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## People ready, time right for the election

Yunus says about April timeline at Chatham House event

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

April 2026 is the right time for holding the general election and people are ready for it, Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus said in a question-answer session at Chatham House in London yesterday.

Replying to a query from Chatham House Director and Chief Executive Bronwen Maddox about the controversy over the election timeline, Prof Yunus said, "Well, I keep saying that we will have the most beautiful election we ever had in our history. The time is right. People are ready."

On a question from the audience as to whether he would be willing to be part of the next government, the CA said, "No way. No way. No way."

"I believe none of our cabinet members would want to do that. That's not our role. Our job is to manage a smooth transition and ensure the people are happy when we hand over power to the elected government. For us, ensuring a credible election is absolutely critical. If the election process is flawed, the whole issue will never be resolved."

Yunus reached London on Tuesday morning on a four-day visit, and is expected to hold a meeting with BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman tomorrow when they are likely to discuss the next election and other political issues.

Asked whether the interim government was excluding the Awami League and others who disagree with the proposed July Charter, Yunus said, "Yeah, well, there's a debate about that too. Is the Awami League a political party? If they can kill young people in the street, make people disappear, steal money – would you still call that a political party? That's the debate. This is not a judgment."

**In the interest of the country's safety – politically and socially – the nation has decided that, for the time being, the activities of the Awami League will be suspended.**

Chief Adviser  
Prof Muhammad Yunus



He said that after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country on August 5 last year, people thought that the chapter is closed and that it was the end of such acts by Awami League. "But those who fled – for them, it didn't end. They continued the same activities in absentia, from abroad, inciting people, causing unrest. So for them, it continues."

"We no longer feel safe out there on the streets.... So in the interest of the country's safety – politically and socially – the nation has decided that, for the time being, the activities of the Awami League will be suspended. That's all we've done. We haven't banned the Awami League. We haven't taken any permanent action. We're waiting until the trial is over – just the trial of those individuals involved [in the atrocities]."

An audience member pointed out that the interim government was silent when the house of Bangladesh's first president, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was demolished, and that the incident divided people and supporters of certain individuals or groups felt excluded. The audience member then asked Prof Yunus how he plans to bring about reform and unity in Bangladesh against this backdrop.

The CA replied, "Many issues hit us all at once. We couldn't handle everything immediately. It took time to bring things under control. One of our biggest tasks was restoring order."

He added that the people didn't trust the police when the interim government was formed. "So we had a deadlock. The police were afraid to do their jobs, and the people didn't accept them. It took time. But thankfully, I can report that things have calmed down now. People are beginning to accept the police again."

Commenting on a question regarding referendums on whether people want reforms, he said the interim government would not opt for

RELATED STORY ON B1

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## Starmer declines to meet Yunus tracking down missing billions'

Reports Financial Times

STAR REPORT

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has declined a request to meet Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, who is visiting London to garner support for efforts to recover billions allegedly laundered abroad by the deposed Sheikh Hasina regime, reports the Financial Times.

Yunus told the British daily that the UK should feel "morally" obliged to help his government track down funds "stolen" by the Awami League led regime, much of it allegedly now in the UK.

However, Yunus said Starmer had not yet agreed to meet him.

"I have no direct conversation with him," Yunus said, adding that he had "no doubt" Starmer would support Bangladesh's efforts.

"This is stolen money," he said of the misappropriated funds.

According to the FT report, UK government officials confirmed that there were no plans for Starmer to meet Yunus and declined to comment further.

The UK government was already

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A BURST OF GREEN AND GOLD ... With the arrival of jackfruit and pineapple season, boats loaded with the seasonal delights crowd the waters of Samata ghat in Rangamati's Banarupa. Growers from across the district flock here, turning the ghat into a floating hub of trade, colour, and community. PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## Avoid all forms of public gatherings

DGHS urges people as Covid cases soar, issues 11-point advisory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health authorities yesterday issued an 11 point directive for the general public and suspected Covid-19 patients amid a rise in cases both within the country and in neighbouring nations.

The directives include an appeal to avoid all forms of public gatherings.

They also make wearing masks mandatory in crowded places. People have also been advised to wear masks to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses.

Prof Md Abu Jafor, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), announced the directives at a press conference held at the DGHS headquarters in the capital.

"We want to create awareness among people, not spread panic," he said, adding that the health ministry and DGHS are working jointly with relevant ministries and agencies regarding Covid-19 tests, medicine, protective equipment, and related issues.

Replying to a question, he said their directive for people to avoid public gatherings will also be applicable to political activities.

The directives came after the Covid infection rate last month reached a 29-month high, and there was a Covid-19 linked death on June 5

**The sick are advised to stay indoors**

**New variants of Omicron detected in the country**

**10 tested positive out of 107 samples yesterday**

**DGHS says guideline meant for political activities too**

after a long gap.

In the last 24 hours, 10 people tested positive out of 107 samples collected from Dhaka, according to the DGHS. The number was 13 out of 101 in the previous 24 hours.

Meanwhile, our correspondents in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar, citing local health officials, said two people – one in each district – have been tested positive.

Prof Jafor said the infection rate in the country is still lower than in neighbouring countries.

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**The poor to get Tk 37,076cr next fiscal year**  
**Allocation to go to 39 safety net programmes**

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

The interim government proposed a new framework for social safety net programmes, under which 7.68 crore poor people would receive Tk 37,076 crore next fiscal year to help them cushion the blow from high inflation over the last three years.

As many as 39 pro poor programmes were separated from the social safety programmes this fiscal year on the recommendation of the EU, according to the report styled 'Journey Towards an Equitable Society: Social Security Budget Report 2025-26'.

Key examples include major cash transfer allowances for vulnerable populations, food security and price relief programmes and public works and livelihood programmes that employ the poor segment of society.

The objectives for segmenting the 39 programmes are to closely monitor progress and outcomes in poverty reduction and vulnerability mitigation and set short- and long-term goals to reduce extreme poverty, vulnerability, marginalisation and inequality.

High targeting effectiveness means minimising leakage to the non poor and maximising inclusion of those in need, according to the report.

Individuals who earn less than Tk 1.95 lakh per year are considered poor and households whose annual income is

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## IMMIGRATION RAIDS US cities brace for more protests LA police make 'mass arrests' in areas under curfew

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Several US cities yesterday braced for protests against President Donald Trump's sweeping immigration raids, as parts of the country's second largest city Los Angeles spent the night under curfew in an effort to quell five days of unrest.

The Governor of Texas, Republican Greg Abbott, said he will deploy the National Guard this week, ahead of planned protests. Protesters and police in Austin clashed on Monday.

Trump's extraordinary measures of sending National Guard and Marines to quell protests in Los Angeles has sparked a national debate on the use of military on US soil and pitted the Republican president against California's Democrat governor.

"This brazen abuse of power by a sitting president inflamed a combustible situation, putting our people, our officers and even our National Guard at risk. That's when the downward spiral began," California Governor Gavin Newsom said in a video address on Tuesday.

"He again chose escalation. He chose more force. He chose theatrics over public safety... Democracy is under assault."

Newsom, widely seen as preparing for a



Law enforcement officers detain a demonstrator during a protest against federal immigration sweeps near the US immigration court at the Jacob K Javits Federal Building in New York City, US, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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## Security at Utmachhara beefed up

Move comes after Islamist group drives away tourists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Authorities have taken steps to safeguard visitors at Utmachhara in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila after a local Islamist group recently forced tourists to leave the tourist spot.

As the spot is not named on the government's list of tourist attractions, tourist police could not be deployed; however, the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has been requested to maintain vigilance over tourists' safety, said Companiganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Azizunnahar.

"After we saw the video, we started looking into the matter. We got to know that the Islamist group acted alone. They didn't consult with any locals, not even the local union parishad member."

"The locals want tourism to flourish at the spot," she added.

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Cracks have appeared in the Tk 300-crore embankment in Chattogram's Banskhali upazila, just three years after its construction was completed in June 2022. Efforts to patch the damaged portions with sand-filled geo bags have so far proven ineffective, sparking fears of erosion among locals.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Avoid all forms of public gatherings

FROM PAGE 1

However, the actual number of infections remains unknown due to limited testing. Increasing public awareness would encourage more tests and reveal the true scale of the outbreak, he added.

Other directives of the DGHS include covering the nose and mouth with your elbow or a tissue when sneezing or coughing; disposing of the used tissue immediately in a covered waste bin; frequently washing hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser for at least 20 seconds; not touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands; and avoiding contact with infected individuals while maintaining a minimum distance of 3 feet.

People with fever, cough, and breathing difficulties are advised to stay home until recovery and wear a mask covering their nose and mouth. Caregivers should also wear masks as a precaution. If necessary, people are urged to contact the nearest hospital or call the IEDCR at 01401-196293 or the Health Portal at 16263.

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). Prof Jafor said that, with Covid infection rates rising in many countries and the emergence of new variants, directives have already been issued for international travellers and port authorities.

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

They also advised the public to avoid travelling to India and other

affected countries unless necessary.

Prof Jafor said creating public awareness and preparing for the unfolding situation has become necessary, as people have let their guard down against Covid since the end of the pandemic period.

He said the government is in discussions with international agencies and friendly countries to procure more test kits, as some of the stored kits have expired.

"We have already collected 28,000 rapid test kits, and 10,000 RT-PCR test kits are expected to arrive tomorrow [Wednesday]," he added.

Prof Jafor stressed the need for strengthening the vaccination drive against Covid.

He urged all unvaccinated individuals over 18 to get vaccinated, and stressed that pregnant women, people over 60, and those with comorbidities must receive an additional dose.

He added that over 17 lakh doses have already been supplied to civil surgeons, with 14 lakh more available at vaccination centres.

DGHS's Director (hospital) Abu Hossain Md Moinul Ahsan and Line Director of Communicable Disease Control Prof Halimur Rashid, among others, were present at the briefing.

## People ready, time right for the election

FROM PAGE 1

a referendum because it could be pointless if the general public did not fully understand the complex issues of reform.

"People might laugh it off or misunderstand what they're voting on. Instead, we are involving all political parties. If they can agree on the reforms, then it's more credible than putting everything into a referendum."

