

“The ocean is the ultimate shared resource. But we are failing it.”
Guterres tells delegates at the UN Ocean Conference in France

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YUNUS-TARIQUE MEET ‘A potential turning point’

Says Fakhrul about talks slated for Friday in London; polls timing may top the agenda

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman are set to meet in London on Friday, which analysts believe will help cut the gap between the party and the government over the timing of the national election.

BNP leaders also consider the planned meeting a significant turn in overcoming a standoff over the polls.

Before travelling to the UK on Monday, Yunus, in his Eid-ul-Azha address to the nation last Friday, said the election would be held in the first half of April next year after necessary reforms. The BNP, however, remains firm on its demand that the polls be held by December this year, saying the reforms can be implemented much earlier.

Speaking to journalists at the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan yesterday, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the meeting is expected to



Bangladesh lost their AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture against Singapore 2-1 at the National Stadium in Dhaka last night, but the story could have been a little different had Tariq Kazi's last-minute header on a cross from Sheikh Morsalin not been expertly tipped on to the bar by the Singapore goalkeeper.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

- Fakhrul says govt invited Tarique for a meeting
- Tarique may call for election before April
- Khaleda reportedly asked BNP leaders to avoid confrontation over polls

take place between 9:00am and 11:00am (London time) at The Dorchester, the hotel where Yunus is staying during his UK visit.

“The chief adviser has invited our acting chairman,” he said. “We hope this meeting will play a positive role in resolving the challenges facing the political landscape of Bangladesh.”

In the context of recent political developments, he said, this meeting could prove to be a “turning point” in the country’s politics if all goes as planned.

“This meeting is the most significant event at present

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Bangladesh go down fighting

ATIQUE ANAM

Bangladesh suffered a 2-1 defeat to Singapore in their eagerly-awaited AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture at the National Stadium in Dhaka last night, leaving 23,000-plus fans at the ground and millions across the country in deep dismay.

The match was hyped up as the biggest in years for the men in red and

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At least 10 minors were forcibly disappeared

Says commission report on enforced disappearances under AL regime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 minors were found to be victims of enforced disappearances, according to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. All were under the age of 18.

Of the 1,772 complaints registered with the commission as verified active cases since 2009, it closely examined 253 individuals to trace the patterns that have defined enforced

disappearances for over a decade. The professions of 228 victims were documented.

The commission found that 29 percent of the victims were students, followed by businesspersons at 28 percent. At least 15 percent were teachers, while five victims were journalists.

The political identities of 101 victims were also examined. Activists linked to the BNP

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Govt to expand Covid testing facilities

Advises people to use masks as cases rise

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The health authorities are working to expand testing facilities at major hospitals over the next 10 days in response to the sudden spike in Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh and neighbouring countries.

Currently, very few government hospitals carry out Covid tests.

But the expansion move came after the Covid infection rate last month was 17-month high and there was a Covid-19-linked death on June 5 after a long gap.

In the last 24 hours, 13 tested positive out of 101 samples, according to the Directorate General of Health (DGHS).

The infection rate saw a sharp rise in May, according to the analysis of Covid-19 surveillance data conducted by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). Of the 1,409 samples tested in May, 9.51 percent tested positive for Covid-19, the highest since January 2023.

The icddr,b also said Covid cases saw a significant uptick last month. However, its scientists have emphasised that there is currently no major reason for public concern and stressed the importance

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BUSINESS

NOTICE

Business pages have not come out today as economic activities have not gained momentum after Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

Star Business will be available from tomorrow.



With many having left the capital for the Eid holidays, the city's usual hustle and bustle has quietened. The dinghies that ferry people across the Buriganga sit idle as barely anyone is commuting in the holidays. The photo was taken in Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Yunus-Starmer meet uncertain Says CA’s press secy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' meeting with UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer remains uncertain, as the latter is believed to be visiting Canada, said Shafiqul Alam, Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser.

“As far as we know, Keir Starmer is likely in Canada on a visit. A British MP, who met us today, informed us that he [Starmer] is currently in Canada,” he said at a press briefing at the Bangladesh High Commission in London yesterday.

Prof Yunus arrived in London on Monday morning for a four-day official visit.

“We’re in discussions to align schedules. If that happens, the meeting will go ahead. If not, then it won’t. But efforts are ongoing,” said Shafiqul.

On June 4, acting foreign secretary Ruhul Alam Siddique said that Prof Yunus would hold bilateral talks with the British prime minister and be granted a private audience with King Charles III.

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POLLS IN APRIL BNP ‘disappointed’, Jamaat, NCP ‘satisfied’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' announcement on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha that the next national election will be held in the first half of April 2026 has triggered mixed reactions from political parties.

BNP and like minded parties described the announcement as “disappointing,” while Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party (NCP) broadly welcomed it.

In a televised address on Friday, Prof Yunus explained that the interim government assumed office following the August 2024 fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, based on three main mandates – reforms, justice, and elections.

“I believe by next Eid-ul-Fitr, we will reach an acceptable point on reform and justice. Especially, visible progress will be seen in the trial of crimes against humanity, which is the government’s collective responsibility to the martyrs of the July mass uprising,” he said.

“After reviewing ongoing reforms in justice, governance, and election processes, I announce that the next national elections will be held on a date in the first half of April 2026,” Yunus announced.

He added that the government aims to organise “the freest, fairest, most competitive, and most acceptable election in history,” and discussions have been held with all parties in this regard.

The announcement came as BNP and allied parties had hardened

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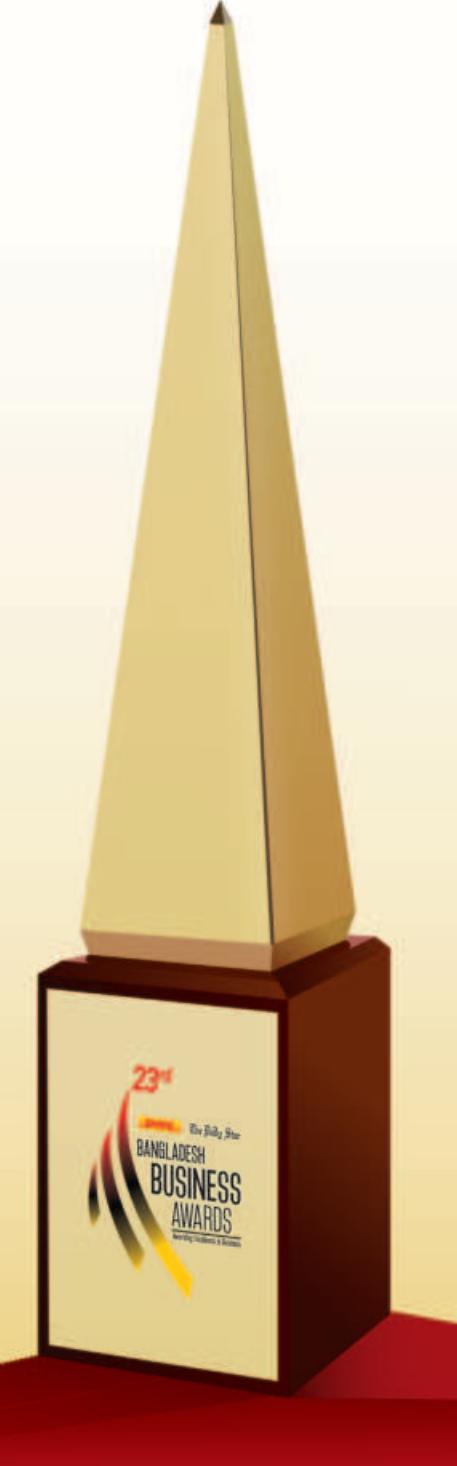
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Lebanon says two dead in Israel strike

AFP, Beirut

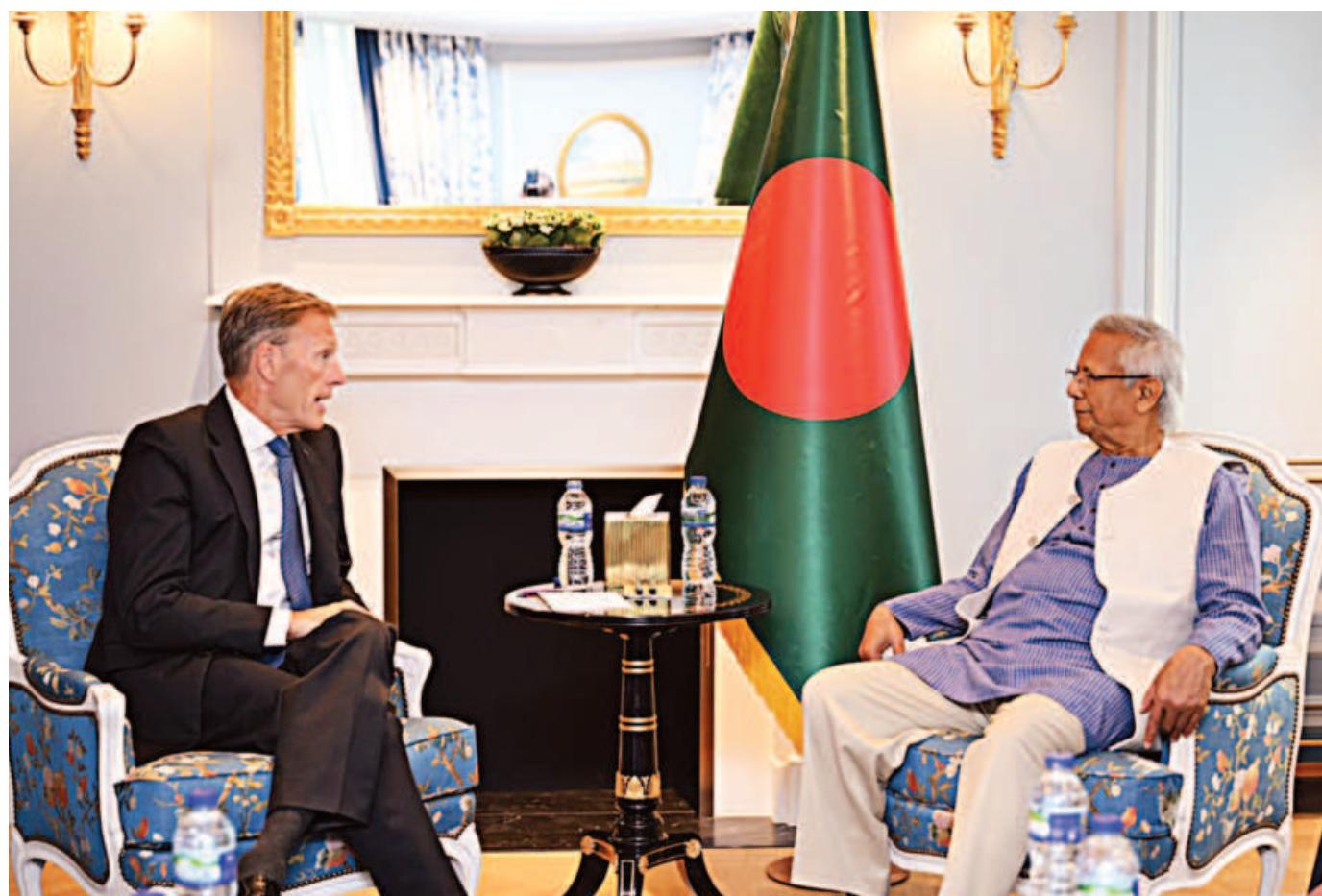
An Israeli strike killed a Lebanese father and son yesterday in a southern village, the Lebanese health ministry and state media said, the latest deaths despite a November ceasefire.

A second son was also wounded in the strike in Shebaa, the state-run National News Agency reported. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

"An Israeli enemy drone carried out a strike in the village of Shebaa, killing two people and wounding one," a health ministry statement said.

Israel had warned on Friday that it would keep up its strikes on Hezbollah targets across Lebanon despite the condemnation expressed by the Lebanese government after a massive strike on south Beirut the previous night on the eve of the Eid al-Adha holiday.

Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah said the strikes levelled nine residential blocks. The Israeli military said they targeted underground drone factories.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus talks to Wouter Van Wersch, executive vice-president of Airbus, who called on the CA at the Dorchester hotel in London yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

'A potential turning point'

FROM PAGE 1

and holds great importance both nationally and internationally. Many issues could be resolved through this meeting, and new dimensions may emerge," Fakhrul added.

Later yesterday, speaking to reporters in London, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam confirmed the meeting will be held on Friday morning.

Since Tarique Rahman is currently the leader of Bangladesh's largest political party and Prof Yunus is the head of the interim government, they will meet for discussions.

Shafiqul said the format of the meeting was not fixed yet. Various aspects of Bangladesh's current political situation, including the announced election timeline, the July Charter, reforms, and other relevant matters, may come up.

"The specific agenda will be decided by them [Yunus and Tarique]," Shafiqul added.

Speculations about a possible meeting between Yunus and Tarique gained momentum after the chief adviser's UK visit was announced, although the meeting was not included in his official itinerary.

Party insiders said Tarique may urge Yunus to bring the election date forward, arguing that April is not suitable for electioneering since Ramadan will end in mid-March.

BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said, "Political discussions will certainly take place, along with talks about the current situation in the country. We are hopeful that the chief adviser will reconsider his decision [regarding election date], and also discuss the overall situation of the country and the current political situation."

"He [chief adviser] may consider factors like the weather, Ramadan, and public examinations while determining an appropriate time for the election. Additionally, the discussion will cover many other important issues related to national security, politics, and the broader national context," he told this newspaper.

The BNP also has some observations and proposals to ensure the government's neutrality, he added.

Another senior BNP leader, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, said,

"This is an opportunity to restore democracy, hold an acceptable and neutral election, and bring back a fair political environment."

BNP standing committee members have welcomed the proposed meeting, granting Tarique full authority to negotiate on the party's behalf.

During a meeting to exchange Eid greetings, they briefed Chairperson Khaleda Zia about the announcement of election timing.

According to sources, she told them, "An election is necessary, not a debate. It is better to avoid confrontation."

A standing committee member, who requested anonymity, interpreted this as a signal that the party should avoid escalating tensions and instead leave the door open for negotiations.

At a subsequent meeting on Sunday night, BNP's senior leadership briefed Tarique on recent political developments, including reform proposals, the roles of government advisers, and updates on local government elections.

The Standing Committee reiterated its position that the national election must be held under the interim government, but preferably before Ramadan.

Political analysts have also welcomed the development, seeing it as a possible breakthrough in Bangladesh's tense political impasse centring the polls.

They believe direct interaction may reduce a lack of trust between the BNP and the interim government and help soften the party's firm demand for polls by December.

