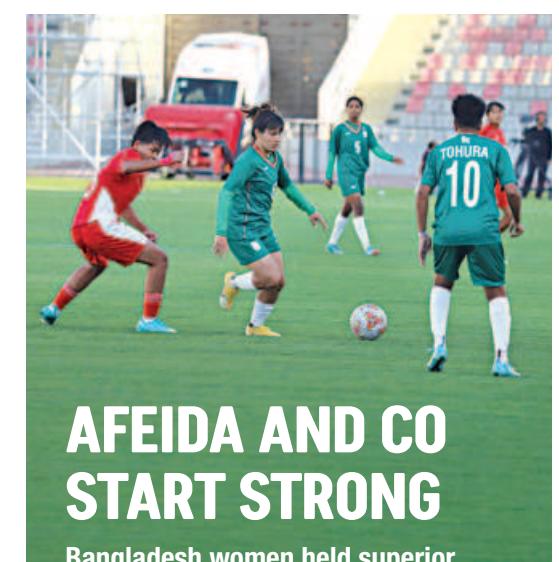
The 39th Junior (Age-Group) Athletics Championships concluded yesterday at the National Stadium, with Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) once again stamping their authority on the track and field with a dominant performance.

As expected, BKSP emerged champions, clinching 25 gold, 19 silver, and nine bronze medals from the 40 events contested over two days. BKSP athletes alone set 10 of the 13 new records, with the remaining three coming from Noakhali, Ansar & VDP athletes.

Ansar & VDP finished runners-up with seven gold, 10 silver, and three bronze medals, followed by Kurigram DSA in third place with two gold, three silver, and four bronze.

Noakhali also won two gold medals but had to settle for fourth place, having bagged two silver and three bronze medals. Chattogram, Rajshahi Education Board, Gopalganj, and Munshiganj also made the gold tally, each winning one gold medal. Eight more district sports associations made it to the medal table with silver and bronze medals.

On the final day of the competition, new records were set in the boys' 100m hurdles, boys' 4x400m relay, boys' 400m, girls' 400m, girls' 800m, girls' discus throw, and boys' triple jump in the U-18 category. In the U-16 category, the boys' and girls' 400m events also saw new benchmarks set.



AFEIDA AND CO START STRONG

Bangladesh women held superior Indonesia (ranked 94) as the charges of Peter Butler (ranked 133) played out a goalless draw in a FIFA friendly fixture at the King Abdullah Stadium in Amman, Jordan, yesterday. The girls, led by defender Afeida Khandakar and boosted by the return of five mainstays, next play a stronger side, Jordan (ranked 74), on June 3 in the tri-nation series at the same venue.

PHOTO: BFF

'Ours is the strongest side since the 2003 SAFF winners'

Bangladesh and Bashundhara Kings forward Rakib Hossain finished as the top local scorer in the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), netting 11 goals in 17 games – one more than the previous season. Rakib spoke with The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman about his form, domestic football, the national team, and the inclusion of Canada-based Shamit Shome in the Bangladesh squad.

The Daily Star (DS): You've become the top local scorer in successive seasons. What was your mindset?

Rakib Hossain (RH): When you aim to make your team champions, you have to perform well – and the goals will come naturally. Being the top local scorer again feels good, especially after having to compete with both foreign and national players. Still, I would feel better if I scored more.

DS: Of your 11 goals, nine came against weaker teams like Dhaka Wanderers, Chittagong Abahani, and Fakirerpool. Any regrets about not scoring more against bigger teams?

RH: I do regret it. I should have scored four or five more. Bashundhara Kings dominated many matches and created lots of chances, but we failed to convert them in key games.

DS: What was the difference between this season's Rakib and last season's?

RH: I had a chest injury and couldn't play comfortably at the start of the season, during which we played top teams like Mohammedan, Abahani.

I recovered in the second phase and then found goals.

DS: What went wrong for Bashundhara Kings, who dropped to third spot for the first time after winning five consecutive titles?

RH: First, we didn't get the expected performance from our foreign players. If you look at Mohammedan's scorers, most goals came from foreigners. In contrast, local players scored most of our goals. Also, injuries affected our foreign and local players. We locals couldn't always deliver our best either.

DS: How did the season for the players go since changes in the country's political landscape and the withdrawal of Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC?

RH: Players suffered the most. Many quality players didn't get clubs, and some had to accept lower payments.

There was competition, but it would have been stronger with teams like

Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Russel, Saif SC, and

Shamit Shome.

DS: Your goal conversion in international matches is lower than in domestic matches. Why?

RH: The difference in international and domestic matches is big. But I always give my best. I've made

mistakes – if I'd stayed calmer in the box, I could've scored more than the four goals I have for the national team.