On the moderator's question as to why the interim government didn't trust the voters to vote for any of the parties and pick the best ideas, he said, "I wish we could do that – if everybody understood what bilateral, bicameral legislation was, what proportional voting was [and] all those complicated things. People say, 'Forget it. How much money will you give me? I'll vote for you.' Voting can turn into that. So we said we don't want to go that path."

He said political unity is the top priority of the interim government because the interim government intended to announce the July Charter next month, a year after the uprising in 2024.

"We've been holding meetings

and discussing the creation of a July Charter. It's not easy to get all political parties to sit down and debate, but we are doing it.

"I promise you – hopefully, I can deliver on this – that by next month, July, the charter will be announced in the presence of all parties. That is the highest level of unity you can expect in any country, especially just a month or a year after a revolution."

The Consensus Commission led by the chief adviser himself is holding meetings with the political parties on reforms, including of the constitution. The parties still have disagreements over several fundamental issues.

Also, the BNP demands the election by December this year, while Dr Yunus announced early this month that the election would be held in mid-April next year. The National Citizen Party, however, had been seeking more reforms before elections.

During the interview, Prof Yunus also highlighted his government's efforts in economic recovery, particularly reforms in the banking sector, stabilisation of foreign exchange reserves, and the maintenance of macroeconomic

stability.

Also yesterday, UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell and British Secretary of State for Business and Trade and President of the Board of Trade Jonathan Reynolds held separate meetings with Prof Yunus, according to the CA Press Wing.

Reynolds reaffirmed the UK's support for the interim government's initiatives to recover misappropriated funds siphoned off to various countries. Special Envoy to the CA Lutfay Siddiqi proposed the initiation of a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the UK and Bangladesh, noting that Dhaka has already commenced discussions on FTAs with several countries, including Japan.

During the meeting with UK National Security Adviser Powell, they discussed the Rohingya crisis, democratic transition, recovery of the asset laundered out of Bangladesh, and regional stability in South Asia.

Prof Yunus also visited the House of Lords and observed a debate.

Last night, he attended a dinner hosted by King Charles. Today, Prof Yunus will receive the King Charles Harmony Award from the King.

## Starmer declines

FROM PAGE 1

assisting in finding the money, the report quoted Yunus as saying.

However, according to the report, Yunus said the UK should feel "legally and... morally" obliged to help Bangladesh recover laundered money.

Yunus said the objective of his trip to the UK was to bring out "more enthusiastic support" from the UK.

Yunus, a Nobel prize winning economist, has headed an interim government since a student-led movement ousted Sheikh Hasina last August.

The report says Bangladesh's investigations into the finances of Hasina and her Awami League have at times threatened to reflect badly on Starmer's UK Labour party.

In January, Tulip Siddiq, then anti-corruption minister and a close ally of Starmer, was forced to resign after weeks of questions over her financial ties to her aunt, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

She has been accused of receiving material support, including property, from figures connected to the AL.

Tulip has denied any wrongdoing, but resigned from her ministerial position.

Meanwhile, Tulip, who remains an MP, has asked to meet Yunus in a letter this week.

She said she wanted to clear up the "misunderstanding" being perpetuated by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission.

Yunus, however, told the Financial Times that he would not meet Siddiq. "This is a legal issue...a legal process," he said of the investigations into Tulip's affairs. "It's not personal."

Yunus said that during her 16 year rule, Hasina turned her "power into an opportunity to grab money" for some relatives and associates.

There had been a "big looting process", he said.

The report, citing Bangladesh

authorities, said that around \$234b was siphoned off while Hasina was in power, and the UK was a prime destination for "stolen" funds.

Yunus named Canada, Singapore, the Caribbean and the Middle East as other destinations for allegedly misappropriated assets, said the report.

He said the trip to the UK was "just the beginning", and that he was planning further visits. His administration was looking to get support from "all directions" in the UK, including businesses, financial institutions, the police and all intelligence agencies, he added.

Yunus said that during her 16 year rule, Hasina turned her "power into an opportunity to grab money" for some relatives and associates.

His team still hoped to meet the prime minister, they said.

The UK's National Crime Agency last month obtained freezing orders on two London properties owned by the son of an ally of Hasina.

## 'Taandob' will not return to Tangail's Kalihati upazila

Religious groups agree to allow film's screening; organisers say they are no longer interested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The Islamist groups that had opposed the screening of the film "Taandob" in Tangail's Kalihati upazila yesterday backed down from their stance, agreeing to allow the film to be shown.

However, the organisers said they are no longer interested in continuing the screenings, citing potential financial losses caused by the negative publicity stemming from the protests.

On Tuesday, the screening was abruptly halted under pressure from the religious groups, despite the organisers having had official permission from the district council to run the film for a month.

Yesterday, the upazila administration held a nearly four hour-long meeting with local religious leaders, politicians, and law enforcers in a bid to reach a resolution.

"At the meeting, they [religious leaders] told us they will no longer oppose the film's screening here," Khairul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer of Kalihati, told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Hazrat Ali, a local madrasa teacher, protester, and vice-president of the union unit of

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## US cities brace for more protests

FROM PAGE 1

presidential run in 2028, and the state of California sued Trump and the Defense Department on Monday, seeking to block the deployment of federal troops. Trump in turn has suggested Newsom should be arrested.

Hundreds of US Marines arrived in the Los Angeles area on Tuesday under orders from Trump, after he also ordered the deployment of 4,000 National Guard to the city. Marines and National Guard are to be used in the protection of government

personnel and buildings and not in police action.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said the deployments were not necessary as police could manage the protest, the majority of which have been peaceful, and limited to about five streets.

However, due to looting and violence at night she imposed a curfew over one square mile of the city's downtown, starting Tuesday night. The curfew will last several days.

Police said multiple groups stayed

on the streets in some areas despite the curfew and "mass arrests" were initiated. Police earlier said that 197 people had already been arrested on Tuesday – more than double the total number of arrests to date.

Democratic leaders have raised concerns over a national crisis in what has become the most intense flashpoint yet in the Trump administration's efforts to deport migrants living in the country illegally, and then crack down on opponents who take to the streets in protest.

## Poor to get Tk 37,076cr next fiscal

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below the Tk 1.4 lakh are counted as ultra-poor.

Considering nutrition and child mortality, years of schooling and school attendance, access to electricity, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel and assets, many people are included in the programs.

It also considered people who are consistently unable to meet basic needs and move in and out of poverty due to seasonal or economic shocks.

Analysts have long been calling for separating the real allocation for the poor so that the actual impact can be realised, said Selim Raihan, a professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

"So it is a good step, but it is just one step – more things are needed."

The social safety net programmes have targeting errors, such as exclusion and inclusion errors. There are also leakages and corruption, and the programmes are misused politically, he said.

"So, a roadmap is needed on how these problems will be solved."

On the other hand, the database of the programmes is poor and fragmented. There is a lack of coordination among ministries as well.

"So, emphasis is needed to ensure that the funds meaningfully reach the poor. This is necessary as extreme poverty is rising and overall poverty is also increasing," said Raihan, also the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling.

The total beneficiaries of the programmes are 7.34 crore and the government is planning to expand the coverage to 7.68 crore.

The proposed allocation for the pro-poor programmes is Tk 37,076 crore

– up 15 percent year-on-year – which is nearly one-third of the entire social security budget.

Among all the 39 pro-poor programmes, the highest number of beneficiaries is in the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme: 1.76 crore. The proposed allocation for the VGF is Tk 1,224 crore.

The second highest number of beneficiaries is in the Open Market Sales programme: 1.23 crore.

The government proposed Tk 3,433 crore for this programme in fiscal 2026-27 to address the nutritional needs of disadvantaged populations amid the comparatively high food inflation.

The highest allocation among all the pro-poor programmes went to the old-age allowance programme: Tk 4,791 crore.

As many as 60 lakh receive allowance under the programme at present and the government is planning to increase the number of beneficiaries by another lakh in fiscal 2026-27.

The second highest allocation went to the disability allowance and education stipend programme: Tk 3,845 crore.

In reality, targeting Bangladesh's safety nets has room for improvement. As of 2022, only about 44 percent of social protection benefits reached the bottom 40 percent of households, down from 51 percent in 2016, underscoring the importance of better targeting, according to the Social Security Budget Report 2025-26.

To enhance this, the government is pursuing data driven tools like a Dynamic Social Registry (DSR). A DSR will continuously update household

data and allow on-demand inclusion of newly vulnerable families, improving precision in identifying the most disadvantaged, it added.

While it is a good step, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics should be strengthened and the system digitised to implement this, Raihan said.

"If we can introduce NID cards in all the programmes, it will help avoid many problems in the system," he said, adding that India can be a good example as they use their Aadhaar card for every service.

In the upcoming fiscal year, the number of social safety net programmes has been trimmed to 95, down from the current 140. The government proposed Tk 126,731 crore, which is 16.04 percent of the total budget.

This fiscal year, the total allocation for social safety net programmes was Tk 136,026 crore, which was 17.07 percent of the total budget.

Programmes such as building rural bridges were repealed. Those were previously included to inflate total spending, said a finance ministry official.

On the other hand, some small programmes were merged, so the total number of programmes dropped, he added.

Out of the total social safety net, the government proposed to spend Tk 35,282 crore on pensions for government officials and Tk 27,000 crore on agricultural subsidies.

However, interest payments on national savings certificates were removed from the social safety net programmes, which impacted the total allocation, the finance ministry official added.

## UK freezes assets

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dubbed "Britain's FBI", coincided with this week's visit to London by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

It will be a 'historic moment' for democracy

Says Rizvi on Tarique Yunus Jun 13 meeting

UNB, Dhaka

BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir

Rizvi has described the upcoming meeting between Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus and the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman as a "historic moment".

"It will bring a fresh breeze for democracy in Bangladesh," he said at a press briefing at BNP's Naya Paltan office yesterday.

The meeting is scheduled for June 13 and is being closely watched in political circles.

Rizvi said the event could mark a turning point in the country's democratic journey.

"The entire nation is watching, and we, the leaders and activists of the party, are also watching. A meeting will take place between the head of the government and the acting chairman of BNP. This is very joyful news for us," he said.