Prof Dilara Chowdhury, a former teacher of Jahangirnagar University's government and politics department, described the planned meeting between Tarique and Yunus as a "very positive step".

"This meeting could play a crucial role in resolving misunderstandings, fostering political consensus, and easing tensions," she said, adding, "It opens a channel for negotiation and could reshape the political landscape."

Prof Dilara believes the meeting will dispel suspicions that Yunus may aim to stay in power beyond the interim period.

"The perception that the chief

adviser wants to prolong his stay will be addressed. This is a moment of political maturity," she said.

She also said that the BNP might soften its position that the election must be held by December.

"Yunus is engaging directly with the [BNP]. That itself is a good political culture," she said.

Political analyst Al Masud Hasanuzzaman said that most of the previous interactions between the BNP and the government occurred without direct input from the party's top leadership.

"This meeting marks the first direct contact between BNP's top leader and the head of the government since the political upheaval. If any agreement emerges from it, the impact will be significant," he said.

Tarique, the eldest son of Khaleda, has been living in London since his release from prison during the state of emergency in 2008.

Under the Awami League regime, he was sentenced in five cases in absentia, while over a hundred cases were filed against him.

However, following the fall of the Awami League government in the July 2024 uprising, Tarique has been acquitted in all the cases in which he had been sentenced.

MEETING DECISION

Tarique joined the BNP's Standing Committee meeting virtually on Monday night, where the decision to meet Yunus was finalised.

Party sources said the BNP initially was not interested in such a meeting. Unease among senior leaders persisted over the government's lack of seriousness about their demand for polls in December despite informal communication from the chief adviser's office.

The party later agreed to the meeting, as the election schedule was expected to come up in the discussion between Tarique and Yunus.

Salahuddin said the situation became such that the meeting seemed "somewhat uncertain" since the chief adviser set an April timeline for the election.

"But even after a meeting at the chief adviser's office, communication was maintained. Given this context, we decided that political decorum necessitates a courtesy meeting," he said.

The perception that the chief

Govt to expand Covid testing facilities

FROM PAGE 1
 of maintaining standard Covid-19 precautions.

Two new SARS-CoV-2 Omicron subvariants, XFG and XFC, have been detected for the first time at Chatogram Medical College Hospital in April, according to a hospital-based influenza surveillance study jointly conducted by icddr,b and IEDCR.

The new variants accounted for approximately 7 percent of the patients attending study hospitals, marking a significant increase from earlier in the year when the positivity rate remained near zero, according to an icddr,b report on Monday.

Subsequently, the DGHS has already instructed medical facilities with RT-PCR lab facilities to take preparation for resuming Covid tests, said Prof Halimur Rashid, DGHS's line director of communicable disease control.

Test kits available at local companies are also being procured, he said, adding that the Central Medical Stores Depot has been directed to start the process of procuring test kits from abroad.

"We hope that testing facilities will

be restarted within 10 days -- but it would be at a limited scale."

Only medical colleges and district hospitals having RT-PCR facilities will start testing at the initial stage. Patients with Covid-19 symptoms or those referred by the doctors will be allowed to test.

However, the scope will be expanded if the infection rate increases, he added.

Meanwhile, the DGHS on June 4 directed relevant authorities to strengthen health screening and surveillance measures at all land, river and air entry points to prevent the transmission of new sub variants of the coronavirus -- particularly Omicron LF.7, XFG, JN.1, and NB.1.8.1 detected in several neighbouring countries including India.

The DGHS asked the relevant authorities to use thermal scanners or digital handheld thermometers with non-contact techniques to measure body temperature at all entry points; ensure an adequate stock of masks, gloves and personal protective equipment for healthcare workers; and disseminate infection prevention guidelines to raise public awareness.

It asked people to stay at home if they were ill, seek medical attention at the nearest hospital in case of severe illness, and, if needed, contact the IEDCR hotline at 01401-196293.

Covid-19 first hit Bangladesh on

March 8, 2020, with the first death

reported ten days later. Since then,

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cases and 29,499 deaths, with 2021

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EID JOY STILL IN THE AIR

People from all walks of life across the country celebrated Eid-ul-Azha over the last four days, spending time with their loved ones. People in the capital flocked to locations like the National Zoo in Mirpur, Zia Udyana and DNCC Wonderland in Agargaon to spend their holidays. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA, PRABIR DAS



Supreme Court scraps JS power to remove judges. Releases full text of a verdict on 16th amendment
ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the full text of a verdict has observed that the sixteenth amendment to the constitution, which had empowered the parliament to remove the SC judges for incapacity or misbehavior, is a colourable legislation and is violative of separation of powers among the three organs of the state -- executive, legislature and judiciary, and independence of the judiciary.

In the 50-page full text of judgement, which was uploaded on the SC website on June 3, a six-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed unanimously restored the constitutional provision (Article 96) of the Supreme Judicial Council to deal with the allegations against the SC judges over incapacity or misconduct.

"What was the essence of the sixteenth amendment case? In my view, it was an

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

HOLIDAYS
Dhaka's air remains 'unhealthy'

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka ranked eighth on the list of cities with the worst air quality yesterday morning, recording an Air Quality Index (AQI) score of 135 at 9:40am.

Yesterday's air was classified as "unhealthy", indicating potential health risks, according to the AQI index.

Despite reduced traffic and public movement in the capital due to the Eid-ul-Azha holidays, the air quality remained unhealthy over the past few days, raising concerns about public health.

According to the AQI scale, when the value for particle pollution ranges from 50 to 100, the air quality is considered "moderate", where sensitive individuals are advised to limit prolonged outdoor exertions. A score between 101 and 150 is considered "unhealthy for sensitive

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TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Sufia Begum, a 55-year-old woman from Munshiganj's Sreenagar, suffered severe injuries to her right hand when a motorcycle struck her on the day of Eid-ul-Azha (Saturday) when she was crossing a road near her home.

She was rushed to a local hospital, but no doctors were available there due to the Eid holiday. The staffers there asked Sufia's family to take her to Pongu Hospital, formally known as the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR), in Dhaka.

When our correspondent found her at NITOR around 7:30pm on the day, she was lying on a stretcher in an overcrowded emergency room.

There are nine beds in the room, but the number of patients was more than double, with many lying on stretchers or sitting on chairs. A few were even seen standing with bandaged limbs.

"We submitted our token about half an hour ago, but still no doctor has visited her," said Sufia's son-in-law Md Hasan.

After some time, a doctor visited and examined her. The doctor then checked several other patients, apparently following the tokens.

We submitted our token about half an hour ago, but still no doctor has visited her.

MD HASAN
an attendant

Over 250 patients had already arrived at the emergency ward between 12:01am and 7:30pm that day. This number is higher than usual.

a nurse

Two notices from 2024 posted near the doctor's room mentioned that only the hospital director holds the authority to speak to the media.

"Most of the patients came with injuries due to road crashes or accidents while cutting sacrificial

animals," she added.

Within half an hour, four to five new patients joined the crowd.

At the emergency department, four doctors, five nurses, and five ward boys were working during that particular shift, another nurse said.

Outside the emergency department, other parts of the hospital were relatively calm, with few inpatients, while outdoor activities were fully suspended.

During a visit to two inpatient wards, our correspondent found several empty beds. A nurse there said 64 patients were receiving treatment at that time, against a capacity of 84.

Only seven nurses were on duty in three shifts, she added. During normal times, 19 nurses work in that ward.

Around 8:00pm, over a dozen patients were seen outside the emergency operation theatre room.

An Ansar personnel deployed there said three doctors were working inside the operation theatre, and only one OT was operational.

Obaidul Islam, 25, said he has been waiting for around nine hours for his operation. A resident of Dhaka's Green Road, he came to the hospital around 11:00am after a cow hit him, fracturing his right

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First return Hajj flight lands in Dhaka

STAR REPORT

The first return Hajj flight, carrying 369 Bangladeshi pilgrims, landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka yesterday morning, according to a statement from airport authorities.

The SV-3803 Saudia flight, touched down at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) at 10:54am, it said.

The returning pilgrims were greeted at the boarding gate with flowers and received bottles of Zamzam water from a booth set up by Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan, chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), personally welcomed them at the boarding bridge with floral tributes.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 4,904 pilgrims were scheduled to return yesterday on 12 flights. The return phase of Hajj flights will continue until July 10.

A total of 86,958 Bangladeshis performed

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Low rawhide prices frustrate traders

SUKANTA HALDER

Rawhide prices during Eid-ul-Azha have once again dropped below government-set rates across the country, frustrating traders and raising concerns about the effectiveness of recent policy steps, including the temporary lifting of the export ban on raw and wet blue leather.

On May 26, the Ministry of Commerce set the price of salted cowhide at Tk 60-65 per square foot in Dhaka and Tk 55-60 outside the capital, an increase of Tk 5 from last year.

The minimum price of cowhide in Dhaka was set at Tk 1,350 and Tk 1,150 outside the city, while salted goat hides were priced at Tk 20 to Tk 22 per square foot.

However, actual transactions mostly took place at lower rates, with many buyers offering prices similar to last year's.

In some cases, raw unsalted cowhides were sold at Tk 700-900 for large and medium sizes, while lower-quality hides fetched only Tk 600-650.

Prices were reportedly even lower in districts outside Dhaka, and demand for goat hides remained weak.

Despite this, wholesalers and tannery owners said they aimed to collect 80-85 lakh pieces of rawhide this year and claimed they were offering slightly better prices than last year.

However, many seasonal traders said they failed to get fair prices, with some reporting lower rates than last Eid.

Typically, large cowhides range from 31-40 square feet, medium from 21-30 square feet, and small from 16-20 square feet. According to fixed rates, a 25 square-foot salted cowhide in Dhaka should sell for Tk 1,500-1,625.

Tipu Sultan, general secretary of the Bangladesh Hide and Skin Merchants' Association, said rawhide was not bought or sold at government fixed prices. "We bought medium and large-sized hides at Tk 750-800," he said, adding that traders do not have enough funds.

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EID EVENING AT PONGU HOSPITAL Of overflowing emergency and lingering waits

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA, PRABIR DAS

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Biman pilot, Team Group MD, drown in Canada

STAR REPORT

A Bangladeshi entrepreneur and a pilot of Biman Bangladesh Airlines died after the canoe they were on flipped over in a lake in Canada's Ontario on Sunday.

The deceased are Abdullah Hil Rakib, managing director of Team Group and also a former vice-president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), and Captain Md Saifuzzaman, who flew Boeing 787 for Biman.

According to a report by local outlet CTV News, the incident occurred on Sturgeon Lake in



the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario, about 155 kilometres northeast of Toronto.

Rakib's first namaz-e-janaza will be held on Wednesday at Sunnat Jamaat Mosque in the Danforth area of Toronto, Canada, at 7:00pm local time, reports UNB.

According to family sources, the body of Rakib will depart from Canada on June 12, and is scheduled to arrive at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 9:30pm on June 13, said Mohiuddin Rubel, former BGMEA director and additional managing director of Denim Expert Limited.

His second namaz-e-janaza will be held at BGMEA Bhaban on June 14. He will be buried at Banani Graveyard following the 3rd namaz-e-

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

52,000 tonnes of sacrificial waste cleared

Say officials of city corporations following Eid-ul-Azha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka's city corporations, in collaboration with residents, cleared sacrificial animal waste within three days of Eid-ul-Azha.

Thanks to efforts and community participation, the city remained relatively clean during and after the festival. Residents were encouraged to disinfect their surroundings with bleach, and many complied.

"After sacrificing our cattle, we cleaned the area and left the waste by the roadside. Conservancy workers cleared it quickly," said Ziauddin Alam, a resident of Gondaria.

Muzahidul Islam of Mirpur-12 shared a similar experience: "We cleaned the place ourselves, and the city corporation helped with waste removal."

Before Eid, the administrators Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) promised to clean the city within 72 hours.

According to official statements, a total of 52,115 tonnes of waste were removed during the post-Eid operation -- 31,226 tonnes from DSCC and 20,889 tonnes from DNCC.

The waste management drive began on Eid day (Saturday) and continued until 2:00pm on Monday. A total of 632,834 animals were sacrificed in Dhaka -- 466,755 in DNCC and 166,754 in DSCC areas.

In his briefing, DNCC administrator Mohammad



The Mayor Hanif Flyover in the capital remained largely empty yesterday, the fourth day of Eid-ul-Azha, as many residents had yet to return from their hometowns and villages. Earlier in May, the interim government had declared a ten-day holiday for the Eid celebrations, from June 5 to June 14.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SHERPUR HILLS

Cultivation of cashew nut gaining ground

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The cultivation of cashew nut is becoming popular among farmers in hilly areas of Sherpur district.

Since 2021, some 100 farmers have engaged in cultivating cashew nut in Nalitabari, Jhenaigati and Sreebordi upazilas for the first time in the region, said Mohammad Shakhaat Hossain, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sherpur.

"The cultivation, initiated under a pilot programme titled "Cashew Nut and Coffee Research, Development and Extension Project", has a bright prospect in this hilly region due to suitable weather condition and more small and marginal farmers are getting involved every year," he said.

If the cultivation expands further, it will boost domestic production and generate high revenues as cashew nut fetches good prices in market, the official added.



Shahidul Islam, director of the project, said the demand for cashew nut is growing every year. Presently, the country has an annual demand for 60,000 to 65,000 tonnes of cashew nut, but the domestic production stands at only 3,000 tonnes per year while rest of it is imported mainly from Vietnam and India.

Five years from now, the production of cashew nut in the country's hilly areas is expected to be around 25,000 tonnes, and will continue to increase gradually over time, he added.

According to the official, around 160 saplings can be planted in 100 decimal of land. The plants begin bearing cashew nuts after two years, each producing around 15-20 kilogrammes initially. The production gradually increases as the plants get matured.

The raw fruit is sold at Tk 200-220 per kg, but after processing, the dry fruit fetches Tk 1,800-1,900 in local markets. There are 22 cashew nut processing facilities in the country, he informed.

"So far, the pilot project has generated enthusiasm among the local farmers, and many more, including agro entrepreneurs and unemployed youths, are showing interest in cashew nut cultivation," said Md Abdul Wadud, upazila agriculture officer in Nalitabari.

Golam Maula, a farmer from Nalitabari's Samoschura area, said he had cultivated cashew nut on one acre land and earned a good profit from his harvest.

Uma Hajong, a farmer from Beltoil village, said they are getting adequate support from project officials.

Prof Dr Abdur Rahim, former dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at Bangladesh Agricultural University, said boxing glove or kidney-shaped cashew nut is considered among the best dry fruits. It has around 50 percent fat, as well as rich with Vitamin E and minerals including magnesium, zinc and copper.