DS: Tickets for the Singapore match (on June 10) are already sold out. Can the team meet fan expectations?

RH: This Bangladesh team is more mature than before. We know Singapore are strong, but we'll try to repay the fans who bought tickets. Our goal is to beat Singapore.

DS: What's your take on inclusion of Shamit Shome after Hamza Choudhury in the national team?

RH: Honestly, they are great players. We saw Hamza's impact in the match against India. Shamit's inclusion will strengthen us, because playing in the Premier League or other top leagues is no small feat. If he can contribute like Hamza, the match against Singapore will be easier, and our chances of scoring will improve. I believe this is the strongest Bangladesh team since the 2003 SAFF-winning side, especially with expatriates like Jamal Bhuiyan, Tareq Kazmi, and now Shamit.



Top seed Jannik Sinner dismissed world number 34 Jiri Lehecka in straight sets on Saturday at Roland Garros as the Italian booked his place in the fourth round. Sinner delivered a dominant display of power-hitting as the first-ranked men's player beat his opponent 6-0, 6-1, 6-2.

PHOTO: REUTERS

THE BEST QUALITY
EVERY TIME GUARANTEED
BSRM



BSRM
building a safer nation



BANGLADESH'S
NO. 1 CEMENT BRAND

Yunus invites BNP for talks tomorrow

Says Salahuddin, slams govt for 'stalling reforms to delay the election'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday alleged the government is offering nothing but empty gestures in the name of reform, while taking no concrete steps to ensure the national election is held by December.

The chief adviser invited the party for talks tomorrow.

"How many times will you inaugurate these reforms?" asked the Standing Committee member of the party. He was speaking at a discussion organised by Krishak Dal at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in the capital to mark the 44th death anniversary of party founder Ziaur Rahman.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



A farmer in Puthia, Rajshahi, shows his paddy crop damaged by recent downpours. He said he may not even find buyers for it. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Push for polls by Dec threatening stability: Patwary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Insisting that the election "must be held by December" is tantamount to threatening the country's stability, said Nasiruddin Patwary, chief coordinator of the National Citizen Party, yesterday.

The youth will not accept the politics of intimidation, he told a workshop organised by NCP's Dhaka (north) unit at a hotel in the capital's Gulshan.

"We are still on the streets, and we will continue to be on the streets in the future."

The country will move towards a democratic process only after reforms are made and justice is delivered, Patwary said.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Misery persists in coastal areas

Thousands still marooned; one dies, 8 missing as trawler capsizes in Meghna

STAR REPORT

Though the downpour has subsided, flooding continues to affect thousands across coastal districts, following a deep depression over the Bay of Bengal.

At least two deaths have been reported since the depression hit the country on Thursday.

Seven out of 19 coastal districts experienced significant damage, according to the primary assessment by the Department of Disaster Management (DDM).

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) said that although the depression further weakened yesterday, the active monsoon is expected to bring light to moderate rainfall across the country over the next four days.

Meanwhile, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) yesterday forecast flooding in

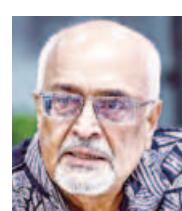
SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Investor confidence dips amid absence of meaningful talks
Says Debapriya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investors have been grappling with uncertainty over the absence of meaningful discussion between political players and the interim government about the country's future fiscal direction, said Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

"Without political consensus and policy continuity, private investors will remain



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

'Signs of new fascism' now being seen

Says Prof Anu Muhammad

DU CORRESPONDENT

Noted economist Prof Anu Muhammad yesterday said that signs of a new fascist order beginning to take shape are visible in the country.

"The current situation indicates the arrival of a new wave of fascism. A new fascist force seems to be stirring across the society once again, and it must be resisted," he said.

Anu Muhammad, a member of the Committee for Democratic Rights, made the remarks at a Nagrik Sanghati Rally at the altar of the Raju Sculpture at Dhaka University yesterday afternoon.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Mob kills two in city's Darus Salam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two suspected criminals were killed in a mob beating in the capital's Darus Salam area yesterday.

Locals chased them down and beat them to death, accusing them of being part of a gang that had recently been roaming with machetes, mugging pedestrians, and harassing women in the neighbourhood.

One of the deceased was identified as Tanvir, 25, while the other could not be identified immediately, said Darus Salam Police Station Officer-in-Charge Rakibul Islam.

The incident took place in the Haddipatti area of Ahmed Nagar around noon, hours after Darus Salam police arrested two alleged drug dealers from the area.

"Acting on a tip-off, Darus Salam police conducted an anti-narcotics drive in the area early yesterday, during which two people were arrested and five kilogrammes of

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



WORLD
MILK DAY
2025

NO. 1
LIQUID
MILK
BRAND
OF BANGLADESH