"We are looking forward to that meeting. I believe this meeting will be a historic one. So that Bangladesh's democracy is no longer attacked by any form of fascism, so that it does not fall prey to any aggressive monster and become completely destroyed... It will be a beneficial meeting for the country, the nation, and our unfortunate democracy," Rizvi said.

He added, "This meeting will be extremely important for making our democracy permanent, strengthening it, and above all, ensuring that every person in the country enjoys democracy as a free and equal individual."

## UK security adviser calls on Yunus

BSS, London

UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell called on Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at a hotel in London yesterday.

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, Principal Coordinator on SDG affairs Lamiya Morshed, Chief Adviser's Special Envoy Lutfey Siddiqi, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam and Bangladesh High Commissioner to UK Abida Islam, among others, were present at the meeting.



A bus helper gets off the vehicle to pick up passengers from the opposite side of Babu Bazar Bridge, which is not a designated bus stop. This illegal practice contributes to unnecessary traffic congestion. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## NHRC yet to be reconstituted seven months on

Remains leaderless, powerless and ineffective

### NILIMA JAHAN

More than seven months after the resignation of its chairperson and members, Bangladesh's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) remains leaderless, powerless, and largely ineffective.

Following the fall of the Awami League government and amid criticism that its leadership was politically appointed, Kamal Uddin Ahmed, a former secretary, stepped down as NHRC chairman on November 7 last year.

Full-time member Md Salim Reza and honorary members Tania Haque, Prof Biswajit Chanda, Kongjari Chowdhury, and Md Aminul Islam also resigned.

Another member, Kawsar Ahmed, resigned earlier.

They had all been appointed in December 2022 for a three year term.

The NHRC, established under the 2009 Act, was aligned with the 1993 Paris Principles to function as an independent rights watchdog.

These principles require such institutions to be autonomous, well-resourced, and capable of investigating all rights violations, including those by state actors.

Since the leadership stepped down, the NHRC, once envisioned as the nation's human rights watchdog, has become little more than a complaints desk.

Between November 8, 2024 and April 29, 2025, at least 250 new complaints were lodged, but none have been resolved.

Despite its 73 member staff continuing to receive complaints, the absence of its three decision-making benches has stopped all activities.

"We are only receiving complaints and carrying out administrative tasks," said NHRC Secretary Sebastin Rema. "There is no information on when the commission will be



### ISSUES

- Lacks chairperson, members since Nov 2024
- 250 complaints, zero case resolutions in 5 months
- Structural limitations
- Political appointments
- Loss of credibility
- Dependence on foreign aid

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reform selection process
- Empower the NHRC
- Appoint rights defenders
- Secure financial autonomy
- Use constitutional tools
- Rebuild public trust

reconstituted."

Deputy Director Farhana Syed said, "People come every day asking about the status of their cases, but we cannot offer them any satisfactory answers."

In 2024, the commission received 751 complaints, but only 373 were resolved. Most involved minor disputes such as wage issues, labour conflicts, family matters, and land disputes.

Of the 100 suo motu (self-initiated) cases opened in 2024, only 20 have been concluded.

Even before the current leadership void, the NHRC was widely criticised as a "toothless body" offering recommendations without enforcement powers.

By law, the commission cannot investigate law enforcement or intervene in cases before courts or the ombudsman, excluding it from many of the country's most serious human rights cases.

Critics argue this design is intentional.

Under Sections 6 and 7 of the NHRC Act, the president appoints the chairperson and members based on recommendations from a selection committee largely made up of ruling party allies.

This structure, rights advocates say, violates the Paris Principles, which stress that reduced political interference strengthens institutional credibility.

Over the past three terms, the NHRC has been led by former government secretaries: Dr Kamal Uddin Ahmed (2022-2024), Nasima Begum NDC (2019-2022), and Kazi Reazul Hoque (2016-2019).

"Sadly, the last NHRC head was a former home secretary, someone we repeatedly contacted about law enforcement abuses and never heard back from," said Dr Mizanur Rahman, NHRC chairman from 2010 to 2016.

"How can we expect someone to act independently when their entire career has been about following government orders?"

"It's not enough to fill the chairs," said rights activist Nur Khan Liton. "We need a commission capable of holding state actors

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## Not April or December, hold polls in February

Suggests Nagorik Coalition

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Nagorik Coalition has proposed that the next national election be held in the first week of February.

It urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and BNP Acting Chairperson Tarique Rahman to include this proposal in their June 13 meeting agenda.

In a statement issued yesterday, the newly formed civil society platform said political consensus on the key reforms outlined in the July Charter can be achieved by August 30.

The proposal also includes updating the voter list through a special ordinance so that citizens turning 18 in 2025 can vote in February.

The statement comes amid growing political tension. The interim government has proposed holding elections in April 2026, which the BNP has rejected, demanding polls in December 2025 instead. However, the Nagorik Coalition argues that neither date is practical or inclusive.

It said that reaching a reform consensus, changing laws, and preparing for an election by December would be too difficult. Meanwhile, voting in April would be challenging due to the summer heat, Ramadan, and major public exams.

The coalition also noted that the interim government's proposed budget does not include any allocation for reform. As a result, a government elected in April would not be able to take up new reform projects in the 2026-27 fiscal year.

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## FULL TEXT OF VERDICT SC upholds the 39-point judicial code of conduct

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the full text of a verdict has upheld its previous judgement that reformed 39-point code of conduct for its judges with a view to avoiding any confusion under article 96 of the constitution.

The apex court, however, said in the full text of verdict that the Supreme Judicial Council, which comprises of the chief justice and two other senior judges of the Appellate Division to deal with the allegations against the SC judges over incapacity or misconduct, will have the authority to revisit the provisions of the code of conduct.

"Considered in this context, the Code of Conduct is to be considered as permitting of growth and mutations by drawing on the inherent power of only the Supreme Judicial Council to revisit existing provisions as and when necessary," Chief Justice Syed Reafat Ahmed observed in the 50 pages' full text of verdict, which was uploaded in the SC website on June 3.

On October 20 last year, a six-member bench of the Appellate Division, led by Chief Justice Syed Reafat Ahmed, has delivered the verdict after disposing of a review petition filed by the previous government against the 2017 SC verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution that empowered parliament to deal with the allegations against SC judges.

Senior lawyer Manzill Murshid, who challenged the legality of the 16th amendment, told The Daily Star that the Appellate Division in its review judgement has not scrapped the 39-point code of conduct for SC judges.

Therefore, the code of conduct will remain in force, but the Supreme Judicial Council can revisit those, he added.

According to SC formulated code of conduct, the judges should participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high standards of conduct, and should personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

## SATCHARI NATIONAL PARK Speeding vehicles turn forest road into death trap

MINTU DESHWARA, from Habiganj

In a tragic incident on May 20, an endangered Capped Langur baby was crushed to death by a speeding microbus on the old Dhaka-Sylhet highway through Satchari National Park.

The mother langur was seen sitting beside her dead offspring for hours -- a sight that deeply moved commuters and locals alike.

Forest officials have yet to identify the vehicle responsible.

With the highway passing directly through the forest in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj, such incidents are common, said Miftaul Islam, a local.

There are regular reports of endangered Capped Langurs, snakes, barking deer, and other animals being killed due to unchecked vehicle movement on the road.

Countless animals are at risk due



to vehicular traffic through the 600-acre forest, a biodiversity hotspot and home to 197 species of animals, reptiles and birds, including several endangered species. Primates, in particular, are highly vulnerable as they often roam near the roads.

Conservationists and locals have repeatedly urged authorities to adopt urgent measures, including speed control, better signage, stricter vigilance and

enforcement of rules, to prevent further loss of animal lives in this ecologically sensitive area.

Sand- and stone-laden heavy trucks often pass through the forest at reckless speeds, exceeding the designated 20kmph limit. Some 10-12 wild animals die every month on this road," claimed Mobin Mia, a local.

"All other roads in Satchari are in a sorry state except this

figure, it's true that many animals are dying due to speeding vehicles."

"Unfortunately, current laws under the Road Transport Act do not permit construction of speed breakers, thereby making it difficult to mitigate such incidents," he also said.

"We are looking into potential solutions and will consult with environmental experts and the environment adviser to explore what can be done within legal frameworks," the DFO added.

Zakir Hosain, executive engineer of Roads and Highways in Habiganj, said, "We have installed signs in the forest area, encouraging drivers to slow down and avoid honking."

"While we do have specific policies regarding installation of speed breakers, the Forest Department has not formally consulted or communicated with us on this matter. If they reach out, we will certainly look into it."

## No more night-time voting: AG

UNB, Dhaka

Attorney General Advocate Asaduzzaman yesterday said daytime votes will never again be held at night in Bangladesh, assuring that the government is committed to ensuring every citizen can safely reach the secret polling booth to cast their vote freely.

Speaking at several meetings and seminars over a week in Shaikupura, the Attorney General strongly criticised former Chief Justices Khairul Haque and Syed Mahmud Hossain, labelling them as "disgraceful" for abolishing the 13th amendment, which he said effectively stripped people's voting rights.

"There will be no mafia in the judiciary, and no syndicate of vested circles," Asaduzzaman asserted.

The Attorney General said he is actively fighting against drugs and corruption and claimed to be achieving success in this ongoing battle.

Urging people to assist in this effort, he called upon them to provide information on drugs and corruption.

"We will build a drug-free Shaikupura. I promise that the identity of informants will be kept confidential, and only the names and identities of those involved in drugs will be revealed," said the attorney general.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

# Fishermen return to Bay as 58-day fishing ban ends

## STAR REPORT

The government's 58 day fishing ban in the Bay of Bengal came to an end at midnight yesterday, paving the way for a resumption of marine fishing after nearly two months.

The Department of Fisheries said it expects a surge in supply and a likely drop in fish prices, including hilsa, as trawlers return to the sea.

The ban, which began on April 15, was aimed at allowing safe breeding and the replenishment of fish stocks in Bangladesh's maritime waters.

Officials say it is part of a broader effort to preserve marine biodiversity and ensure the long-term sustainability of the fisheries sector.

Since 2015, a 65 day ban had been in force from May 20 to July 23 each year.