Anti-oxidants present in cashew nut make skin look radiant and glowing. It also has anti-inflammatory, analgesic, anti-diabetic, anti-cancer, anti-microbial and cardio-protective properties, he added.



A rickshaw-puller rests by the roadside, exhausted after a grueling morning of hard work under the blistering sun. Although monsoon rains had briefly brought some relief, high temperatures are once again becoming the norm in the capital. The photo was taken in the Tejturi Bazar area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

COX'S BAZAR

Eid tourism expected to generate Tk 700cr

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

Businesspeople expressed hope that tourism during Eid-ul-Azha holidays will generate over Tk 700 crore in transactions in Cox's Bazar.

The Cox's Bazar sea beach has been witnessing a massive tourist influx during the Eid holidays from across the country, boosting the coastal town's tourism-based economy.

Cox's Bazar has over 500 hotels, resorts, cottages, and guesthouses, with a capacity to accommodate roughly 187,000 people daily. Hoteliers anticipate an average daily footfall of over 70,000 from June 12-19, with the total number of visitors this Eid expected to exceed 900,000.

Abu Morshed Chowdhury, president of Cox's Bazar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "During Eid-ul-Fitr, about 1.2 million tourists came here, generating over Tk 1,000 crore in 13 sectors. This time, we are expecting around 800,000 to 900,000 visitors and a minimum of Tk 700 crore in business activity."

It is not just the hotels reaping the benefits -- restaurants, retail stores, beach activities, local transport services, and tourist attractions are also witnessing a booming business, he added.

According to Mukhimm Khan, general secretary of the Cox's



Bazar Hotel, Motel and Guesthouse Owners' Association, the tourist influx surged since June 8.

"This is one of the peak times of the year for business. On June 9-10, between 100,000 and 150,000 tourists arrived each day. Around 95 percent of rooms in upscale hotels, motels, and resorts have been booked in advance," he said.

Despite no major promotional offers, the demand is so high that room rates have little room for negotiation.

"Hotels that usually offer 50-70 percent discounts during the off-season are now offering no more than 10-20 percent," he added.

The Kolatoli Hotel Resort Owners' Association reports

that shops near the beach have seen their sales triple during the holidays.

Arafat Rahman, a tourist from Dhaka, said, "The weather has been good, and there's a huge crowd. Prices have gone up -- whether it's food by the beach, horse rides, or bike rentals -- but the atmosphere is lively and clearly profitable for the businesses."

Eid holidaymakers are swarming popular destinations beyond the beach, including the scenic Marine Drive, Himchhari Waterfall, the rocky beaches of Inani and Patuarek, Ramu's Buddhist Monastery, Adinath Temple in Maheshkhali, Burmese Market,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Of overflowing emergency and lingering

He also mentioned that the number of inpatients was lower than usual. "We are trying our best to provide emergency services. Operation theatres are ready round the clock," he added.

However, these correspondents found only four doctors in the emergency ward and learned from the Ansar personnel that three doctors were working inside the OT.

Though the Ansar personnel stated that only one OT was operational, Prof Kenan claimed that six beds in three operation theaters were ready for use.



Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-50 8-15
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-55 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

52,000 tonnes

FROM PAGE 3

Azaz said on the first day of Eid alone, 10,614 tonnes of waste were collected from DNCC's 54 wards through 1,902 waste transport trips. On the second day (Sunday), 7,353 tonnes were removed in 1,429 trips, and by 2:00pm Monday, 2,922 tonnes were cleared.

Addressing concerns about waste seen on roadsides, Azaz explained that each secondary transfer station has a 5-tonne capacity, which was overwhelmed during Eid as volumes soared to five to six times the normal rate. "These were cleared as quickly as possible," he said, acknowledging

minor delays due to manpower shortages.

At another press briefing, DSCC Administrator Shahjahan Mia officially announced the end of the waste removal campaign. He said that this year's waste was cleared ahead of schedule, surpassing targets.

He added that most temporary cattle market waste -- including bamboo structures and litter -- had also been removed, with final clean-up work ongoing.

A total of 23,284 cleaning staffers were deployed across both city corporations, supported by 2,900 vehicles for waste transportation.

In a Facebook post, LGRD Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain said that 100% of sacrificial waste in all 12 city corporations was cleared by 10:00pm on Eid day.

"All 487 wards under the 12 city corporations -- 100% waste removal completed by 10:00pm. This was made possible through collective planning, tireless work, and genuine commitment," he wrote.

He added that 40,104 tonnes of waste were cleared nationwide with the help of 35,272 personnel.

FROM PAGE 3

hand.

"I haven't been called in yet because the doctors have deemed mine to be less urgent," Obaidul told this newspaper.

Contacted, Prof Abul Kenan, the hospital's director, said the number of patients usually increases during the Eid holiday.

While he did not explain the reason for the rise, staff at the hospital mentioned that road accidents increase during Eid, contributing

to the surge in patient numbers. Additionally, more patients from upazila and district-level hospitals are referred to NITOR because doctors are unavailable during the holiday period.

Prof Kenan mentioned that the emergency ward typically handles 250 patients daily during normal times, but this number rises to over 300 during the Eid holiday.

He said 45 doctors were deployed for three shifts in

TENDER NOTICE

CORRIGENDUM No. 2, RFP BGD-UNHCR RFP-1303

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sub-Office in Cox's Bazar hereby announces amendment No.2 to the following tender:

TENDER REFERENCE NUMBER	ITEM DESCRIPTION
BGD-UNHCR RFP-1303	FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FRAME AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF CLEANING, GARDENING AND JANITORIAL SERVICES FOR UNHCR OPERATIONS IN BANGLADESH

Amendments

Annex A - Terms of reference.

Annex D - Financial Offer Form

Submission Deadline

The minimum take home salary within clause 9.

Revision to Formula

25 June 2025

Interested and bona fide vendors are invited to participate in this Request for Proposal (RFP) by accessing and downloading the tender documents at the following web link: <https://www.unhcr.org/Public/Notice/266578>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: You are requested to inform us of the receipt of this RFP by using a message functionality in Cloud ERP Supplier portal or by sending an e-mail to BGDCOSUP@UNHCR.ORG against this negotiation as to:

- Your confirmation of receipt of this RFP

- Whether or not you will be submitting a Proposal

Sending your confirmation above will enable us to send you any updates or any changes in the tender documents.

Proposal to be submitted: Proposal must be submitted through the Cloud ERP portal. In case you have never registered before, you can register a profile using the registration link <https://idcs.c87ac6c2db8444cb41e7c1be0c0c329.identity.oraclecloud.com/ui/v1/signin> Supplier Registration (oraclecloud.com) and follow the instruction in guides available in the UNHCR website: https://faersysaasaprod1fa.oacs.oraclecloud.com/faces/PrsPostRegisterSupplier?prcId=30000009859468&_adf.ctrlstate=1a62dnl8q_603&_affLoop=368535968425491138_&_affWindowMode=0&_affWindwid=null_&_affS=168_&_affMFC=88_&_affMF=08_&_affMFR=9118_&_affMFD=19208_&_affMF=DH=10800_&_affMFC=88_&_affMFR=968_&_affMFG=08_&_affMFO=0 to register as a prospective supplier and UNHCR Supplier portal registration manual. Do not create a new profile if you already have one. Use the forgotten password feature in case you do not remember your password or username from previous registration.

Bid submission deadline: Wednesday, 25 June 2025 - 05:00 PM Bangladesh time.

Kindly note that hard copy submissions will not be accepted. All offers must be submitted exclusively through the Cloud ERP portal.

Dengue outbreak sparks protests in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Activists from Students Against Discrimination staged a protest at the Barguna Press Club yesterday, raising alarm over what they called a "dire dengue situation" in the district.

They claimed at least 10 people have died and 1,500 have been infected with dengue in Barguna.

However, official figures report two deaths and 1,204 cases this year. Nationwide, dengue has claimed 23 lives, with 5,115 infections reported so far.

Activist Nasrin Akhter Shimu blamed the poor administration at Barguna General Hospital and local health authorities for the rising death toll.

Later in the morning, around 11:00am, the Barguna Sadar upazila unit of the BNP formed a human chain and rallied at the same venue, demanding the resignation of the health adviser over the worsening situation.

Among the deceased are Upoma, daughter of former district BNP president Nazrul Islam Molla, and Monalisa Zerin, daughter of lawmaker Zafrul Hasan Farhad. Their sudden deaths have triggered public outrage and intensified protests.

Currently, 158 patients are admitted to Barguna General Hospital -- the district's only major healthcare facility for nearly 1.2 million residents. Of its 55 sanctioned doctor posts, only 10 are filled, and five of those doctors are on leave.

Dr Md Rejwani Alam, superintendent of the hospital, said the deputy commissioner already raised the issue with the health adviser, and a list of vacant positions has been sent.

Residents suffer as vital road in sorry state

MOHSIN MILON, Benapole

Residents of Benapole Municipality have long been facing hassle with their daily commute as around 1.5-kilometre stretch of the Benapole-Bahadurpur road has been lying in a sorry state.

The road was dug up around a year back, but it was later only levelled with a road roller spending Tk 5 lakh. Further repairs remain suspended due to fund constraints, said municipality sources.

The municipality authorities claimed that repair work will begin once a nearly Tk 240 crore Development Project (RUTDP) is signed.

The Benapole Municipality Office itself, as well as numerous educational institutions including Benapole Degree College, are located along this vital thoroughfare in the town, used by around 50,000 people and hundreds of vehicles daily.

"Many rickshaw and easy-bike drivers either avoid the road or charge double fare. Its present condition is having a negative impact on student attendance," said Kamruzzaman Shanti, principal of Benapole Degree College.

"The road is unusable. No vehicle wants to come here, and if they do, they charge extra fare..." said Abid Hossain, a local student.

Mosharraf Hossain, municipality engineer, said new allocations are needed to fix the road.

Dr Kazi Najib Hasan, administrator of Benapole Municipality and also Sharsha upazila nirkabi officer, said, "We've submitted a project proposal to the LGED."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Principal
Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College, Sylhet

No: 59.14.0000.129.07.029.24-2567

e-Tender Notice

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

SL No.	Tender/Proposal ID, Reference No.	Description of the Tender	Tender Document last selling Date & Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date & Time
1.	1125254,<br			

INTERNATIONAL

Israel strikes Hodeida port

Threatens naval, air blockade

REUTERS, Dubai

Israel's navy said it struck Houthi targets in Yemen's Red Sea port of Hodeidah yesterday, and Defence Minister Israel Katz threatened the Iran-aligned movement with a naval and air blockade if attacks on Israel continue.

Houthi-run Al Masirah TV said Israel targeted the docks of Al Hodeidah port with two strikes. The Israeli army said in a statement that the navy struck Houthi targets, adding the port is used by the group to transfer weapons.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. Israel has been hitting Houthi targets with air strikes in a military campaign launched after the country severely weakened Iran's other Middle East partners.

The Israeli military on Monday urged the evacuation of the Houthi-controlled ports of Ras Isa, Hodeidah and Salif.

10 killed in Austrian school shooting
Shooter among dead; 30 injured

REUTERS, Graz

A gunman killed at least nine people at a secondary school in the southern Austrian city of Graz yesterday, in the worst school shooting in the country's modern history.

Police said the attacker also died and that they were working on the assumption that he had operated alone. National broadcaster ORF said about 30 people were wounded. Austrian media reported that most of the dead were pupils at the school.

Police did not publicly identify the killer, but Austrian media cited unconfirmed reports saying he was a former pupil who had entered the school and opened fire on pupils.

"The rampage at a school in Graz is a national tragedy that has deeply shaken our entire country," Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker said in a statement.

"There are no words for the pain and grief that we all - all of Austria - are feeling right now."

At the scene, police had set up a perimeter a few hundred meters away from the school, barring access routes with police cars.



Fireworks explode around police officers in riot gear during a protest in response to federal immigration operations in the Little Tokyo neighbourhood of downtown Los Angeles, US on Monday night. President Donald Trump's administration said that it was sending 700 US Marines and thousands more National Guard troops to Los Angeles, sparking a furious response from California's governor over the "deranged" deployment.

PHOTO: AFP

Russian drone attacks hit Ukraine's Kyiv, Odesa

Three killed; European Commission unveils 18th package of Russia sanctions aimed at energy, military

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia launched one of its largest air strikes on Kyiv in over three years of war and struck a maternity ward in the southern city of Odesa in attacks that killed at least three people, officials said yesterday.

The overnight strikes followed Russia's biggest drone assault of the war on Ukraine on Monday night and were part of intensified bombardments that Moscow says is retaliation for attacks by Ukrainian forces on Russia.

Loud explosions shook Kyiv and blasts and fires lit up the sky in the early hours of yesterday morning, leaving plumes of heavy smoke over the city, Reuters witnesses said.

At least four people were treated in hospital after seven of the capital's 10 districts were hit, city officials said. "Today was one of the largest attacks on Kyiv," President Volodymyr Zelensky said. "Russian missile and Shahed (drone) strikes down the efforts of the United States and others around the world to force Russia into peace."

Meanwhile, the European Commission has proposed an 18th package of sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, aimed at Moscow's energy revenues and military industry, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday.

Zelensky urged Ukraine's allies to take steps to force Russia into peace, and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called for immediate new sanctions and air defence systems.



Although Moscow and Kyiv have held two rounds of direct peace talks in recent weeks, the only tangible progress has been an agreement on exchanges of prisoners of war, and Russia has continued to advance along the front line in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's air force said Russia had fired 315 drones across the country, of which 277 were downed. All seven missiles launched by Russia were also brought down, it said.

Air raid alerts in Kyiv and most Ukrainian regions lasted five hours until around 5:00 am (0200 GMT), according to information released by the military.

"A difficult night for all of us," Timur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's city military administration, said on Telegram.

Defence Ministry said Ukraine had launched more drones at Russia, officials said.

Flights in Moscow and some other cities were later restored but restrictions were still in place in St Petersburg at 0430 GMT. No damage was reported.

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and advocated for a Constituent Assembly election to implement a new constitution.

LEFTIST PARTIES EXPRESS DISSATISFACTION

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince called the election timeline ignores public opinion.

"Most political parties, and ordinary citizens we've spoken with, want the election to be held within this year by December. We want the same," Prince said.

Revolutionary Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Huq said the chief adviser ignored "the consensus for December elections", warning that an April election would "frustrate many".

He said the nation has a strong desire for reform, justice, and elections, and that through the formation and implementation of the "July Charter", Bangladesh can return to a proper democratic path.

NCP, composed of July uprising leaders, supports holding elections only after reforms are complete.

Jamaat-e-Islami initially aligned with NCP's position but later suggested elections could take place in February before Ramadan. Last week, Jamaat leaders indicated elections might happen between December and April.

On May 21, Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman said that elections should be held by December, stating, "Bangladesh needs political stability, which can only come through an elected government, not unelected decision-makers."

MIXED REACTIONS FROM POLITICAL PARTIES

Following the announcement, BNP convened an emergency standing committee meeting and issued a press release reiterating its demand for elections by December. They cited Ramadan, public exams at secondary

and higher secondary levels, and weather concerns as reasons.

BNP also warned that the combination of weather and campaigning during Ramadan might lead to the postponement of the polls.

On Saturday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, who was returning from Thailand after receiving treatment, stated that the announcement not only "disappointed" his party but also the whole nation.

In contrast, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman welcomed the tentative election date, expressing hope that the government will ensure a free, fair, neutral, and acceptable election within the declared timeframe.

He said the nation has a strong desire for reform, justice, and elections, and that through the formation and implementation of the "July Charter", Bangladesh can return to a proper democratic path.

NCP, in its reaction, said it would not oppose elections by April next year if key reforms and constitutional changes are completed before that.

"We believe fulfilling the July Declaration and July Charter and announcing a clear election timeline will meet national expectations," said Akhter Hossen, NCP member secretary. He added that reforms and justice must be visible before elections

and advocated for a Constituent Assembly election to implement a new constitution.

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Ramadan, public exams at secondary

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JUNE 11, 2025
JAISHTHA 28, 1432 BS
The Daily Star 5

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

State Dept resumes processing student visas after judge's ruling

REUTERS, Washington

The US State Department directed all US missions abroad and consular sections to resume processing Harvard University student and exchange visitor visas after a federal judge in Boston last week temporarily blocked President Trump's ban on foreign students at the Ivy League institution.

In a diplomatic cable sent on June 6 and signed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the State Department cited parts of the judge's decision, saying the fresh directive was "in accordance with" the temporary restraining order.

Under that order granted to Harvard late on Thursday, US District Judge Allison Burroughs blocked Trump's proclamation from taking effect pending further litigation of the matter.

Trump had cited national security concerns as justification for barring international students from entering the US to pursue studies at Harvard.

Trump administration has launched a multi-pronged attack on the nation's oldest university, freezing billions of dollars in grants and other funding. Harvard argues the administration is retaliating against it for refusing to accede to demands to control school's governance, curriculum and ideology of its faculty and students.

MYANMAR CONFLICT

Guerrillas claim rare downing of junta jet

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar anti-coup guerrillas claimed to shoot down a junta jet yesterday, declaring a rare victory over the air force which has kept them at bay in a grinding civil war.

The military swiftly denied their claim, saying the plane crashed near the central village of Min Taing Pin around midday because of "sudden engine failure" while on a "practice flight".

Myanmar has been consumed by civil war since the military ousted a democratic government in 2021, but analysts say its air force backed by Russia and China has allowed it to fend off a myriad of lesser-equipped opposition groups.

The military and some of its adversaries have pledged a truce this month as the country continues to recover from March's devastating magnitude 7.7 earthquake which killed nearly 3,800 people.

But the People's Liberation Army (PLA) -- the armed wing of a Myanmar communist group -- said its fighters downed the plane after four days of fierce conflict in central Sagaing region, one of the areas worst-hit by the quake.

"Our fighters were able to shoot down an attack jet today. This is a first in the history of the PLA," said a spokeswoman.

Zaw Tun, a member of the local anti-coup People's Defence Force, said they were fighting alongside the PLA when "our joint forces used machine guns and shot it down".

A local administrator from the rebel-held area, Zaw Htet, said two planes were returning from a bombing run when one was hit as both "flew very low on the way back".

chief adviser answered all," Alam said.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey met Prof Yunus yesterday, expressing her organisation's willingness to support Bangladesh's political and constitutional reforms ahead of next year's election.

"We are happy to offer support, especially for constitutional reforms, if Bangladesh seeks it," she said.

Prof Yunus urged the Commonwealth to promote youth engagement and explore the power of sports as a tool for social change.

Botchwey also announced that a Commonwealth youth programme will be held in Dhaka later this month.

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, Special Envoy Lutfi Siddiqi, SDG Affairs Senior Secretary Lamia Moshed, and Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Abida Islam were also present.

Yunus is scheduled to deliver a keynote speech today at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. He will also meet with members of the Bangladeshi community and students involved in the July uprising.

The chief adviser is accompanied by Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H. Mansur and Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Dr Mohammad Abdul Momen, who are expected to hold talks on asset recovery and enhanced cooperation with British agencies.

"This is one of the core objectives of

the tour. We hope it yields results," said Shafiqul Alam.

However, he cautioned that recovering stolen assets is difficult. "With increased engagement with agencies like the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA), we may see progress. But these are sensitive legal matters, and we can't disclose much publicly."

Meanwhile, three anti-corruption organisations -- Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), UK-based Spotlight on Corruption, and Policy at Transparency International UK -- have urged the UK government to support Bangladesh in recovering assets allegedly stolen by the previous regime.

They also called for sanctions against Bangladeshi elites suspected of serious corruption and stronger action from UK law enforcement to locate and recover stolen assets.

Separately, UK-based leaders, activists, and supporters of the Awami League staged protests in front of the Dorchester Hotel in London, where Prof Yunus is staying. They pledged to continue demonstrations throughout his visit, reports Prothom Alo.

Former MPs Ranjit Sarkar (Sunamganj-1), Md. Abu Zahid (Habiganj-3), and Sylhet Metropolitan Awami League Joint General Secretary Bidhan Kumar Saha appeared publicly in the protest for the first time. Former State Minister Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury and other senior party figures also participated, the Bangla daily reported.

BNP 'disappointed', Jamaat, NCP 'satisfied'

FROM PAGE 1
their stance on elections by December this year.

On May 28, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman said the next general election must be held by December and called on party activists and leaders to prepare to ensure that.

Yunus had previously indicated that elections would occur between December 2025 and June 2026, depending on reform progress.

NCP, composed of July uprising leaders, supports holding elections only after reforms are complete.

Jamaat-e-Islami initially aligned with NCP's position but later suggested elections could take place in February before Ramadan. Last week, Jamaat leaders indicated elections might happen between December and April.

On May 21, Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman said that elections should be held by December, stating, "Bangladesh needs political stability, which can only come through an elected government, not unelected decision-makers."

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Ramadan, public exams at secondary

Yunus-Starmer meet uncertain

FROM PAGE 1
King Charles III is expected to formally confer the Harmony Award 2025 on Yunus on June 12 at St James's Palace in recognition of his lifelong work promoting peace, sustainability, and social harmony.

"This is a very prestigious award," said Shafiqul.

"He has worked tirelessly for the poor, the environment, and against wealth concentration. His advocacy for social business and youth upliftment is being recognised."

Yesterday, Yunus met separately with Wouter van Wersch, executive vice president of Airbus, and Charles Wyley, executive vice president of Menzies Aviation, the world's largest ground handling firm and a partner in Bangladesh's aviation sector.

"As you know, we are working to operationalise the Third Terminal in Bangladesh, and are therefore in discussions with various parties about who will handle ground services there. In that context, we also held talks with Menzies," the press secretary said.

A group of British MPs of Bangladeshi origin also met Prof Yunus. Topics included the Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh's democratic transition, progress of the Reform Commissions, and the upcoming July Charter.

"We also highlighted the government's achievements over the past 10 months, especially economic reforms. It was a cordial exchange. The MPs asked many questions, which the

chief adviser answered all," Alam said.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey met Prof Yunus

Rising COVID cases in Asia a warning for us

Bangladesh must take note and prepare

Amid a rise in infections caused by new sub-variants of the coronavirus in some neighbouring countries, Bangladesh's health ministry has advised citizens to refrain from travelling to India and other affected nations unless absolutely necessary. According to Indian media, the country recently reported over 6,000 COVID cases within a 24-hour period. So far in 2025, India has reported 65 COVID-related deaths. Similarly, in the last week of May, Thailand recorded 65,880 new COVID cases and three fatalities. The number of cases in other Asian countries, including Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, has also risen significantly.

In Bangladesh, although no significant surge in hospital admissions has been reported, health authorities have noted a slight uptick in flu-like symptoms and respiratory illnesses in urban areas. Experts have cautioned that low testing rates may be masking the true extent of community transmission, calling for enhanced monitoring.

With the World Health Organization announcing on May 28 that global SARS-CoV-2 activity has been increasing since February—reaching a test positivity rate of 11 percent, a level not seen since July 2024—and with cases rising in neighbouring regions, the time for caution has once again arrived. Although the world has somewhat adjusted to living with the virus, if the previous pandemic years have taught us anything, it is that overcoming COVID becomes easier with better preparedness.

Raising awareness, therefore, is key, but it must be matched by swift and coordinated action from the authorities. The government must ensure an adequate supply of test kits, medical equipment, and vaccines. Reportedly, COVID test kits are currently unavailable in government hospitals. According to sources at the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) under the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), there are currently 3.1 million vaccine doses in stock, of which 1.7 million will expire by August. All this suggests that our COVID preparedness is once again at a poor level.

Now that we know so much about the virus, there is really no excuse for failing to prevent another surge in COVID cases and fatalities. The government must ensure that adequate supplies are available at all public hospitals and health facilities. In addition, surveillance and risk communication activities must be strengthened at the International Health Regulations (IHR) desks in all land, sea, and airports for incoming travellers. The use of thermal scanners or digital handheld thermometers with non-contact techniques to measure body temperature must be ensured at all entry points, along with sufficient provision of masks, gloves, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers.

The DGHS has issued a set of guidelines to reduce the risk of contracting and transmitting the disease. Meanwhile, Dhaka metro rail authorities and the railway ministry have urged travellers to wear masks and abide by health guidelines. These infection prevention guidelines should continue to be disseminated to raise public awareness and help prevent the spread of the virus.

A crisis worsened by fund crunch

The Rohingya need global support to live properly

With the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar showing no signs of ending and the repatriation process in Bangladesh at a standstill, it is concerning that only 19 percent of the required fund for Rohingya refugees this year has been secured after the passing of five months. Reportedly, a total of \$934 million is needed to support 1.5 million people—1.2 million Rohingya and 300,000 members of the host community—but only \$180 million has been received. This gap, largely due to the suspension of US funding, will further strain conditions in the camps, making it harder for the refugees to access essential services such as education and healthcare. Dozens of projects, including those related to health, family planning, nutrition, and education, have already been affected by the cuts. Humanitarian organisations warn that the situation will further deteriorate unless funds are urgently released.

An example of the refugees' shrinking access to healthcare is that the number of general patients seeking treatment in camps dropped from 372,000 in February to 205,000 in April. Many are having to pay for doctors themselves in serious cases, which is not possible for everyone. The funding cut has also severely impacted education, putting the future of 230,000 Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar—and the livelihoods of hundreds of terminated teachers from the host community—at risk. Since these learning centres also serve as protection spaces for the children, their closure poses serious safety risks.

Moreover, the scarcity of shelter has worsened with the onset of the monsoon rains, which have already damaged many homes. It has become extremely difficult to provide shelter and basic services to the 150,000 Rohingya people who have fled to Bangladesh in recent months. According to a WFP update, 50,000 more may arrive by the end of the year, raising further concerns. Without access to basic services, refugees may flee the camps and embark on risky journeys to foreign lands in desperation. Criminal activities in and around the camps may also increase, and gender-based violence could rise, leaving victims without support or psychological counselling.

According to a UN official, there is only enough food to support the Rohingya until October, which is deeply alarming. Access to food, education, and healthcare is a fundamental human right and must not be denied. We urge the international community not to forget the plight of the Rohingya and to come forward with aid. The interim government, led by Professor Yunus, must leverage its capacity to secure necessary assistance from global sources. Additionally, the authorities must ensure that all aid received is utilised efficiently and without waste.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

'E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial' released

On this day in 1982, Steven Spielberg's blockbuster *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* was released in theatres, and it is widely seen as a classic of American cinema.

EDITORIAL

We need both new wine and a new bottle

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

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SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN

The chief adviser has announced the timing of the next parliamentary election—the country will go to the polls, *ceteris paribus*, in the first half of April 2026. One would not be wrong to suggest that his hands were forced by the BNP demand to hold the election by December this year. Predictably, the announcement has not satisfied the BNP, who claim that they reflect the majority public opinion regarding the polls, and that the nation has been disappointed by the election schedule announced by the CA on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha.

We don't know whether the party has conducted a countrywide public opinion poll on which they posit their assertion. Going by the comments and observations in various media platforms, there are grounds to take issue with BNP's claims. In fact, one might go so far as to suggest that a large segment of the population is disappointed by the election schedule. And for good reasons.

Let me make it clear before proceeding further that there is no

I don't want to be coerced to vote for any particular party. I want money and muscle power to become irrelevant in politics. I want political leadership to emerge through a democratic process within the political party. I want that by the time that the next election is held, the law of primogeniture followed by our two major political parties, for so long, becomes history.

alternative to a democratically elected government. Needless to say, any government that is entrusted with the task of running the affairs of the state must have the confidence of the public. And the confidence is expressed through a free, fair and participatory election, which the last three elections under Sheikh Hasina did not allow. But there is yet another means by which the public entrusts a group of



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, addressing the nation on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha, announced that the next general election of the country would be held in the first half of April in 2026.

SOURCE: CHIEF ADVISER GOB/FACEBOOK

people to conduct the affairs of the state, for a period of time, with the expectations that the aims, the hopes and aspirations, the shortcomings of democracy, the trampling of people's rights that led to the extraordinary manner of regime change—in our case an illegal regime—are fulfilled and the causal factors are purged forever. Such an arrangement certainly defies the narrative of political science literature, but nevertheless is lent credibility by the demonstration of public support, which may not have come through the ballot boxes, but through a public upheaval, as the July uprising of 2024 was. There can be nothing more powerful a popular verdict than what was pronounced on August 5, 2024.

We must not forget that the July uprising was a unique phenomenon, hardly witnessed anywhere else in the recent past. We must also not forget that the people have invested the interim government with the power to bring changes—albeit not through the ballot box, but perhaps more empowering and overwhelming than the ballot box—as deemed necessary to ensure that we don't suffer the pains we did in the 15-plus years of the previous regime. But of course, the changes must be done through consultations with other political parties who lost their say during this long one and a

far been able to weather the persistent media onslaught from across the border which has made Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus the main target.

Why has the election schedule been disappointing to most people?