However, this year, based on feedback from researchers, fishing communities, and industry representatives, the government revised the duration to 58 days -- from April 15 to June 11. The change also aligned the timeline with India's fishing ban schedule.

Md Alfaz Uddin Sheikh, director of the Divisional Fisheries Office in Barishal, said fish supply is expected to rise sharply now that the ban is over.

Barishal Division has 4,21,093

registered fishermen, of whom 1,46,029 are engaged in sea fishing. Around 7,405 boats operate from this region, according to the fisheries office.

During the ban, the government distributed food assistance for 42 days to affected fishing families.

The rest will be provided once it becomes available, Alfaz said.

Israi Pandit, president of the Khudro Mossajib Jete Samity, said fishermen had demanded 100kg of rice per family during the ban period, but the full allocation was not delivered in time.

Meanwhile, the coastal upazilas of Kalapara and Rangabali in Patuakhali also rejoiced at the end of the ban, as thousands of fishermen headed back out to sea at midnight yesterday.

The bustling fish landing stations of Mohipur and Alipur -- home to one of the country's largest wholesale fish markets -- have once again come alive with activity.

Starting this evening, nearly 200 fishing trawlers and around 20,000 fishermen are expected to leave the Mohipur Alipur ghat for the open sea, hoping for a good catch of hilsa and other marine fish.

Afzal Hossain, a fisherman with 15 years of experience, said, "This time we sincerely followed the ban. We are ready to go to sea to hunt

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



LAKUTIA ZAMINDAR PALACE

## Restoration effort underway

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The Department of Archaeology has initiated restoring the iconic Lakutia Zamindar Palace in Barishal Sadar upazila to its former glory.

The restoration work for the severely dilapidated two-storey mansion commenced on May 4, according to the Barishal Divisional Museum authority.

Visiting the site recently, this correspondent observed that brick pillars were being erected to reinforce the building's structure, while preparations were underway to construct a roof using clay tiles brought from Satkhira.

Arifur Rahman, assistant custodian of

the Barishal Divisional Museum, confirmed that the project is being implemented under a Tk 60 lakh tender. The current phase covers brickwork and roof tiling. In phases, issues with the palace's doors, windows, floors, and lighting will also be addressed.

"We are trying to restore the palace to its former self, exactly as it appears in historical photographs," said Lovely Yasmin, regional director (Khulna and Barishal divisions) of DoA.

According to the museum authority, the palace is 25.40 metres in length, 9.20 metres in width, and 8.20 metres in height. It has a total of nine rooms.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

## MADHABKUNDA WATERFALL AND ECOPARK

# Portion of access road collapses after heavy downpour

## Number of visitors drops over safety concern

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

A portion of the access road to the scenic Madhabkunda Waterfall and Ecopark collapsed recently following incessant rains over past few days, prompting fresh calls for long-term solutions.

Local residents and tourism operators alleged that mismanagement and lack of regular maintenance have turned the road hazardous.

With more rainfall expected during monsoon, further collapses, flooding, and broader structural failure will likely happen unless prompt steps are taken, they added.

"Heavy downpours and landslides between May 27 and June 1 severely damaged nearly one-kilometre stretch of the internal road. In many spots, the road has sunk to around three feet depth," said Shifat Mia, a local resident.

Visiting the tourist site recently, this correspondent observed that the soil beneath the road in front of a restaurant had been washed away, giving way to large cracks. Several other sections have also subsided similarly, and the surrounding railings and security walls have sustained heavy damage.

Around 31 metres of the access road collapsed, while the guide wall adjacent to the road has also developed cracks, said Md Rezaul Mridha, assistant conservator of forests, Barlekh Range.

In response, the Forest Department conducted emergency repairs using sandbags to restore limited access. Red

flags have been placed along hazardous stretches of the road to warn visitors, he added.

"This is not the first time such damage has occurred. A similar collapse happened in 2017 following landslides triggered by heavy rainfall," the official said.

"We came to visit here for the first time. The natural beauty of the waterfall is breathtaking, but we had no idea that the road was in such a sorry state," said Abdul Alim, a student from Sirajganj who came to visit with three friends.



"This is peak season for us, especially during Eid, but visitor numbers have dropped significantly as the access road collapsed," Jewel Ahmed, a local videographer.

"Despite the damage, there have been no untoward incidents so far. We are prioritising visitor safety," said Suman Singh, a sub-inspector of Madhabkunda Tourism Police.

## Lost

I, S M Arshad Amin, have lost the (Namjari Letter) Ref: No:9124 issued by the Deputy Director Estate of Rajuk Uttara Zonal Office. A GD was done in Gulshan PS, GD No: 360 Dtd: 05/06/2025. D-37

## No more night-time

FROM PAGE 3  
During the week-long campaign,

General Asaduzzaman attended various gatherings, seminars and meetings across local markets in Shaikupura Upazila, including an event hosted by the Bankers' Forum of Shaikupura.

Referring to the development works currently underway in Shaikupura, he noted, "These developments are being carried out with your tax money."

He warned that if any officials of the departments concerned are found involved in corruption, they must be reported.

"No one will be allowed to misuse development funds. Those who engage in corruption will face consequences," he cautioned.

## STATUTORY NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)  
Company Matter No. 885 of 2025

An Application under Sections 81(2) and 85(3) read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of delay in holding the Annual General Meeting of Buildtech Megamart Limited. Upon hearing of the application on 25-05-2025 Hon'ble Justice Ahmed Sohel has pleased to admit the said application and directed to file affidavit-in-compliance on or before 30th June, 2025. If anybody is interested to oppose the said affidavit, he may appear before the Hon'ble High Court Division either in person or through an Advocate.

Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Manjurul Ahsan  
Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court  
Chamber Room No. 9053  
Hussain Shaheed Subhashary Bhawan  
Supreme Court Bar Association Building, Dhaka-1000  
Mobile: 01717 535 409

D-38

## Children among 5 drown in 3 dists

## STAR REPORT

At least five people, including two children, drowned in Kishoreganj, Sylhet, and Tangail districts yesterday.

In Kishoreganj, two children drowned in a pool near their house at Pitua village in Karimganj upazila in the afternoon.

The deceased are Yasmin Akhter, 8, daughter of Shafiqul Islam, and her cousin Taiyiba Akhter, 9, daughter of Russell Mia of the same village. They were both third-grade students at a local primary school.

Yasmin and Taiyiba went to bathe in the pool around 12:30pm. As they were late returning home, family members went to the spot and found them stuck in the mud under the water.

They were rescued and taken to Karimganj Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared them dead, said Dr Riyad Shahed, upazila health and family planning officer.

In Sylhet, a teenage tourist drowned while bathing in a waterbody at Jaflong Zero Point under Gowainghat upazila in the afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Mahi, 15, son of Jamil Ahmed of the Shahidpara area under Bayezid Police Station in Chattogram.

Sarkar Mohammad Toufayel Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Gowainghat Police Station, said Mahi drowned around 1:45pm while visiting the spot with his friends.

His body was recovered at around 2:00pm and sent to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for autopsy. His family has been informed, the OC added.

In Tangail, two youths drowned in separate incidents in Gopalpur and Basail upazilas in the afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Mustafa Shaharyal Nehal, 22, a student of BRAC University and resident of Dhaka's Rampura, and Jahidul Islam, 17, of Bhaua village under Saturia upazila in Manikganj.

Nehal, who had gone to attend a wedding, drowned while trying to save his cousin while

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## Invitation to Bid for Worldwide Media Rights

(Of All Bilateral International Home Series(s) involving the Bangladesh National Cricket Team (Men) from 12th July 2025 to 15th June 2027)



Bangladesh Cricket Board  
Date: 12th June 2025

Ref: BCB / World Media Rights / 2025/365

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hereby invites Bid from the reputable TV Broadcasters, Digital Platforms, and Marketing Agencies/Consortiums/Firms for acquiring the following Worldwide Media Rights of all Bilateral International Home Series(s) involving the Bangladesh National Cricket Team (Men) from 12th July 2025 to 15th June 2027:

### Categories of Media Rights:

1. Satellite TV (Linear) Rights - Worldwide including Bangladesh
2. Digital OTT Right - Worldwide including Bangladesh
3. Direct-To-Home (DTH) Rights - Bangladesh only

### Area of Rights :

A detailed Bid document has been developed incorporating all necessary Bid details and documents for acquiring the above-mentioned Media Rights of all Bilateral International Home Series(s) involving the Bangladesh National Cricket Team (Men).

### Eligibility Criteria:

- a) Television broadcasters, digital platforms, and marketing agencies, consortiums, or firms with a minimum of three (03) years of operational experience in the broadcasting or sports marketing industry, and demonstrable expertise in marketing or broadcasting international-standard cricket events, shall be given preference in the bidding process.
- b) The requisite qualifications of bidders for acquiring the aforesaid Worldwide Media Rights from BCB through Open Tendering Method (OTM) shall be determined as per relevant Rules, Policies and Guidelines of BCB.

### Document Purchasing Procedure:

- a) Interested parties need to obtain a copy of the Bid Document from BCB Management Office (Marketing & Commercial Department) on payment of the Non-Refundable fees of USD 3,000 (Dollar Three Thousand Only) or BDT 3,68,000 (Taka Three Lakh Sixty-Eight Thousand Only) in the form of Pay-Order/ Bank Draft shall be issued in favour of 'Bangladesh Cricket Board' (Account No. 02-7537131-01, Account Name : Bangladesh Cricket Board, Bank : Standard Chartered Bank, Dhaka, Bangladesh for transaction in Bangladeshi Taka or to be remitted to BCB (Account No. 01-7537131-01, Account Name : Bangladesh Cricket Board, Bank : Standard Chartered Bank, Dhaka, Bangladesh, SWIFT : SCBLBDDX) for transaction in US Dollar. Please send your request for the Bid Document (Soft copy or printed version) along with the evidence of Bank Transfer /Payment receipt referred to above at the following email address: sponsorship.rights@bcb-cricket.com
- b) The details of the Bidding process, Tentative tour Itinerary, Bank Guarantee Format etc. are set out in the Bid Document. Bid documents will be available from June 15, 2025 to July 6, 2025 during working hours (10.00 AM to 5.00 PM except Friday and Government Holiday).