The simple answer is most people are worried about our future. Worried that the objective of the Monsoon Revolution may perhaps not be fulfilled. Worried because the pious hope for a systemic change that would prevent the repetition of the past regime's misdeeds may not come about. People don't want to see the old wine in an old bottle—politics being hogged by time tested politicians who have failed people's expectations time and again. Each successive election brought one of the two political parties that outdid the previous regime in maladministration, in financial mismanagement, in crony capitalism, and what have you. Why do you think the Awami League could cling to power despite its blatant misdeeds and violation of human rights, on which the UN has also given its verdict? Other than the three farcical elections, one reason was that the binary alternative, in public estimation, was no better an option.

We must not forget that the July uprising was a unique phenomenon, hardly witnessed anywhere else in the recent past. We must also not forget that the people have invested the interim government with the power to bring changes—albeit not through the ballot box, but perhaps more empowering and overwhelming than the ballot box—as deemed necessary to ensure that we don't suffer the pains we did in the 15-plus years of the previous regime. But of course, the changes must be done through consultations with other political parties who lost their say during this long one and a

In short, the call is: Reform, then elect.

reforms have regrettably not been thrashed out, consensus reached and made ready for implementation. The call is for essential reforms.

And what do I want as a common voter? I am confident that I speak more than for myself only.

I don't want to be coerced to vote for any particular party. I want money and muscle power to become irrelevant in politics. I want political leadership to emerge through a democratic process within the political party. I want that by the time that the next election is held, the law of primogeniture followed by our two major political parties, for so long, becomes history. That the sanitised system ensures a balance of power and separation of the branches of the government, providing guard rails of democracy that would prevent descent to authoritarian rule and foil the prospect of a single individual assuming superlative power. That the security and law enforcement agencies don't become appendages of the ruling party. That there should be a stonewall between the party in power and the administration.

A tall order, perhaps, but very essential.

We don't want old wine in a new bottle, we want both new wine and a new bottle.

The curious case of the *déjà flu*



MIND THE GAP

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NOSHIN NAWAL

Some people get back together with their ex. Others get back on the medicinal health crisis bandwagon. Bangladesh, shockingly, chose the latter (the ex has been more than blocked—it's been banned, to be fair).

But yes, COVID is rising again, slowly, stealthily. Hospital admissions are creeping up, whispers of "complications" are floating around, and somewhere deep inside the health ministry, someone has just re-Googled, "What is the difference between coronavirus and flu virus?"

This, of course, is not our first viral rodeo. We've done this dance before, complete with mask mandates, panic induced grocery shortages, and that unforgettable cameo by our former health minister, who somehow managed to combine the calm of a stampede with the clarity of expired cough syrup (read sarcasm, please).

He may not have cured COVID, but he did cure the nation of taking him seriously.

Now, here we are again. One foot in flu season, the other in full-blown *déjà flu*.

To be fair, the virus isn't back with the same drama. No lockdowns (yet),

no sirens, no daily death tolls scrolling across your TV like the credits of a horror film. It's more of a soft launch, the dinner table story featuring only your hands, not the face. Like an indie sequel to a blockbuster we all hated but secretly watched out for, given morbid curiosity.

And what are we doing to prepare? Mostly, recycling habits. Masks are back—on chins, only "maskne." Sanitiser is back—in theory. And of course, we're back to hoping that this time, the government's response won't involve mysterious medical procurement deals and YouTube doctors suggesting turmeric as an immune booster.

But there is one noticeable change. This time, people are... tired. Bone-deep, eye-roll-heavy, can-we-just-not-tired. We've seen the plot twists. We know how this goes. The rising numbers, the vague press briefings, the dramatic declaration of "urgent precautions" that somehow translates into a fogging machine and a photo-op.

For every Millennial reader, I see you, I hear you; it's just exhausting, I know. Half our 20s was eaten whole

by pandemic, panic, lockdowns, recession, blackouts, protests, politics and the incredible doomscrolling of war memes (you know which). We just low-key want a fair shot at life without this dystopian world getting in the way.

And yet, bizarrely, no one seems to be steering the ship. You know that moment at a wedding when the power goes out, the mic squeals, and

We don't need miracle cures or motivational slogans this time. We need basic things: hospitals that are equipped, doctors that are protected, information that is accurate, and possibly a health minister who doesn't accidentally become a meme.

everyone looks around pretending it's part of the programme because they're still not done with their firmi? That's where we are now. Except instead of power failure, it's health preparedness. And instead of a mic, it's a nation-sized throat-clearing.

But here's the thing: we've been gifted a second chance. A re-run with spoilers. We already know what not to do—like announcing that infections are under control when we haven't tested anyone, or putting a committee together with the same efficiency one

might use to assemble IKEA furniture without the manual.

We don't need miracle cures or motivational slogans this time. We need basic things: hospitals that are equipped, doctors that are protected, information that is accurate, and possibly a health minister who doesn't accidentally become a meme.

Let's try something totally out of the box and totally novel. Let's learn from our mistakes. Let's assume that a virus does not, in fact, care about election timelines, district boundaries, floods, or whether we have an opening ceremony planned for a new overpass. Let's assume that health—drumroll, please!—matters.

And while we're at it, maybe we, the public, can do better too. No more licking ice cream in air-conditioned malls and announcing, "I don't believe in viruses," like it's a zodiac sign. No more WhatsApp forwards claiming ginger can cure variants. Just sensible decisions, a little less bravado, and a bit more brain.

COVID was never gone. It just went offline for updates. And if we've learnt anything at all in the last few years, it's that viruses don't wait for permission. They arrive uninvited and leave behind invoices.

So, this time, let's send them straight to voicemail. Let's not be the nation that fails twice in the same exam. Let's not look back in six months and say, "We should have seen this coming." Because we did. We've already watched this movie. We know how it ends.

Let's just hope, for once, we don't trip over the same plot hole.

EDUCATION IN FY2026 BUDGET

Action fails to match rhetoric again



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MANZOOR AHMED

A nominal increase over the revised FY2024-25 allocation in the education budget has been proposed for FY2025-26, but it is nearly at an all-time low as a ratio of GDP. The specific allocations has proposed a continuation of past policies, many of which have not worked or have faced implementation challenges. The rhetoric about prioritising education—under the past political governments—does not match the actions in the interim government's budget proposal.

The Tk 95,644 crore budget proposed in FY26 for the three major administratively divided parts of education—primary and mass education, madrasa and technical education, and secondary and higher education—marks an increase over the Tk 84,311 crore in the revised FY25 budget. The new allocation amounts to 1.72 percent of GDP and 12.1 percent of the national budget, compared to the recommended UNESCO benchmark of four to six percent of GDP and 20 percent of the national budget, depending on a country's public expenditure structure.

Significantly, the new budget proposal shows a reduction in the allocation for primary and mass education compared to the original allocation for the current year—Tk 35,403 crore against Tk 38,819 crore originally allocated in the FY25 budget, later revised down to Tk 35,123 crore. A government-appointed consultation committee for primary and non-formal education reform expressed concern about the serious deficiency in the literacy and numeracy skills of the majority of children completing primary education. The committee submitted detailed recommendations for immediate and medium term actions. The budget speech mentioned the reform initiative, and highlighted a school meal provision and continuation of stipends, but a concerted action plan to implement the reforms remained missing.

The Secondary and Higher Education Division is a beneficiary of the education

crore in FY26, which is a small gain over Tk 11,783 crore in the current year. Enrolment in madrasas as well as in vocational education is growing, while general schools are losing students. Government education data shows that between 2019 and 2023, general secondary students' enrolment declined from 9.23 million to 8.16 million, whereas madrasa enrolment grew from 2.4 million to 2.75 million. Out of a total of just over 20 million

instruction and a lack of qualified teachers and facilities.

Even in specialised technical-vocational institutions, such as polytechnics, technical schools and colleges, and vocational training centres, complaints are frequent about training equipment, the quality and number of instructors, and institutional management. Tracer studies of TVET have shown that half of the graduates were

Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said in his budget speech, "There is no alternative to science, technology or technical education to build a strong economic structure." He went on to claim that, "This year's budget has given special priority to creating the environment for a science-based, technology-driven and employment-oriented education."

His ambitious rhetoric has not been borne out by the proposed education budget in its content and characteristics. An annual budget by itself cannot solve the long standing and inherent problems of the education system. The national budget can be a useful vehicle for change when a vision for change exists and the decision-makers are keen to fulfil that vision.

A clear sense of direction and strategy for the education system is lacking, as it has been under past political governments. The interim government has emphasised reforms in many areas of national concern by establishing high-level commissions for this purpose. But an education reform commission has been conspicuously absent.

Effective implementation of the budget, regardless of its pros and cons, has always been a challenge. An idea, though some political parties may find it heretical, is worth considering. The late Akbar Ali Khan, well-known for his research and writing on economic management and governance, long argued for a participatory budget process involving citizens through local government bodies (*Bangladesh Budget: Orthoniti o Rajniti*, 2021).

While radical changes in the proposed budget are unlikely at this stage, could the interim government hold local government elections and involve the local bodies in implementing the budget? The local bodies could be particularly helpful in such areas as safety net spending, small and medium-sized business support, distributing various agricultural subsidies, and improving community healthcare. They can help make funds available to schools for better learning outcomes and greater educational equity through school-based activities with local NGO and community involvement.

In the absence of the MP rule and personal fiefdoms created under the past political governments, genuine people's representatives may help ensure better use of public funds. And an early local government election need not detract the chief adviser from his timetable for a general election in the first half of April next year.



ILLUSTRATION: SUSHMITA S PREETHA

budget increase, with the proposed allocation of Tk 47,563 crore, which is an increase over the original current year allocation of Tk 44,108 crore and an even larger increase from the revised allocation of Tk 39,233 crore. The increase is well-deserved, but only if the expenditures deliver improved learning outcomes rather than merely keeping the system running by spending on physical infrastructure and paying salaries.

The Technical and Madrasah Education Division has also been given an increase, with the proposed allocation of Tk 12,678

primary-level students in 2024, almost 30 percent, or 6.2 million, were in primary-level madrasas.

The government has promoted the expansion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) enrolment, the result of which can be seen in an increase to 19 percent of secondary-level students in 2024 from about 14 percent five years earlier. However, observers argue that most of this and earlier growth has been through opening vocational streams in secondary schools, which suffer from low quality of

unemployed or not employed in their field of training. Analysis shows that the best predictor of success in TVET is strong learning outcomes of students in primary and general secondary schools. Deficiencies in basic foundational competencies of students remain a huge problem, as noted above. The grievances and anxieties of TVET students have often spilled out onto the streets in public protests.

The consequences of these troubling trends for the preparation of the next generation for life and work loom large as a critical issue.

The silent plastic crisis in rural Bangladesh

Saeif Manzoor Al Islam and Sabbir Rahman Khan are development practitioners

SAIEF MANZOOR-AL-ISLAM and SABBIR RAHMAN KHAN

Sumon runs a small tea stall. Every morning, he wades through ankle-deep plastic waste—a growing pile of discarded bottles, wrappers, and bags that clog the drains around his shop. "When it rains, the market floods because the drains are blocked with plastic," he says. "Business drops, and so does our hope for a cleaner place."

While cities like Dhaka and Chattogram often dominate discussions on plastic pollution, the rural and peri-urban areas of Bangladesh bear a silent but severe brunt. In rural Bangladesh, plastic waste infiltrates rivers, irrigation channels, and croplands, disrupting daily life and livelihoods. Yet, this reality rarely garners attention.

It is believed that Bangladesh produces approximately 87,000 tonnes of single-use plastic waste each year, and nearly 22 percent of this originates from rural areas. There is a notable lack of awareness regarding the environmental and health risks associated with plastic waste in rural areas. For instance,

only 5.5 percent of rural consumers are aware of the health risks posed by single-use plastics, compared to 18.4 percent in urban areas. These facts highlight that plastic pollution is not solely an urban issue.

Of the plastic waste generated in Bangladesh, only 36 percent is recycled, leaving the rest to accumulate in open dumps, water bodies, and agricultural lands, exacerbating waterlogging and soil degradation. In rural areas, plastic waste mixed with crop residues blocks irrigation channels, starving crops of vital water flow. Additionally, plastic debris gathers around sluice gates, worsening persistent waterlogging.

For local farmers and traders, these seemingly small disruptions add up, impacting both their income and the local ecosystem. The impacts are further compounded by the surge in single-use plastics. Despite a ban on plastic bags in 2002, single-use plastic consumption has increased by 200 percent over the last decade, with rural areas increasingly bearing the consequences.

The government's National 3R Strategy was a step towards tackling the plastic menace through reducing, reusing, and recycling waste. However, its implementation at the grassroots level remains largely on paper. Local government institutions, particularly union parishads and municipalities, are

supposed to lead the charge in managing plastic waste. But resource constraints, limited technical capacity, and a lack of structured waste management plans hinder their effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, small-scale initiatives in Bangladesh are emerging as potential game changers. The informal sector collects around 1,000 tonnes of plastic waste daily, significantly contributing to recycling efforts. However, the lack of formal recognition and support limits their impact. We are seeing the private sector also stepping into this domain. In Dhaka, for instance, Standard Chartered Bank launched a plastic exchange programme, allowing community members to trade plastic waste for cash or essentials. Replicating this initiative in rural areas could motivate grassroots communities to engage in waste collection while creating local income opportunities. Encouragingly, a number of development platforms are working with the private sector. They are collaborating to establish and institutionalise market-centric collection hubs for plastic waste, incentivising traders to segregate and deposit waste for recycling. Such initiatives show how grassroots engagement can foster a culture of environmental responsibility, even in areas with limited waste management infrastructure.

But to effectively tackle the long-standing

plastic pollution situation in rural and peri-urban areas, a few good examples are not enough; we need collective efforts and mutually benefiting strategies. First, local governments need targeted support to incorporate plastic waste management into local development plans. Waste segregation at the source, coupled with community-based recycling hubs, can lay the groundwork for more structured waste management systems.

Second, engaging local entrepreneurs in waste recycling can transform plastic from a pollutant into a resource. With technical training and seed funding, they could establish small recycling units that create useful products like eco-bricks or compost bins. In Indonesia, fishing villages have turned to innovative solutions like eco-bricks—plastic bottles filled with non-biodegradable waste used as building materials to manage plastic waste effectively. These initiatives highlight the potential of local actions in combating plastic pollution.

Third, educational programmes in schools and community centres can instil sustainable habits from an early age, reinforcing the principles of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. In Cox's Bazar, school collection systems have already been set up to teach children about waste segregation and composting, showing how early intervention can cultivate lasting environmental responsibility. Covering two

climate hotspots—Naogaon and Satkhira—the WaterAid–Swisscontact consortium has engaged school-level students in clean-up campaigns, waste segregation activities, and educational programmes to instil sustainable waste practices.

Lastly, public-private partnerships must be leveraged to provide the necessary infrastructure and incentives for waste management. One example is Practical Action's initiative in Faridpur, where a circular economy approach is employed to transform previously unprofitable waste into valuable commodities. In this initiative, low-grade plastics collected from the Padma River and local communities are processed using pyrolysis technology, converting them into high-grade oil and black carbon, thus creating employment opportunities and improving waste workers' livelihoods.

We must keep in mind that the fight against plastic pollution extends far beyond urban centres. The crowded markets of a remote union in the south and the irrigation fields of the north are not just bearing the brunt of plastic pollution; they are also fertile grounds for solutions. With the right support, rural communities can transform from passive victims to active change-makers, driving localised recycling initiatives, championing waste reduction, and adopting sustainable practices.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 One of a bear trio
- 5 States
- 10 Bakery come-on
- 12 Pastel shade
- 13 Nursing concern
- 15 Memorable time
- 16 Carnival city
- 17 Signing need
- 18 Motley
- 20 Helper: Abbr.
- 21 Comb parts
- 22 Casino acts
- 23 Brawl
- 25 Right away, in the ER
- 28 Gold-loving king
- 31 Swindles
- 32 Singer Franklin
- 34 Gold, to Coronado
- 35 Lyricist
- 36 Bar bill
- 37 Off-peak travel cost
- 40 Minotaur's home

DOWN

- 1 Origami need
- 2 Ark's landing site
- 3 Thick soup
- 4 French friend
- 5 Choir voice
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- 7 Pass by
- 8 Least common
- 9 Fragrances
- 11 "Adam Bede" author
- 12 Garden aids
- 13 Beattie and Blyth
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Woman dies of electrocution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

A woman died after being electrocuted in Netrokona's Barhatta upazila yesterday.

The incident occurred around 9:00am at her father's house in Charpara village under Raypur union.

Twenty year old Ritu Akter, daughter of Md Monzil Miah, had returned to her parental home for the first time with her husband, following their marriage, to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha.

According to her family, she noticed an electric wire in the kitchen and tried to fold and move it.

Just then, the electricity supply resumed, and she was electrocuted.

Hearing her screams, family members rushed to the spot and took her to Netrokona Modern Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Her cousin Sohrab Hossain said, "She had just come home for Eid. When she tried to move the wire, the power returned. She likely died instantly, though we took her to the hospital without delay."

Barhatta police confirmed the incident. They said as the family did not lodge any complaint, the body was handed over to them.

BGB fires blanks as crowd tries to snatch detainee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) fired blank shots in Teknaf on Monday to disperse a mob that allegedly tried to snatch a yaba smuggler from their custody, the force said in a press release.

The incident occurred around 4:30pm near Khurangkhali Border Outpost (BOP) under BGB 64 (Ukhya Battalion), when a patrol team arrested Jahangir Alam -- an accused in a case filed by BGB on May 28 -- near the embankment adjacent to the BOP.

According to the press release signed by Lt Col Mohammad Jasim Uddin, commander of BGB 64, a group of 50-60 locals, including fishermen, gathered and began arguing with the BGB patrol team after the arrest. Although the team successfully brought the detainee back to the BOP, the group allegedly gathered again and attempted to surround the outpost in a bid to snatch Jahangir.

Following this, Jahangir's followers, including his relatives, alleged human traffickers, drug dealers, fishermen, and other locals, blocked the Teknaf-Cox's Bazar highway at Moulvibazar point using boats and burning tyres, the release added.



About 200 metres of the protective embankment near Naodoba Zero Point on the Padma Bridge in the Majhi Kandi area of Shariatpur collapsed into the river on Saturday morning due to erosion. Fearing further damage, three nearby shops were relocated. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Tidal surges damage 955 houses in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Monir Sardar, 45, a fisherman from Char Montaz union under Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila, and his four family members became homeless overnight as strong winds and tidal surges caused by a low-pressure system battered the coastline recently.

Since then, Monir has been living with his family in makeshift shanty near the sluice gate area. "We live hand-to-mouth by fishing in the sea. All we had was the house, and now it is gone. I have no means to build a new house. We need the government's support badly," he told this correspondent.

Monir is not alone. Many people in the upazila are facing similar plight after at least 60 houses were damaged and over 10,000 people were waterlogged following heavy rains and flooding. Many still remain confined to their homes as water has yet to fully recede in the low-lying areas.

Across Patuakhali, at least 955 houses were damaged -- including 460 in Kalapara, 300 in Dumki, 270 in Patuakhali Sadar, 105 in Bauphal, 60 in Rangabali, 56 in Galachipa, 20 in Mirzaganj, and 15 in Dashmina upazilas -- leaving hundreds of people homeless.

"Only a skeletal frame of my house now remains that is unfit to live in. Wind blew off the tin walls and roof, and tidal surge



washed away the floor. I can't afford repairs without assistance," said Abbas Hawlader, 50, another fisherman from Char Montaz.

Omar Sani of Madhya Chalitabunia village said the nearby embankment collapsed due to the tidal surge, causing inundation across the village. "My home was partially damaged. For us, surviving here along the coast is a lifelong battle," he added.

Md Iqbal Hasan, upazila nirbahi officer of Rangabali, said relief efforts are underway. "We are preparing a list

of the affected residents. Rehabilitation will begin once damage assessments are complete."

Md Delwar Hossain, district relief and rehabilitation officer in Patuakhali, said it will take a few more days to complete damage assessments.

"So far, 109 tonnes of rice have been allocated for distribution among victims across the district. Each upazila has also received nine lakh takas for purchasing corrugated tin for rebuilding damaged homes," he added.

Supreme Court

FROM PAGE 3

attempt by a despotic and fascist government to wrest the power of removal of judges from the Supreme Judicial Council and vest them in the hands of the Parliament, thereby putting the independence of Judges at stake."

"In other words, if a Judge, in the course of discharging his function, would incur the wrath or disfavour of the government, he/she could be removed from office by the stroke of a pen by the members of the parliament. Can such a situation be allowed or accepted in a democratic society? The answer, in my considered view, as has also been stated by my learned brothers in their respective judgments, is an emphatic 'No,'" said Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury, a judge of the Appellate Division bench, in the full text of verdict.

In the full text of the judgment, the apex court upheld its earlier verdict that reformulated the 39-point code of conduct for its judges with a view to avoiding any misgiving and confusion under article 96 of the constitution.

On October 20 last year, the Appellate Division, led by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, has delivered the verdict after disposing of a review petition filed by the previous government against a 2017 SC verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution that empowered parliament to

First return

FROM PAGE 3

Hajj this year, which officially began on June 4.

In total, 222 return flights will return pilgrims from Saudi Arabia to Bangladesh.

To facilitate smooth immigration procedures, dedicated counters have been set up under the supervision of the Immigration Police and Special Branch, with clear guidance provided to the president for action.

But when the High Court, in May 2016, scrapped the 16th amendment, parliament lost its power to deal with the matter. However, the council could not be made functional as the then government challenged the HC verdict at the Appellate Division.

Even after the Appellate Division upheld the HC verdict in July 2017, paving the way for making the council functional, the government filed a review petition, which created the legal stalemate.

In the full text of judgement, the Appellate Division observed that "The Civil Review Petition is disposed of unanimously with the observations. Resultantly, Article 96 of the Constitution stands restored in its entirety without any ambiguity whatsoever."

Justice Md Ashraful Kamal was appointed as an additional judge of the HC on December 12, 2010, for two years and his service was confirmed on December 10, 2012, during the regime of Sheikh Hasina-led government.

Eid tourism expected

FROM PAGE 4

Radiant Fish World, and the Dulahazra Safari Park.

Authorities, meanwhile, raised concerns over safety as the sea has been rough for several days, with parts of the beach forming dangerous pits and some areas experiencing reverse currents. Red flags have been raised to warn visitors, yet many continue to enter the water, ignoring the risks.

At least five bodies were recovered from the Cox's Bazar shoreline under Sadar upazila on Monday. Among the deceased, three were tourists, one

local and one unidentified person.

Security has been intensified, with Tourist Police, mobile units, and lifeguards working in coordination to manage the crowd.

Mobile courts are also operating to ensure tourists are not harassed and that rules are followed.

Mohammad Sifatullah Sifat, a senior member of Sea Safe Lifeguard, said,

"Our team is monitoring from towers, patrolling the beach, and using boats in the water. However, tourists themselves must stay alert for their own safety."

Dhaka's air remains

FROM PAGE 3

groups"; between 151 and 200 is "unhealthy"; 201 to 300 is classified as "very unhealthy"; and anything above 301 is deemed "hazardous", posing serious health risks.

India's Delhi, Iraq's Baghdad, and Kuwait's Kuwait City occupied the top three spots on the list with AQI scores of 174, 157, and 153 respectively.

The AQI, a daily reporting index, informs the public about how clean or polluted a city's air is and the possible health implications.

In Bangladesh, the AQI is calculated based on five pollutants: particulate

matter (PM10 and PM2.5), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and ozone (O₃).

Dhaka has long struggled with air pollution. Its air quality typically deteriorates in winter and improves during the monsoon.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution causes an estimated seven million deaths globally each year, mainly due to increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections.

This year, cowhide was sold for Tk 600 to Tk 700 per piece, he added.

In the Rangpur division,

Low rawhide prices frustrates

FROM PAGE 3

He noted their target was to collect 100,000 hides this Eid, of which they had gathered around 80,000.

The government recently relaxed export restrictions on raw and wet blue leather for three months to boost local demand and prices. It also disbursed Tk 220 crore in incentives.

PRICES LOWER OUTSIDE DHAKA

In Chattogram, rawhide traders struggled to sell their stock, with many households forced to donate or dispose of unsold hides due to a lack of buyers.

Despite official price announcements, most transactions occurred at significantly lower rates.

Abdus Sabur from Halishahar said no one came to buy his cowhide, and he eventually donated it. A similar situation was reported in other areas.

Seasonal trader Atikur Rahman bought 170 cowhides at Tk 350 each but had to sell them for Tk 250 apiece.

Moslem Uddin, former vice president of the Chattogram Rawhide Warehouse Traders' Cooperative Association, said government rates apply only to processed hides.

According to him, around 400,000 hides were collected over two days -- Eid day and the following day.

On Monday, Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin said Bangladesh's leather industry has been struggling for 15 years and cannot recover quickly

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JUNE 11, 2025

JAISHTHA 28, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

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Indurhat-Jilbari road renovation halted for months

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

The renovation work of a two-kilometre stretch of road between the Indurhat and Jilbari areas under Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila has remained halted for more than a year.

The 5km rural road serves as an important route connecting Nesarabad and Nazirpur upazilas. At present, a 3km stretch of the road, including the 2km under renovation, lies in a sorry state, with vehicular movement halted for a long time. As such, thousands of local residents have been facing immense suffering in their daily commutes.

The Local Government Engineering Department in Pirojpur initiated renovation of the 2km stretch of road through Jilbari and Binna villages under the Important Rural Infrastructure Development Project (IRIDP-3) in April 2023. The work order for the Tk 2.75 crore project was awarded to Efte ETCL (Pvt) Ltd, with a one-year deadline.

However, before the deadline expired in April last year, the contractor firm halted the work after completing only around 40 percent of the renovation.

"Nesarabad is a local commercial hub. Several thousand people come here from Nazirpur and other

neighbouring areas daily for different purposes. They have to bear immense hassle during their commute," said Azharul Islam Tutul from Jilbari village.

Meanwhile, another 1km stretch of the road has also become dilapidated and unfit for vehicular movement. So, people are now being compelled to commute either on foot or using waterways via engine-boats, said Anwar Hossain, an elderly resident.

Mehedi Hasan, another local, urged the authorities concerned to renovate the 3km damaged portion of the road to mitigate people's suffering.

Contacted, Md Raisul Islam, upazila engineer in Nesarabad, said they have had no communication with the contractor firm.

"We have informed higher authorities in this regard. We have also sent a proposal for renovation of the other one-kilometre damaged part," he added.

Allegedly, Merazul Islam, managing director of the contractor firm, fled the country after withdrawing Tk 2,000 crore from the fund for eight projects in the district, including this one, according to LGED sources.

Following this incident, most of the development works of the LGED in Pirojpur have remained suspended.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed eight cases accusing Merazul of embezzling around Tk 1,073 crore from eight projects of LGED in Pirojpur, said Md Aminul Islam, deputy director of the ACC Integrated District Office in Pirojpur.

"We are also investigating nine other projects to find out if there was any corruption in them," he said.

Merazul is the former chairman of Pirojpur's Bandaria Upazila Parishad and also general secretary of the upazila unit Awami League. His elder brother, Mohiuddin Maharaj, is a former Pirojpur-2 lawmaker.

are finding it difficult to recover their capital.

Tariqul Islam from Gangachara upazila borrowed Tk 3 lakh and bought each cowhide for Tk 100-200, expecting to sell them for up to Tk 1,000.

"The current offers don't even cover processing costs," he said.

Similar frustrations were echoed by traders in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, and Nilphamari, who now face high storage costs and declining leather quality due to inadequate preservation facilities.

In Moulvibazar, madrasas and orphanages, which traditionally rely on rawhide sales for funding, were shocked to find hide prices drop to Tk 250-300 on Eid day.

Md Shakawat Ullah, senior vice chairman of the Bangladesh Tanners Association, said the supply of cowhides is good this year, with a higher proportion of smaller hides.

He said prices have increased by Tk 100 to Tk 150 per hide compared to last year.

According to him, around 400,000 hides were collected over two days -- Eid day and the following day.

On Monday, Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin said Bangladesh's leather industry has been struggling for 15 years and cannot recover quickly.

As a result, China has become the main buyer of Bangladeshi leather, but the Chinese offer lower prices.