### Technical Offer Submission:

- a) The Technical Document/Offer along with Security Deposit (prepared in accordance with the Bid Document) must be submitted by the TV Broadcaster, Digital Platform, or Marketing Agency/Consortium/Firm on its own accord to the BCB Management Office situated at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh, during office hours (between BST 1000 to BST 1700) in a sealed envelope on or before Monday, July 7 , 2025.

### The technical offer must include the following:

- 1) Company Profile and Individual Directors / Owners' Profile.
- 2) Updated auditor's report on financial statements (In case of consortium, each party's auditor's report needs to submit individually)
- 3) Bank Solvency Certificate along with Bank Statement.
- 4) Certified copy of Memorandum and Articles of Association along with certificate of Incorporation or similar constitutional documents.
- 5) Updated VAT Registration Certificate, Trade License and Tax Identification Number (TIN) Certificate or similar documents.
- 6) In case of Consortium, notarized consortium Agreement.

### c) The qualified bidders shall be invited to participate in an "Open Bidding Process" scheduled on Thursday, July 10, 2025.

### Participation in the Bidding Process:

- a) The "Open Bidding Process" will be held on Thursday, July 10, 2025 & Bid submission process will start at BST 1200 hrs onwards in the BCB Management Office, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216.

- b) A multiple rounds of close envelope Bidding process will take place. The detail bidding process shall be determined by the BCB at its sole discretion.

- c) Only authorized representative of the participating TV Broadcaster or Marketing agent is allowed to submit financial bid i.e. Representative must carry official authorization letter from the participating TV Broadcaster or Marketing agents.

### Security Deposit:

The technical offers must include a security deposit of an amount of USD 1,000,000 (One Million US Dollars), or its equivalent in Bangladeshi Taka calculated at the prevailing exchange rate on the date of payment, shall be required for qualified bidders. The security deposit shall be submitted in the form of Bank draft or pay order or unconditional and irrevocable bank guarantee or bank transfer. Any bank guarantee originated from an overseas country has to be confirmed by a local scheduled bank.

It is mandatory to submit a security deposit prior to the start of the bidding process i.e. before BST 1200 hrs on Tuesday, July 8, 2025.

### Floor Price:

The floor price for bidding of the Worldwide Media Rights of all Bilateral International Home Series(s) involving the Bangladesh National Cricket Team (Men) from 12th July 2025 to 15th June 2027 will be available in the Bid Document.

### Financial Offer Specifications:

All bidders are required to submit their financial proposals in the following two formats:

#### Option A: Worldwide Media Rights Fee (Inclusive of TV Production Expenses, VAT, and Tax)

- Bidders shall quote the gross fee for Worldwide Media Rights, inclusive of all TV production expenses and applicable Value Added Tax (VAT) and Tax totaling 35%.

#### Under this option, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) shall be solely responsible for the execution of TV production, including but not limited to the deployment of DRS (Decision Review System), Spider Cameras, and other advanced broadcast technologies, in accordance with the

## Trump willing to work on Kashmir issue

Says US State Dept

DAWN ONLINE

US Department of State yesterday reiterated US President Donald Trump's resolve to work on the Kashmir dispute, saying each step that he takes "is made to solve generational differences between countries".

Trump had offered to work on the Kashmir issue after he brokered a ceasefire between India and Pakistan after the two nations' most intense military confrontation in decades. Responding to a question on the steps US plans to take in the wake of Trump's offer, State Department's spokesperson Tammy Bruce during a White House press briefing noted, "[Trump] has been the only one to bring certain people to the table to have conversations that nobody thought was possible," remaining hopeful that the Kashmir issue can also get resolved.

Improving ties with US will take time

Says Russia; Ukraine brings home bodies of 1,212 soldiers

REUTERS, Moscow

Talks between Russia and the United States aimed at improving ties and removing "irritants" in their relationship are not expected to yield quick results, the Kremlin said yesterday.

"Well, let's say that there are a lot of blockages in bilateral relations. Of course, one can hardly hope for any quick results, but this is precisely the kind of complex step-by-step work that has begun and will continue," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, denying that dialogue had stalled.

Since Trump returned to White House in January, two countries have launched a series of contacts aimed at improving relations which Kremlin had described as "below zero" under the previous administration of Biden. Russia's new ambassador to Washington said earlier yesterday that US-Russia bilateral talks would soon move to Moscow from Istanbul.

Meanwhile, Ukraine brought home bodies of 1,212 servicemen killed in war with Russia. Ukrainian official body responsible for exchanging prisoners of war said yesterday.



Palestinians gather at a food distribution point in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip, yesterday. Israel faces increasing condemnation over the humanitarian crisis in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip, where the United Nations warns that the entire population is at risk of famine after more than two months without aid deliveries.

PHOTO: AFP

## Iran to target US bases if conflict breaks out

Says its defence minister days ahead of planned sixth round of Iran-US nuclear talks

REUTERS, Dubai

If nuclear negotiations fail and conflict arises with the United States, Iran will strike American bases in the region, Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh said yesterday, days ahead of a planned sixth round of Iran-US nuclear talks.

"Some officials on the other side threaten conflict if negotiations don't come to fruition. If a conflict is imposed on us ... all US bases are within our reach and we will boldly target them in host countries," Nasirzadeh said during a weekly press briefing.

**Trump said he was less confident that Iran will agree to stop uranium enrichment in a nuclear deal with Washington**

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened Iran with bombing if it does not reach a new nuclear deal.

The next round of talks is due this week, with Trump saying negotiations would be held today while Tehran says they will take place on Sunday in Oman.



Iran is expected to hand a counter proposal to a previous US offer for a nuclear deal it rejected, with Trump saying on Tuesday that Iran was becoming "much more aggressive" in nuclear talks.

Tehran and Washington have clashed on the issue on uranium enrichment on Iranian soil, which Western powers say is a potential pathway to the development of nuclear weapons. Iran holds that its nuclear programme is purely for civilian purposes.

"As we resume talks on Sunday, it is clear that an agreement that can ensure the continued peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program is within reach – and could be achieved rapidly," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X yesterday.

Another sticking point in the talks has been Iran's missile programme. Ballistic missiles form an important part of Iran's arsenal.

Nasirzadeh said that Tehran recently tested a missile with a two-ton warhead and does not accept limitations.

Trump said he was less confident that Iran will agree to stop uranium enrichment in a nuclear deal with Washington, according to an interview released yesterday.

"I don't know," Trump told the "Pod Force One" podcast on Monday when asked if he thought he could get Iran to agree to shut down its nuclear program. "I don't know. I did think so, and I'm getting more and more – less confident about it."

Musk regrets some of his Trump criticisms

AFP, Washington

Elon Musk, the world's richest person and Donald Trump's former advisor, said yesterday he regretted some of his recent criticisms of the US president, after the pair's public falling out last week.

"I regret some of my posts about President @realDonaldTrump last week. They went too far," Musk wrote on his social media platform X.

Musk's expression of regret came just days after Trump threatened the tech billionaire with "serious consequences" if he sought to punish Republicans who vote for a controversial spending bill.

Their blistering break-up – largely carried out on social media before a riveted public since Thursday last week – was ignited by Musk's harsh criticism of Trump's so-called "big, beautiful" spending bill, which is currently before Congress.

Some lawmakers who were against the bill had called on Musk to fund primary challenges against Republicans who voted for the legislation.

"He'll have to pay very serious consequences if he does that," Trump, who also branded Musk "disrespectful," told NBC News on Saturday.

## Kuwait to require employer okay for foreign staff to leave

AFP, Kuwait

Kuwait is to require foreigners working in the private sector to obtain their employer's permission before leaving the country, authorities said yesterday, adding further restrictions on workers bound by the kafala sponsorship system.

Human rights groups have long criticised the kafala system, which is widely prevalent in the oil-rich Gulf states and ties migrant workers' visas to their employers, often preventing them from changing jobs or sometimes leaving the country.

First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef issued a ministerial circular "requiring expatriate workers in the private sector to obtain an 'exit permit' from their registered employer before leaving the country," the Public Authority of Manpower said in a statement on its X account.

The procedure, which can be done online, aims to "strengthen oversight of the movement of expatriate workers and ensure a balance between the workers' and employers' rights", the statement added.

The new requirement will take effect from July 1.

Saudi Arabia has similar restrictions on expatriate workers, who are required to obtain exit and re-entry permits from their sponsor to leave and re-enter the country.

Starting in 2017, Qatar made a series of reforms to its employment regulations after being selected to host the 2022 World Cup.

Despite progress, world still had 138m child labourers in 2024: ILO

AFP, United Nations

Nearly 138 million children were still working in the world's fields and factories in 2024, the United Nations said yesterday, warning that given the slow pace of progress, eliminating child labor could be delayed by "hundreds of years."

Ten years ago, upon adopting the so-called Sustainable Development Goals, the world's countries set themselves the ambitious target of putting an end to child labor by 2025.

"That timeline has now come to an end. But child labor has not," Unicef and the International Labor Organization (ILO) said in a joint report.

Last year 137.6 million children ages 5-17 were working, or approximately 7.8 percent of all children in that age group, according to data published every four years. The figure is equivalent to twice the total population of France.

This nevertheless represents a drop since 2000, when 246 million children were forced to work, often to help their impoverished families.

After a worrying rise between 2016 and 2020, the trend has now reversed, with 20 million fewer children working in 2024 than four years prior.

"Significant progress" has been recorded in reducing the number of children forced into labor, Unicef chief Catherine Russell said.

"Yet far too many children continue to toil in mines, factories or fields, often doing hazardous work to survive."

According to the report, nearly 40 percent of the 138 million child laborers were employed in 2024 doing particularly hazardous work "likely to jeopardize their health, safety, or development."

## Highest number of conflicts in 2024 since 1946: study

AFP, Oslo

The world saw the highest number of armed conflicts in almost 80 years in 2024, dethroning 2023 as a record year, a Norwegian study published yesterday showed, highlighting the risks linked to a US disengagement.

Last year, 61 conflicts were registered in the world across 36 countries, with some countries experiencing several simultaneous conflicts, the report by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (Prio) said. In 2023, there were 59 conflicts in 34 countries.