LAW VISION

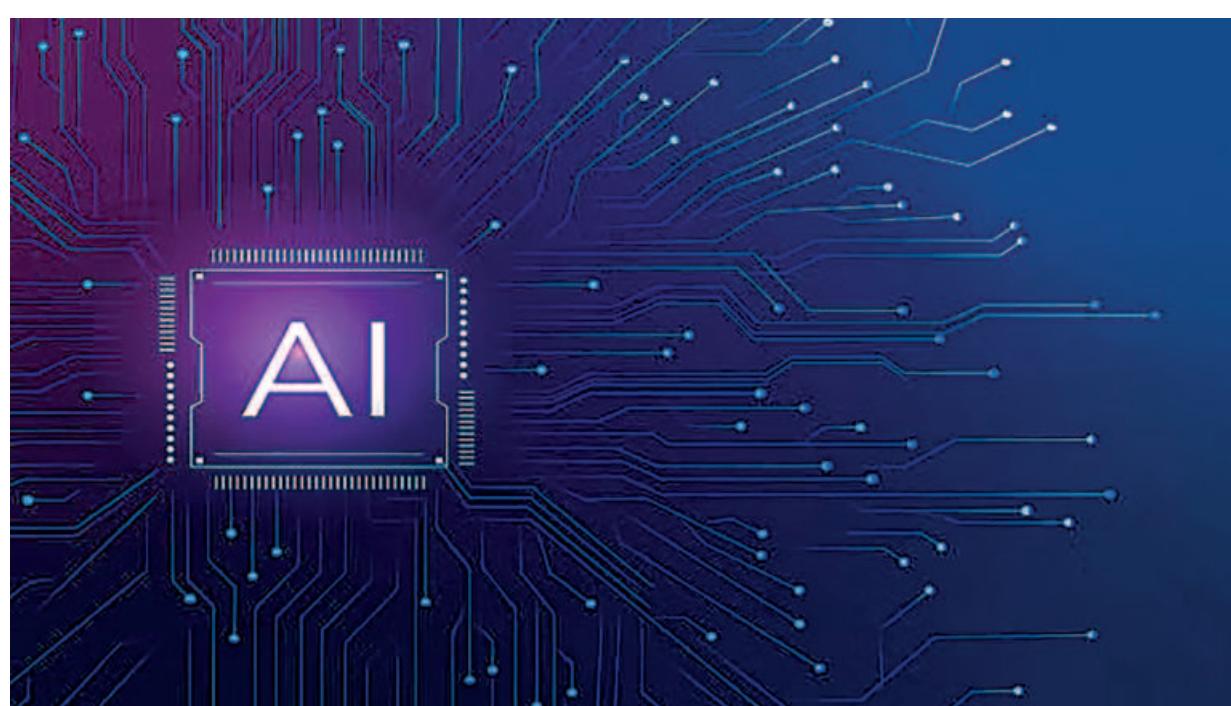
WHEN ROBOTS GO ROGUE: Who's accountable in the digital workplace?

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work reminds us that technological progress must not come at the cost of human life. We cannot afford to be dazzled by AI and robotics without building the legal frameworks that keep them in check.

ROBAYET FERDOUS SYED

On April 28, the world observes the World Day for Safety and Health at Work—a day specified by the UN to reflect on how to make workplaces safer. The theme for 2025 is strikingly modern: "Revolutionizing health and safety: the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalization at work." This theme speaks to a transformation already underway. Robots now carry out dangerous, repetitive tasks in factories. AI-driven platforms manage gig workers' schedules. Wearable tech monitors miners' heart rates in real time. Sensors can detect gas leaks before humans smell a thing. These technologies can save lives, boost productivity, and eliminate jobs that once led to deaths or injuries. Yet they also raise a troubling question: when something goes terribly wrong, who is to blame—the machine or the human behind it?

Let's begin with some real examples. In 2023, a factory worker in South Korea was killed when an industrial robot mistakenly identified him as a box and crushed him. Investigations revealed lack of proper programming and sensor calibration. In Arizona, a self-driving Uber car killed a pedestrian in 2018. The safety driver was distracted, but the AI failed to recognise the woman as a person. Prosecutors debated whether the driver, Uber, or the algorithm was at fault. In Amazon's warehouses, AI-powered systems track worker productivity. Workers have complained that the system penalises them for taking restroom breaks. In some cases, this pressure has reportedly led to exhaustion, injury, and even heart failure. In 2024, a gas leak at a semi-automated dyeing factory in Bangladesh killed three workers after an unmonitored early



warning system failed. These examples highlight the incredible potential—and the unprecedented risks—of AI and automation in the workplace.

Who is Responsible? Suppose a robot malfunctions or an AI system leads to a workplace fatality. Is it the fault of the software engineer who built it? The manager who deployed it? The company that owns it? Or is the AI itself—trained, adapted, and increasingly autonomous—the culprit?

The problem is that most legal systems don't yet have an answer. In countries like Bangladesh, there are no clear laws on liability when AI or robots cause harm. Courts are left to rely on existing tort and criminal law, which were built for human conduct—not autonomous machines.

At the center of this legal confusion are two competing schools of thought: Fiction Theory and Reality Theory. The fiction theory views AI, robots, and corporations as legal fiction—not real persons but tools created by humans. These entities can only act through real people. They have no conscience, no emotions, no "guilty mind" (or *mens rea*). Hence, if something goes wrong, it must be because a human erred. By this view, for a robot arm that crushes a worker, the fault lies with the factory supervisor or the programming team. An AI scheduling tool that drives workers to burnout, is in fact, a management policy issue. For a digital sensor that fails to sound an alarm, its engineers are to be blamed.

This approach upholds human

responsibility and avoids blaming "dumb" machines. But it also has loopholes. What if no specific human can be identified? What if an autonomous system, learning on its own, develops harmful behavior over time? Does that mean no one is responsible?

In contrast, the reality theorists argue that legal entities—such as corporations, and potentially AI systems—are real actors with their own "will" and "body." Just as a company can be sued, fined, or even held criminally liable in some countries, so too could an AI system or robot be treated as a juristic person. Under this theory, AI systems could be held liable for causing injury or death, face fines or operational bans, or similarly, trigger

compensation payouts from mandatory insurance schemes. A legal entity, like an AI-managed logistics firm, is no longer a tool but a collective actor. Just how a football team function as a unit, the AI system and its human "organs"—engineers, managers, users—operate together and can be blamed when required as a whole.

As workplaces around the world—including in Bangladesh—adopt automation, AI, and smart devices, governments must not lag behind. A few urgent steps are necessary to revolutionize workplace safety. First, policymakers must clarify whether and how AI and robots can be held liable, especially in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, and logistics. Second, just as drivers need auto insurance, companies deploying autonomous systems should be required to carry insurance that compensates victims of malfunctions. Third, all workplace AI systems should be subject to independent safety audits and required to pass usability and risk tests—just like elevators or pressure boilers. Importantly, laws must clearly establish who is responsible when harm occurs: the programmer, the operator, the company—or the AI entity itself. Finally, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) laws need urgent revision to address risks unique to digital systems—like mental stress from surveillance, or ergonomic injuries from automated work pacing.

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work reminds us that technological progress must not come at the cost of human life. We cannot afford to be dazzled by AI and robotics without building the legal frameworks that keep them in check.

The writer is law faculty at Southeast University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

REVISITING LAWS

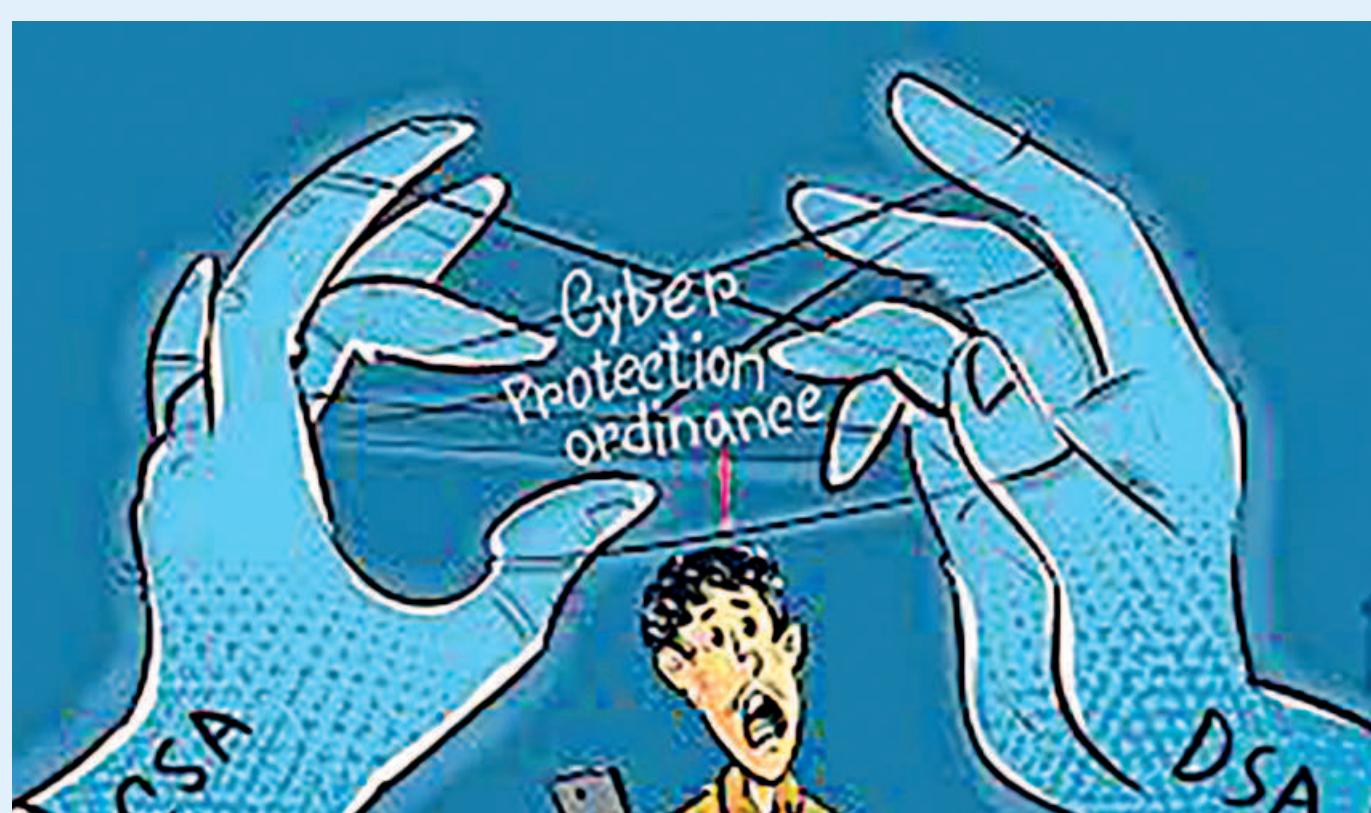
CYBER SECURITY LAWS IN BANGLADESH: The ties that bind our past and present

REZOAN ASRAF

The cyber legal landscape of Bangladesh has witnessed a phase of transition in recent years, initially marked by the repealing of the controversial Digital Security Act (DSA), 2018 with the Cyber Security Act (CSA), 2023 and now replacing the Cyber Security Act with the Cyber Protection Ordinance (CPO), 2025. Even though every modification was presented by the government(s) as the betterment in the preservation of civil liberties alongside the protection of digital accessibility, legal experts and human rights activists have largely been concerned about there being mere re-labeling instead of substantive reforms.

The CSA, passed in September 2023, was brought in amid increasing domestic protests and continuing international criticism of the DSA's repressive provisions. While promoted as a liberal response to calls for protecting digital rights, the CSA retained the problematic areas from the previous law. Notably, section 42(1)(d) of the CSA retained the DSA's notorious provision regarding arrest without warrant, in the case of "reasonable suspicion" which continued to pose threats to whistleblowers, journalists, and dissidents. Section 29 also retained criminal defamation, a violation of international human rights standards that favor civil remedies over penal sanctions for defamation.

Although the Act made certain offenses bailable and capped maximum penalties, it did not address the fundamental flaws in the predecessor. The phrasing remained vague, judicial oversight continued to be lax, and enforcement continued to be under the control of potentially biased actors. Amnesty International's report in August 2024 labeled the CSA as a missed opportunity, noting that it failed to live up to the standards of Bangladesh's international human rights commitments.



Enacted on May 21, 2025, the CPO replaced the CSA and formed part of the interim government's expressed commitment to re-establish democratic credibility and freedom of expression following the controversially contested national elections earlier in 2024. On paper at least, the CPO introduces several promising reforms. First, the ordinance repeals nine contentious provisions of the CSA, including provisions restricting speech that is critical of the Liberation War, national leaders, and constitutional institutions. It also introduces judicial oversight in case of content removals

ordered by the government. Courts are required to review these actions afterwards and restore the content if the removal is found to be unjustified.

Significantly, the CPO is the first South Asian legal instrument to refer to cybercrimes using artificial intelligence (AI), acknowledging the emerging and evolving threats of deepfakes, AI-generated dis- and misinformation, and autonomous hacking networks. It also criminalises online sexual harassment of women and children with stricter sentencing guidelines and an apparent attempt to make definitions clearer, although the language remains

vague and overly broad, still leaving scope for misinterpretation and potential abuse.

Furthermore, the CPO also brought forth an ideological shift by proclaiming internet access as a civil right and embracing the worldwide digital rights movement that sees connectivity as indispensable for education, work, and civic life in general.

Despite these reforms, there are several structural problems that remain. Under section 35(1)(d) the CPO still has a version of section 42, empowering warrantless arrests in situations concerning threats to national security using cyberterrorism, yet subject to a new proviso of post-arrest

judicial review. However, critics argue that the judicial review mechanism offers limited protection in practice, as the broad and undefined scope of cyber-attack may still facilitate arbitrary arrests. On top of that, defamation remains a criminal offense under Section 28 of the ordinance, where it still complicates its definition.

Finally, some argue that the promulgation of the ordinance by an interim, unelected government, not subject to parliamentary debate, undermines its democratic legitimacy. The process was not transparent and subject to public consultation as such, two important hallmarks of responsible lawmaking in a constitutional democracy.

The transformation from the DSA to the CSA and then again to the CPO reflects a process of reactive regulation rather than true legal reform. Real reform indeed demands more than a change in acronyms or redrafting of provisions. Structural change is necessary: clear definition of cybercrimes, unqualified judicial discretion for content control, robust safeguards for online journalism and whistleblowing, and regulation or criminalisation of hate speech under well-structured guidelines.

In the long run, the government must conduct inclusive law-making processes with technologists, journalists, legal scholars, civil society groups, and the wider public. Then only can Bangladesh expect to enact a cyber law protecting its virtual boundary without compromising the democratic values of openness, accountability, and individual liberty. Although the CPO 2025 is an advancement in some ways at least, it is not yet a transformative legal instrument that the people of Bangladesh including the human rights defenders have longed for.

The writer studies law at the University of Dhaka and is official contributor at the Law Desk.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

An evening of evoked memories and renewed belief

ANISUR RAHMAN

Anticipation was high, yet the scenes at the newly renovated National Stadium still amazed as the entire premises transformed into a sea of white -- the color of Bangladesh's home jersey -- as Bangladesh prepared to face Singapore in a much-hyped Asian Cup Qualifier yesterday.

For some experts and fans from all over the country, it was a sign of football's revival in Bangladesh. For others, the buzzing atmosphere evoked memories from two decades ago.

"I think the atmosphere is similar to what we witnessed during the SAFF Championship final in 2003," said former goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee, part of that SAFF winning squad.

Biplob, among the sea of white-clad fans in the stands, attributed the renewed enthusiasm to the inclusion of expatriates recently joining the team.

"This sudden change in public interest must be credited to players like Hamza [Choudhury], Shamit Shome, and Fahmedul [Islam]. They transformed the team's outlook and reignited people's dreams about our football," he said.



For Bangladesh women's team captain Afeida Khandakar, the scene brought back memories from her own experiences.

"The full stadium looked different. I only remember such a full house when the women's team played the SAFF Championship in Kamalapur," said the 18-year-old, eagerly awaiting to see Hamza, Shamit, and others.

Spectators arrived early, hoping to secure their seats well before the 5:00 pm deadline set by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), which had issued six-point spectator guidelines based on lessons from the recent FIFA friendly against Bhutan.

Enthusiasm was high as fans showed little concern for the long wait -- especially after Hamza's much-anticipated debut

against India earlier this year.

Among the crowd were children and elderly alike, many wearing the new all-white Bangladesh kit. The stadium grounds turned festive, with co-sponsors setting up fan zones, selfie stages, and mini games, including a goalpost challenge with prizes.

A group of Bashundhara Kings supporters near Dainik Bangla More, proudly wearing national jerseys,



traveled from districts such as Cumilla, Munshiganj, and Satkhira.

"We're always there -- from domestic leagues to international friendlies," said Mehdi Hasan.

Arafat Sheikh from Munshiganj shared a bittersweet thought: "My father wanted

to come today, but I had only one ticket."

For Sheikh Rabiu Islam of Satkhira, this was a first. "I've never seen the national team live. With Hamza and Shamit [Shome] joining, this team feels different. There's hope."

Satkhira's Asadul Islam, who had stopped watching football years ago, returned with renewed faith. "I think Bangladesh will fight hard today. Afeida Khandakar (women's team captain) gave me this ticket. I couldn't miss it."

Three friends -- Samiul, Arif, and Zahid -- came from Cumilla to see Hamza, Jamal, and Shamit live. Samiul noted his Tk 400 ticket was offered for resale at Tk 2,000, but he declined. "Watching from the gallery is priceless," he said.

Inside, former national players, women's national team members, and referees entered with complimentary tickets. Outside, some desperate fans still searched for tickets.

Much waiting and anticipation culminated yesterday evening. However, as Mohammedan coach and former national striker, Alfaz Ahmed, said, "a victory can erase the pain of spectators' long wait." Unfortunately, that was not the case as the hosts suffered a 2-1 defeat.

Australia aim to defend crown against hungry South Africa

REUTERS

Australia will have to dust off the cobwebs but are still fancied to successfully defend their World Test Championship crown against equally ring-rusty South Africa in the final at Lord's, starting on Wednesday.

The five-day clash comes on the heels of a plethora of limited-overs cricket over the last five months and both teams have been scrambling to prepare for a high-profile return to the red-ball game.

Australia have not played a Test since beating Sri Lanka in Galle in February when

they made sure of a top-two finish in the standings from results for the 2023-25 WTC cycle.

South Africa were assured of top place when they won their last Test against Pakistan at home in January to book a first-ever finals appearance.

It came on the back of a run of seven successive wins, but the fact they did not play against the Aussies or England has seen their achievement dismissed as too easy.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan said they reached the final "on the back of

beating pretty much nobody," which was a result of the lopsided Test schedule where Australia, England, and India dominate and South Africa elect to play more financially lucrative limited-overs internationals.

But an upset win for South Africa could change that.

"It's the biggest thing in this team's existence. It's the biggest thing for South African cricket at the moment," said their coach Shukri Conrad.

Meanwhile, June 16 has been reserved as an additional day if there are any weather delays.



It's a trophy we've spoken a lot about over the last couple of years. Test cricket is my favourite format. You've got to basically win in all different conditions to make it into this final. If we can retain that mace, that's a pretty awesome thing for this team.

Australia captain Pat Cummins

Enough has been spoken about that [they played only 12 Tests over the two-year 2023-25 cycle while Australia played seven more] to be honest. We are quietly confident going into this game that we can pull one over them. We're a confident bunch, we play well as a unit, and if there are any vulnerabilities among them (Australia), I'm sure we'd be able to exploit that.

South Africa coach Shukri Conrad

Lack of quality WC preparation a concern for Tigresses

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

With the ICC Women's World Cup set to get underway in 110 days' time in India and Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, unlike other teams, are sticking only with skill and fitness camps on home soil.

This exposes a lack of vision from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), which failed in recognising the players' and selectors' urge for preparing with international matches for a side that were the last to qualify for the eight-team mega event by finishing second in the qualifiers in Pakistan's Lahore in April.

"Whatever work you do, if your preparation isn't up to the mark, you won't get the expected result," vice captain Nahida Akter told The Daily Star yesterday.

What makes it worse is that the team's preparation itinerary seems to remain unchanged, with the Tigresses now set for a two-week-long skill camp, which is set to begin on June 13 in Mirpur, only because the BCB made late communications with other boards.

"All the teams are currently



playing, and we also want to play matches. But as all the teams are currently busy, I think that's why the board is finding it hard to arrange international matches before the World Cup," added Nahida, who plans to prepare herself through the upcoming Bangladesh Women's Cricket League, which is scheduled to take place in August, and national team camps.

Opener Farzana Hoque Pinky also feels the necessity of more organised training schedules

in the coming days, which she believes to give their preparation a good shape before the World Cup.

"After the World Cup qualifiers, we are taking preparation for the main event by doing skill and fitness camps. But, still, international matches are international matches. If we can play one or two series before the World Cup, we can have better preparation," she said.

"If we can do quality practice, we can expect to do better. The

World Cup isn't an easy place to perform. If we are more organised with our preparation, it would have been better," said Farzana, who also feels the necessity of having full-time batting, bowling, and fielding coaches in the team.

The women's team is currently looked after by head coach Sarwar Imran, while Nasiruddin Faruque (batting coach), Humayun Kabir Shahin (spin coach), and Alamgir Kabir (pace bowling coach) are assisting him.

When contacted, BCB's women's wing chairman, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, informed that they are not thinking of bringing change in the coaching set-up before the World Cup, but claimed that they are still communicating with other cricket boards to give the team some international exposure before the World Cup.

"Arranging international matches was important as it could give a similar vibe as part of World Cup preparation. We are still trying to arrange something differently, like playing against a top team's B side. But nothing is confirmed yet," Fahim told The Daily Star.

'Gaza war hurts my whole body'

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola received an honorary doctorate from the University of Manchester on Monday and used his acceptance speech to address the war in Gaza.

The war erupted after Hamas-led militants took 251 hostages and killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, in the October 7, 2023 attack. Israel's military campaign has since killed more than 54,000 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to health authorities in Gaza.

"It's so painful what we see in Gaza. It hurts my whole body," Guardiola said. "It's not about ideology. It's not about whether I'm right, or you're wrong. It's just about the love of life, about the care of your neighbour."



"Maybe we think that we see the boys and girls of four years old being killed by the bomb or being killed at the hospital because it's not a hospital anymore. It's not our business."

"But be careful. The next four or five year old kids will be ours. Sorry, but I see my kids, Maria, Marius and Valentina. When I see every morning since the nightmare started the infants in Gaza, and I'm so scared."

Guardiola was recognised for his contribution to the city, including guiding his team to six Premier League titles in nine years with the club, along with his charitable work through his Guardiola Sala Foundation.

The 54-year-old Spaniard was presented with his honorary degree by the University's Chancellor Nazir Afzal at Whitworth Hall.

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Ex-president Abdul Hamid returns home

STAR REPORT

After his departure caused an uproar a month ago, former President Abdul Hamid has returned to the country following medical treatment in Bangkok.

The former Awami League lawmaker and two-time president arrived at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at around 1:30am Monday on a Thai Airways flight (TG-339), said official sources.

He was brought down from the aircraft in a wheelchair.

According to airport sources, Hamid proceeded to the immigration counter at 1:45am and left the airport around 3:00am.

On May 8, Hamid departed on Thai Airways flight TG-340, triggering widespread criticism and raising questions about how a person declared in a July uprising related case was able to leave the country.

"The former president went to Thailand for medical treatment. We allowed it as there is no court restriction or any embargo by any agency against him," an HSIA source told The Daily Star then.

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Islamist group drives tourists away in Sylhet

Screening of 'Taandob' stopped in Tangail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Islamist groups disrupted Eid celebrations in Sylhet and Tangail in separate incidents over allegations of promoting "immorality" and "obscenity".

In Sylhet, people visiting the Utmachhara tourist spot in Companiganj on Sunday (the first day of Eid) were asked to leave by members of the Companiganj Jubo Jamiat, the youth wing of Jamiat Ulema-e Islam Bangladesh.

In a video that has since gone viral, the group members are heard telling visitors to leave the area and not return, claiming that local Islamic scholars and residents had agreed to bar tourism on account of "immoral activities, including drinking and indecent behaviour".

The incident occurred at Charar Bazar in Uttar Ranikhai union, a scenic location featuring large riverbed stones that typically attract many visitors from within and outside the district, especially during holidays.

"In the name of tourism, people are harming our environment and negatively influencing our youth," said Mufti Ruhul Amin Siraj, vice-president of the Companiganj Jubo Jamiat.

He admitted to being part of the

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A Palestinian girl mourns over the body of one of three paramedics killed by Israeli bombardment in the Tuffah neighbourhood, during a funeral at the Sheikh Radwan Clinic in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

29 dead, 153 hurt in road crashes since June 5

STAR REPORT

At least 29 people were killed and 153 others injured in road crashes in 16 districts since June 5.

In Bagerhat, a man died and eight others were injured after a bus crashed into a tree in Fakirhat early yesterday.

The driver and seven other passengers were injured, he added.

In Narsingdi, three young men were killed after their motorcycle was hit by a bus on Monday night, said Ismail Hossain, station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Shibpur.

The deceased, Saiful Islam, 22, Ashiq, 22, and Apu, 20, were residents of Mirzakanadi village in the upazila.

In Khulna, two people were killed and four others injured in a head-on collision between a truck and an electric three-wheeler near Rupsha bridge early Monday, reports UNB.

The victims are three-wheeler driver Rafiqul Islam, 56, and passenger Tanzil, 12, said Abdur Rahim, OC of Lobonchora Police Station.

In Barishal's Gournadi upazila on Sunday night, at least 30 passengers were injured in a collision involving four buses on Dhaka Barishal highway, said police.

In Faridpur, Riyan Hossain, 20, of Dasar upazila in Madaripur, was killed and another injured when a bus hit their

motorcycle in Bhanga upazila on Sunday evening, said Mohammad Rokibuzzaman, OC of Bhanga Highway Police Station.

In Matlab, Chandpur, three-wheeler driver Siddiqur Rahman, 50, and a man named Tapan Choudhury, 35, were killed and six others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and an auto-

The victims were residents of Nabinagar, Brahmanbaria, police said.

In Munshiganj, Akash Hawlader, 33, was killed when his motorcycle collided with another bike on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway on Saturday.

He was a resident of Shariatpur, said firefighters.



rickshaw on Sunday afternoon, said Saleh Ahmed, OC of Matlab South Police Station.

In Araihaazar, Narayanganj, Khaleda Begum, 55, and her daughter-in-law Farzana Begum, 22, died after an auto-rickshaw fell into the Meghna river from a ferry at Bishnandi terminal on Saturday.

In Lalmonirhat, at least 55 people were injured after a bus crashed into a roadside ditch in Budartal area early Saturday, said Lalmonirhat sadar police.

In Pakundia, Kishoreganj, Dulal Mia, 45, and Shahab Uddin, 55, of Pakundia upazila, and Sarwar Hossain, 15, of

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

We were kidnapped in international waters: Thunberg

Israeli gunfire kills 17 Palestinians near aid site

AGENCIES

Swedish activist Greta Thunberg said yesterday she was kidnapped in international waters by Israeli forces as she arrived in Paris Charles de Gaulle airport after being deported from Israel.

"We were kidnapped in international waters," she told reporters at her arrival in Paris. Thunberg, 22, arrived in Paris a day after the Israeli navy prevented her and a group of fellow pro-Palestinian activists from sailing to Gaza.

Israeli forces boarded the charity vessel as it neared Gaza early on Monday, trying to break through a years-old naval blockade of the coastal enclave, and seized the 12-strong crew, including Thunberg.

Thunberg was put on a flight to France, the Israeli foreign ministry said, adding that she would travel to Sweden from there.

Meanwhile, Israeli gunfire killed at least 17 Palestinians and wounded dozens as thousands of displaced people approached an aid distribution site of a US-backed humanitarian group in central Gaza yesterday, local health authorities said.

Medics said the casualties were rushed to two hospitals, the Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, and the Al-Quds in Gaza City, in the north.

The Israeli military said they are looking into the incident. Last week it warned Palestinians not to approach routes leading to sites of the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) between 6:00 pm and 6:00 am local time, describing these roads as closed military zones.



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Lost Rodin 'copy' sells for \$1m

AFP, Rennes

The owners thought the sculpture perched for years on the corner of a piano was a Rodin copy, but after being declared as the real thing the small marble figure has now sold for one million dollars at auction, organisers said Monday.

Described as an "extremely rare" find by auction organiser Aymeric Rouillac, the figure was in fact an 1892 work, "Despair" by Auguste Rodin, that had gone missing after being sold at auction in 1906.

The work was put on sale at the weekend at an opening price of 500,000 euros, but eventually sold for 860,000 euros (one million dollars), according to Rouillac.

The family had long believed the 28.5 centimetre (11 inch) figure of a sitting woman holding one foot was a copy of the legendary sculptor's work, said Rouillac.

After the owners approached Rouillac about another matter, he and his team spent months investigating the origin of the sculpture, including even looking into the family's origins.

He went to the Comité Rodin in March and the body that is considered the leading authority on the French artist confirmed its authenticity six weeks later.



Tourist attractions across the country have been seeing a lot of visitors during the Eid vacation. The photo of tourists bathing in the rocky bed of the Dhalai river in Sylhet was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Kachharibari of Tagore attacked after 'quarrel over parking'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A group of people attacked the historic Rabindra Kachharibari in Sirajganj's Shahjadpur upazila yesterday. The attack stemmed from a quarrel between the staff and a local visitor over motorcycle parking on Sunday, police and locals said.

The attackers, mostly young men, broke open the entrance around 11:30am and vandalised the auditorium, doors, and windows, said Habibur Rahman, custodian of the Kachharibari.

The mansion, which houses a memorial museum named after the Nobel laureate, remained unharmed, he said.

"There were visitors at the site who panicked due to the sudden attack. We took shelter during the attack and informed police immediately," Habibur said.

"The staffers tried to resist as the attackers marched toward the museum. By this time, police had rushed to the spot and stopped the attackers," he said, adding that five

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