"This is not just a spike – it's a structural shift," said Siri Aas Rustad, the main author of the report which covers trends in armed conflicts in the period 1946-2024.

"The world today is far more violent, and far more fragmented, than it was a decade ago," she said.

Africa remained the most ravaged continent, with 28 conflicts involving at least one state, followed by Asia with 17, the Middle East with 10, Europe with three and the Americas with two.

More than half of these countries experienced two or more conflicts.

The number of deaths resulting from fighting remained around the same level as in 2023, at about 129,000, making 2024 the fourth deadliest year since the end of the Cold War in 1989, the study said.

The death toll was led by the wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip, as well as clashes in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

"Now is not the time for the United States -- or any global power -- to retreat from international engagement," Rustad said.



Police officers and volunteers carry a person evacuated from an apartment building damaged by a Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, Ukraine yesterday.

**MIGRANT CRISIS**  
Irregular crossings into EU drop 20pc in 2025

AFP, Warsaw

The number of irregular migrant crossings into the European Union dropped by 20 percent in the first five months of the year, the EU's border agency said yesterday.

Warsaw-based Frontex said that a total of 63,700 crossings were detected this year, adding that the main nationalities were Afghan, Bangladeshi and Malian.

The biggest decreases in irregular crossings were seen in the Western Balkans (minus 56 percent), the western African route (minus 35 percent) and the eastern Mediterranean (minus 30 percent).

There was also a seven percent decrease in migrant crossings from Belarus to Poland and the Baltics to 5,062 crossings, Frontex said. Irregular migration has become a political flashpoint across Europe.

## Make tourism safe and sustainable

### Incidents of obstruction in Sylhet tourist spots concerning

It is troubling to learn of some recent incidents of harassment and obstruction faced by tourists in Sylhet. While such incidents in tourist spots are nothing new, the latest development brought two issues to the fore: growing tension surrounding unregulated mass tourism, and the disturbing role played by religious actors in it. According to our report, people visiting the Utmachhara tourist spot in Companiganj on Sunday (the first day of Eid) were asked to leave by members of the Companiganj unit of Jibon 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 of a local decision to bar tourism due to alleged "immoral activities" like drinking and indecent behaviour. The following day, a scuffle broke out between some locals and tourists near the Jaflong BGB camp, although no injuries were reported.

These incidents illustrate how mass tourism can sometimes strain local communities. Complaints about environmental degradation, littering, and disruptive behaviour by visitors are natural in areas where tourist footfall has surged without adequate infrastructure or enforcement of behavioural norms. This creates resentment among locals, who may feel their culture and environment are being disrespected or exploited. But imposing restrictions on tourism—instead of seeking constructive solutions through regulation, education, or improved civic oversight—sets a dangerous precedent. What makes this especially alarming is the involvement of religious groups. While their concerns are shared by many in local communities, their actions—policing public behaviour and dictating who can access shared natural resources—undermine both the rule of law and the inclusive spirit of tourism.

These issues demand critical reflection as mass tourism continues to boom in Bangladesh. There is clearly a fine line to walk here. First of all, tourism is vital for the local economy as it creates employment and supports small businesses. But with too many people rushing to the beauty spots accessible in a small country like Bangladesh, unregulated tourism can be hugely disruptive. We, therefore, must find a way to make this sustainable. Part of the reason for the unregulated mass tourism in Bangladesh is its unregulated development—we cannot address one without addressing the other. Other issues underscored by recent trends involve safety both on the roads and while at the tourist spots. There have been reports of road crashes, criminal activities, and drowning as holidaymakers move to different locations, including Cox's Bazar, which has seen a huge footfall this holiday.

Clearly, to make tourism safe and sustainable, we need to address the persistent lack of safety infrastructure, enforcement of rules, and coordination among all stakeholders. Ensuring community voices are heard while also defending the right to safe and responsible tourism must be the priority. This calls for a comprehensive tourism policy that not only fosters economic opportunities but also protects local culture, the environment, and the safety of tourists. The government may also consider decentralising tourism by investing in new destinations to reduce pressure on existing hotspots. The rise in tourist numbers during holidays is welcome, but without proactive planning and inclusive governance, such growth will only bring more chaos. On their part, Sylhet local administrations must also prevent a repeat of what happened recently and hold to account anyone obstructing tourists.

## Why can't we ensure safe Eid journeys?

### Take steps to prevent further road crashes

Every Eid holiday, home-bound people risk their lives while travelling long distances, and this time has been no exception. Between June 5 and 10, at least 29 people died and 153 were injured in road crashes across 16 districts. Casualties will rise in all likelihood as people start to return to their places of residence after the end of the extended 10-day holiday. A similar trend was observed during Eid-ul-Fitr, when 132 people lost their lives in just eight days. Unfortunately, despite such high numbers of casualties and crashes during Eid holidays, the authorities seem largely indifferent to road safety.

This also reflects the anarchy in the transport sector that continues to persist even after the fall of the Awami League regime in August. Unfit vehicles and unlicensed drivers still dominate our roads, while the Road Transport Act 2018 remains largely unenforced to this day. According to the BRTA, over 75,000 vehicles, including buses, minibuses, trucks, covered vans, and tankers, have surpassed their operational lifespan. In Dhaka, one in five privately operated buses lacks a valid fitness certificate. These outdated and unfit vehicles contribute significantly to accidents, yet there has been little effort to remove them. The interim government's decision to eliminate expired vehicles from roads after May this year has not yet been implemented, with buses emitting black smoke still a common sight. Moreover, extortion and disorder continue to plague the transport sector, with transport associations now predominantly run by BNP leaders instead of their Awami League predecessors.

Motorcycles account for a significant number of road crashes in the country, causing nearly 38 percent of all accident-related deaths. Reportedly, many of the crashes during this Eid holiday also involved motorcycles. We wonder whether the government has at all taken any measure to regulate the operation of such risky vehicles. Furthermore, the accident-prone zones on highways are quite well-known by now, but has the government taken any steps to reduce accident risks in those areas?

Unless all these issues are addressed, road crashes will continue to claim lives. The need for meaningful reforms in the transport sector, therefore, cannot be stressed enough. With the Eid holiday still ongoing, the authorities must take proactive measures to prevent further casualties during people's return journeys. The tragic loss of lives must not continue unchecked.

# The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and the politics of starvation



Dr Faridul Alam  
is a retired academic who writes  
from New York, US.

FARIDUL ALAM

The promise of humanitarian aid is simple: to alleviate suffering and uphold human dignity in times of crisis. But in the Gaza Strip, where starvation has been deliberately weaponised, this moral imperative has been grotesquely subverted. The so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), launched in Delaware in February 2025 as a US-registered non-profit, exemplifies how aid can be co-opted not to nourish, but to manage, surveil, and control a besieged population under the guise of compassion.

Launched with much fanfare and backed by both the Trump administration and the Israeli government, the foundation has been marketed as an "innovative solution" to Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. But it is widely viewed by critics as a politically engineered instrument designed to bypass the UN, sideline established aid organisations, and normalise a system of military-managed charity. It has, in effect, institutionalised a two-tiered aid regime, one that excludes the most vulnerable while entrenching Israeli control over relief access.

Despite its lofty pronouncements of neutrality, the GHF functions less as a shield against suffering than as an extension of geopolitical strategy. Its convoys are sporadic and heavily surveilled. Its access corridors are negotiated through opaque diplomatic channels. Its food distributions are inconsistent and often restricted to arbitrarily chosen zones. In short, it adapts to the structures of deprivation rather than challenging them.

This distortion is not merely bureaucratic mismanagement; it is the logical outgrowth of a system that instrumentalises humanitarianism. The foundation's silence on the targeting of aid workers, its complicity in the blockade regime, and its calculated vagueness on the conditions of delivery all point to a larger, grimmer truth: starvation in Gaza is not collateral damage—it is a war tactic.

For around 18 years, Gaza has endured an air tight blockade, punctuated by periodic military incursions and systematic economic strangulation. Basic infrastructure—electricity, clean water, sanitation, healthcare—has been rendered inoperable. In this context, humanitarian aid becomes both lifeline and leash: it keeps people alive just enough to avoid charges of genocide, arguably again, but not enough to allow



Palestinians carry aid supplies, which they received from the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, in the central Gaza Strip on May 29, 2025.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

autonomy or dignity. What emerges is a logic of containment, not relief.

This is biopolitics at its starker: life reduced to metrics, nutrition calibrated to the bare minimum, human needs treated as logistical problems. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is embedded in this regime of control. It decides who eats, when, and how much—not based on humanitarian need, but on political expediency. And when thousands of starving Palestinians frantically converge on the few permitted distribution points, many are gunned down under the pretext that they pose a threat to Israeli forces lying in wait. Hunger is not merely mismanaged, it is weaponised into a site of systematic killing of the most vulnerable, day in and day out, with

perfect impunity.

The humanitarian corridors often touted as breakthroughs are in fact chokepoints—points of high visibility theatre that create the illusion of access. Aid is allowed through in trickles, often after long delays, while images of children queuing with empty containers are circulated for donor sympathy. The performance of care masks the absence of justice.

story is false, but it is effective. And therefore, it endures.

The rhetorical palette used by the GHF and its backers is thick with euphemism. "Humanitarian pause," "emergency access," "de-escalation"—these terms sanitise a brutal reality. They suggest temporariness where there is permanence, balance where there is asymmetry, and neutrality where there is complicity. They rebrand war crimes as

spreadsheets, logistics plans, and press releases.

The ethical failure is profound. Humanitarian aid, by definition, is supposed to be impartial, independent, and based on need. But in Gaza, these principles have been eroded beyond recognition. Aid has become anti-political, refusing to name the aggressor, refusing to call out hunger as a weapon, refusing to demand accountability. This silence is not neutrality; it is complicity.

Some may argue that imperfect aid is better than none. But in Gaza, the calculus is different. The humanitarian apparatus is now so tightly woven into the logic of the siege that it risks sustaining the very crisis it claims to alleviate. The more efficient the aid delivery, the more durable the blockade. The more visible the convoys, the more invisible the causes of suffering.

This is the paradox of humanitarianism in Gaza: its presence legitimises the conditions that necessitate it. The GHF's very existence allows Israel and its allies to point to "international cooperation" while continuing policies that dismantle livelihoods, destroy infrastructure, and restrict movement. It becomes not a challenge to injustice, but its mask.

So what is to be done?

First, there must be an honest reckoning with the political economy of humanitarian aid. Foundations operating within siege conditions must be held accountable not only for what they deliver, but for the structures they sustain. An aid convoy that passes through a checkpoint controlled by the same forces besieging a population is not neutral, it is implicated.

Second, the language of humanitarianism must be reclaimed. If starvation is weaponised, it must be named—not as a supply-chain issue, but as a war crime. Aid organisations must abandon the fiction that suffering in Gaza is apolitical. They must speak truth to power, even if it means losing access or funding.

Finally, solidarity must replace charity. True humanitarianism in Gaza cannot be divorced from political advocacy. Aid must be linked to justice, not mere survival. That means supporting efforts to lift the blockade, demanding accountability for war crimes, and affirming the Palestinians' right to live—not just without hunger, but with dignity, security, and freedom.

What we are witnessing in Gaza is not merely a humanitarian crisis. It is the collapse of humanitarianism's ethical core. If this term is to retain any meaning, it must reject complicity in the politics of starvation. It must speak not only in calories and metrics, but in moral clarity and political courage. Until that shift occurs, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation will remain a symbol not of compassion but of betrayal, indelibly etched in history.

## Sustaining the oceans as they sustain us



Selim Jahan  
is former director of the Human Development Report Office  
under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and  
lead author of the Human Development Report.

SELIM JAHAN

Oceans are a wonder to humans, not only because of their vastness or that they cover more than 70 percent of the Earth's surface and constitute more than 95 percent of the biosphere, but because of the fact that the wonders they contain below their blue surfaces are beyond imagination. We know only parts of them, but the larger parts of the world's oceans are still unexplored. Oceans remind us that we are part of something bigger, that we all are inherently connected. Every year, June 8 is observed as World Oceans Day to celebrate the oceans' essential wonders, calling on all of us not to lose sight of their value when determining their fate.

It was the 1987 Brundtland Report, prepared by the Brundtland Commission on environment and development, which noted that the oceans lacked a strong voice compared to other aspects of nature. As a

follow-up, the concept of a day dedicated to them was proposed at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, and since 2008, the day has been observed on June 8 every year. It supports the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fosters public interest in protection of the oceans and sustainable management of their resources.

The importance of oceans in human lives can hardly be overemphasised. They are our life source, supporting humanity's sustenance and that of every other organism on Earth. They produce at least 50 percent of Earth's oxygen, are home to most of the world's biodiversity, and are the main source of protein for more than three billion people around the world. The oceans are key to the global economy: ocean-based industries

are projected to employ around 40 million people by 2030. More than 80 percent of global trade is done through oceanic routes. Well-preserved oceans have a major role to play in ensuring food security for humans; in fact, they will be a critical source for feeding an estimated global population of nine billion by 2050. Their contributions to human livelihoods and global economic growth need to be recognised.

Blue economy, based on the oceans and their resources, can be a driving force for global economic growth. The world today faces multiple challenges of food insecurity, climate change, conflicts, economic sluggishness, and financial uncertainties. An integrated response and an urgent transition to a sustainable path is quite necessary right now. In 2012, a global blue economy strategy was adopted to unleash the potential of oceans for human prosperity and development. Blue economies may fuel economic growth via fishery development, aquaculture, tourism, water sports, cruise tourism, blue energy and biomass, ocean-based renewable energy, biotechnology and marine genetic resources, etc.

However, with all their potential benefits,

the oceans now face severe problems and challenges. About 90 percent of their big fish populations are now depleted and about half of the coral reefs are destroyed.

Approximately 11 million tonnes of plastic are dumped into the oceans annually—equivalent to dumping 2,000 trucks full of plastic waste into oceans, lakes and rivers every day, according to UNEP. About one-third of the fish caught for human consumption is contaminated with plastic. By 2050, there could be more plastic than fish in the oceans. More than 100,000 marine mammals and one million seabirds are killed by marine plastic pollution every year.

Bangladesh, a low-lying country in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, faces significant challenges related not to an ocean, but to a sea, particularly the Bay of Bengal. Because of climate change, the sea level in the country is predicted to rise by up to 0.30 metres by 2050, resulting in the displacement of 900,000 people, and by up to 0.74 metres by 2100, resulting in the displacement of 2.1 million people, according to research.

Rising sea levels, exacerbated by climate change, are causing coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources, and inundation of low-lying areas. These changes threaten livelihoods, agriculture, and human settlements.

But at the same time, Bangladesh has the potential to develop a blue economy that can make significant contributions to the country's economic growth, poverty reduction, food and nutrition security,

mitigation and adaptation of climate change, and generation of sustainable livelihoods. Such an economy may entail maritime trade and shipping, coastal shipping and feeder services, tourism, fisheries and sea foods, mariculture, marine aquatic products, oil and gas, ocean renewable energy, sea salt production, etc. Developing a blue economy in Bangladesh would require a balanced approach between conservation, development, and utilisation of marine and coastal ecosystems. The transition to a blue economy would encompass identification of various maritime economic functions and fundamental and systematic changes in its policies, regulatory management, and governance frameworks.

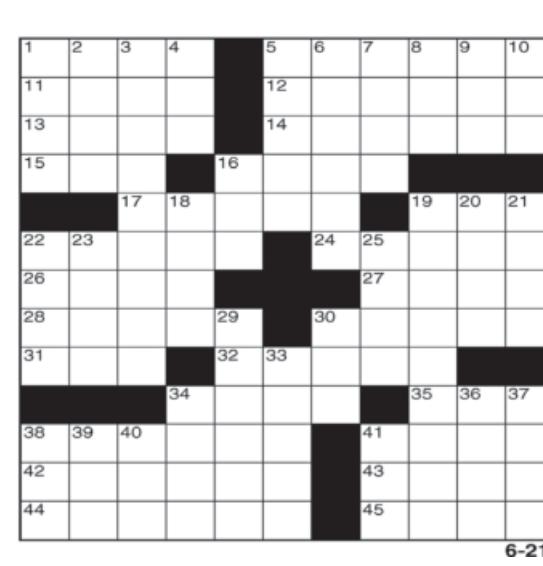
Today, humanity faces some of the greatest threats ever to its blue planet: the climate and the biodiversity crisis. We need a healthy ocean system for our survival, and thus we have to catalyse action to protect the oceans and climate. The world will have to strengthen the 30x30 movement—protecting at least 30 percent of the blue planet by 2030. The ongoing Third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France (June 9-13) is aimed at finding solutions to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources. Let's hope we find those solutions before it is too late.

**ACROSS**

- 1 Spigots
- 5 Takes in eagerly
- 11 Lotion additive
- 12 Large lizard
- 13 "Das Kapital" author
- 14 Burrowing rodent
- 15 PC key
- 16 Fisherman's hope
- 17 Merge
- 19 Bowl-shaped pan
- 22 Honshu home
- 24 Was vocal
- 26 Tel —
- 27 Folk learning
- 28 Record material
- 30 Car type
- 31 Sports drink suffix
- 32 Scientist Newton

**DOWN**

- 34 Winter blanket
- 35 Bounty letters
- 38 Burrowing rodent
- 41 Throw in the towel
- 42 Ventilate
- 43 Bruins' sch.
- 44 Sailing ships
- 45 Approve
- 46 Unexciting
- 47 Weary word
- 48 Large rodent
- 49 Kinsey topic
- 50 Put a cap on
- 51 Some marbles
- 52 Undiluted
- 53 Friend of Frodo
- 54 First numero
- 55 Light touch
- 56 Storage spot
- 57 Blue hue
- 58 Heavy rodent
- 59 Gumbo base
- 60 Acute
- 61 Coffee, in slang
- 62 Gung ho
- 63 "Not guilty," for one
- 64 Police station event
- 65 Spotted
- 66 Categorizes
- 67 "Get lost!"
- 68 Kunis of "Black Swan"
- 69 Order to Spot
- 70 Argon or ozone
- 71 Motor need
- 72 Debate side
- 73 Status —



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR  
OPINION PIECES TO  
dsopinion@gmail.com.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## I tune out communication to focus on my role: Sariful Razz

ZAHID AKBAR

Sariful Razz's latest film, *Insaaf*, directed by Sanjoy Somadder, was released this Eid-ul-Azha initially across 16 theatres in Bangladesh. With Tasnia Farin also in a leading role, the film features Mosharraf Karim in a key role.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Razz described the joy of witnessing viewers connect with his work. "What could be more joyful for an actor than witnessing people connect with their film? After all, it's cinema that made me who I am," he shared, reflecting on his Eid day spent with the *Insaaf* team.

Positioned among six major Eid releases, *Insaaf* offers the complete commercial package—songs, action, and emotional depth. "Portraying my character was quite challenging. Our director, Sanjoy, directed it with great care, and the entire team was fantastic. Tasnia Farin also delivered a stellar performance. All of these factors, I believe, make the film worth watching," said the actor.

On working with Farin, Razz was full of praise. "Farin is a brilliant actress, and I was

really impressed while working alongside her. Every actress I've worked with in my films has been remarkable. Their strong performances made my job as an actor much easier," he noted. He also welcomed the entry of actresses like Farin and Sabilha Nur into commercial cinema, calling it "a great sign".

Known for being difficult to reach during shoots, Razz explained his reasoning: "Whenever I start working on a film, I try to immerse myself fully in my character. I isolate myself from everything else and focus on the role. That's why I don't use my phone much—nothing more than that."

When asked about his son Shahim Mohammad Rajya, Razz confirmed they meet from time to time. "We live in the same city. It's not like I live abroad. We met just a few days ago," he said.

Among the other Eid releases, Razz expressed interest in watching Raihan Rafi's *Taandob*, Tanim Noor's *Utshob*, and *Neelchokro*, starring Arifin Shuvoo. "Quite a few of my close friends have films out this Eid," he added, noting his intention to catch the rest of the releases as well.

## Actress Tanin Subha passes away

Actress Tanin Rahman Subha passed away last Tuesday evening while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Dhamondi. She was 31 years old.

Sony Rahman, a member of the executive committee of the Film Artistes Association, confirmed the news of her passing to The Daily Star.

Subha had suddenly fallen ill on June 2 and was initially treated at a local hospital near her home in Altabnagar. As her condition deteriorated, she was transferred to the



private facility in Dhamondi, where she had been on life support for several days before her demise.

Tanin Subha began her journey in the entertainment industry with a television commercial. She later made her small-screen debut opposite Mosharraf Karim in the popular drama *Jomoj*.

Her film career began with *Obastab Bhalobasha*, an unreleased project. However, her breakthrough role came with the film *Matir Pori*.

## 'Bachelor Point Season 5' sets new OTT record



**Bachelor Point Season 5** has set a new record on local OTT platform Bongo, with over 3.5 million paid views in just three days of release. Directed by Kajal Arfin Ome, eight new episodes of the popular series were launched on Eid-ul-Azha, drawing viewers from over 100 countries.

According to Bongo, audiences have spent more than 25 million minutes watching the new season. Director Ome expressed gratitude for

the overwhelming response, noting the unprecedented level of pre-booking.

Bongo's Chief Content Officer Mushfiqur Rahman Manzu highlighted the strong engagement and announced a 120-episode season pass and additional subscription packages.

The cast includes Marzuk Russell, Chashi Alam, Ziaul Hoque Polash, Monira Mithu, and others.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### 'Stand-up Avenue'

Live2web, powered by Get Amped Series, presents **Stand-up Avenue** this Friday evening. The show will feature performances by comedians such as Ahmad Ashik, Ashir Ismu, K Zubayer, and Makhzum Khan Shadid. Notably, it is an adults-only event, strictly for audiences aged 18 and above, so it's best to attend without children or elders in tow. However, only those who receive a confirmation message on June 11 or 12 will be granted entry, with tickets priced at Tk 200.

Date: Friday | June 13

Time: 7pm onwards

Venue: Chefs Avenue, Uttara



## Maldives names Katrina Kaif as its global ambassador

Bollywood star Katrina Kaif has been announced as the global tourism brand ambassador for the Maldives, as per a post by the country's official tourism page on Instagram.

The post described Kaif as "a true icon of grace and elegance," embodying the Maldives' essence of luxury and serenity. Her appointment coincides with the launch of Visit

Maldives' Summer Sale Campaign, aimed at attracting more tourists to the island nation.

Known for her successful film career and entrepreneurial ventures, Katrina Kaif is a globally recognised figure and a Forbes Icon of Excellence awardee, making her a fitting representative for the tropical paradise.



## NEWS

### 1 killed, 5 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

brother Saidul Islam, 45, and other family members Habibur Rahman, 32; Samrat, 55; and Khadija, 32.

Khadija was also one of the women harassed earlier in the day.

Anisul, who was critically injured, was taken to the Kendua Upazila Health Complex, where he died around 8:10pm.

"The attackers harassed the women in our family without provocation," said the injured Khadija.

"When we objected, they launched a planned assault, destroyed our house, and beat up everyone. We want them to be sentenced to death."

OC Mizanur said, "An investigation is underway... and efforts to arrest the attackers are ongoing. It is deeply unfortunate that a social offence escalated into a deadly clash. Police are on high alert to maintain law and order."

Anisul's autopsy was completed last evening, and the body was sent back to the village for burial, police said.

No case had been filed as of the filing of this report at 7:30pm. Locals, however, have been demanding a swift investigation and exemplary punishment for the perpetrators.

### 1 dies

FROM PAGE 12

Badal Hossain, organising secretary of Bhulta Jubo Dal, told reporters that his brother got shot when a group of Chhatura Dal men led by Jayedul Islam Babu opened fire to free a local Chhatura League leader, Sabir Hossain Khoka, who was caught by locals.

He added that Mamun was walking on the street when he got shot in the head.

Quoting locals, police said Mamun's elder brother Badal's supporters were among the people who caught Khoka on Wednesday.

They were taking Khoka towards Badal's house when Babu and his men opened fire and the two groups clashed.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatura Dal in a statement yesterday afternoon said it permanently expelled Babu from the organisation.

Babu told The Daily Star that allegations against him were false.

Liakat Ali, officer-in-charge of Rupganj Police Station, said a case had been filed over the matter. He added that the Chhatura League leader had been detained.

## Dengue cases surge

FROM PAGE 12

In the last 24 hours, Barishal division (excluding city corporation areas) reported the highest number of cases at 2,275, making it the most affected region. Within Barishal, Barguna has emerged as a hotspot, logging 1,406 cases—the highest of any district.

Other regions also saw a rise in cases: Chattogram reported 836, Dhaka 535, Khulna 165, Mymensingh 96, Rajshahi 87, Rangpur 19, and Sylhet 19. These figures exclude city corporation areas.

Experts attribute the surge in cases outside Dhaka to inadequate mosquito control, low public awareness, and the presence of multiple dengue serotypes.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman noted that Barguna's coastal geography contributes to its vulnerability. "In coastal areas, people often store water, which creates ideal breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes," he said.

He also suggested that improved connectivity via the Padma Bridge, linking Barishal with the rest of the country, may have contributed to the spread.

Rahman stressed the importance of strengthening surveillance and eliminating mosquito breeding sites. "Many people still believe dengue is primarily a Dhaka-centric problem, which results in negligence in other regions. This perception must change," he added.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, identified Barishal, Chattogram, and Cox's Bazar as the most affected districts. He pointed to several contributing

factors, including poor mosquito control, limited public awareness, and infections from multiple dengue serotypes.

He also noted that while mosquito control in Dhaka has been inadequate, conditions outside the capital are even worse.

"Residents of Dhaka are generally more aware of dengue prevention measures, which partly explains why rural and suburban areas are seeing more cases," he said.

He explained that about 50 percent of Dhaka's population has been exposed to different dengue serotypes since 2000, providing some level of immunity. In contrast, populations outside the capital have had far less exposure, making them more vulnerable. He also cited rapid urbanisation in non-Dhaka areas as a factor, as Aedes mosquitoes thrive in expanding urban and semi-urban environments.

Prof Bashir emphasised the urgent need for comprehensive mosquito control across the country. "The government must ensure equal attention and resources for all districts to effectively control the spread of Aedes mosquitoes," he said.

Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) held an emergency meeting yesterday at Wasa Bhaban, where it decided to double the application of adulticide starting June 14. The meeting, chaired by DSCC Administrator Md Shahjahan Miah, also resolved to form zone-based monitoring teams.

An official of Dhaka North City Corporation said regular drives are being conducted within its jurisdiction to destroy dengue larvae.

## Security at Utmachhara

FROM PAGE 2

In a recent video that went viral, a group of Islamists is 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".

After the video sparked criticism, the UNO and the local police held a meeting Tuesday afternoon with the Islamist groups. They also

visited the spot and spoke to the locals.

The UNO said, "As the spot is not regulated, we're planning to put up some information signs, providing clear instructions and rules to ensure a positive and safe experience for visitors."

"Besides, the construction of a road connecting to the spot will begin soon. Once the road is built, it will make it easier for tourists to reach the spot."

## 'Taandob' will not return

FROM PAGE 2

Ulama Imam Parishad, said, "Upon request from the upazila administration, we have agreed that the film screening can be continued obeying all the conditions set by the administration."

Despite this, Kamruzzaman Saiful, head of marketing at Jaaz Multimedia and organiser of the screening, expressed doubts about the audience turnout due to the unrest surrounding the film.

"People will not come to the shows. We are incurring financial losses. We are not interested anymore to

continue the shows here [in Kalihati]," he said last night.

Saiful, a resident of Hasra village in the upazila, and his partner Saju Mehedi of Tokai Theatre Group, had rented the Aulabadi Community Centre cum-Multipurpose Hall for Tk 10,000 per day from the Tangail Zilla Parishad, and obtained permission to screen the movie for a month starting from Eid day. They also paid five days' rent in advance.

Opposing the screening, groups under the banner of Parkhi Union Ulama Parishad and Alem Samaj had marched to the community

## Thousands denied treatment

FROM PAGE 12

said they would leave once they receive clear directives regarding their treatment plans. They also accused the hospital authorities of neglect and malpractice.

This correspondent yesterday found six of them in Room 415 of the dedicated care unit for the July injured on the third floor. They said others had left ahead of Eid but would soon return.

Among them was Raju Islam from Thakurgaon, who lost vision in his right eye during the July uprising.

He claimed that 56 injured individuals had remained admitted at the hospital, with eight staying through Eid and six still present. "The rest will return too," he said, dismissing the allegations by hospital staff as "fake".

"They're spreading falsehoods through the media, saying we're occupying the hospital and have locked the unit. If we locked the unit, how could you reach us?" he asked this correspondent.

Hospital sources, meanwhile, said that 55 of the July protesters are still officially admitted.

According to 2023 government data, the 250-bed hospital -- the country's largest government eye care facility -- typically serves around 1,800 outdoor and emergency patients daily, with about 40 new admissions every day.

A doctor, however, said the hospital was seeing over 3,000 outpatients daily before services

were suspended.

Following two untoward incidents, doctors, nurses, and other staffers began a work stoppage on the morning of May 28, citing safety concerns.

Around 11:00am that day, a group of injured protesters allegedly attacked hospital staff, sparking a tripartite clash involving other patients and their attendants, Prof. Hair Ahmed Choudhury told The Daily Star later that evening.

Several doctors and nurses were injured, and their residential quarters were also attacked, he added. Meanwhile, the July protesters claimed they too were assaulted by hospital staff and police during the incident.

The protesters later demanded that four doctors, including the hospital director, who is currently on leave, be barred from serving at the facility.

Following the clash, all medical services at the hospital were suspended for a week. Limited emergency services resumed on June 4 after a series of meetings involving the health ministry, the Directorate General of Health Services, hospital authorities, and representatives of the injured July protesters.

That same day, a four-member medical board -- formed by the health ministry and comprising ophthalmologists from four major hospitals -- assessed the conditions of the injured protesters.

However, not all seeking care were accommodated. Priya Akhter, who came with a swollen eye, said she was denied treatment as her condition did not "qualify as an emergency" according to the doctors.

"They asked me to return to the outdoor unit on Saturday. But the pain is unbearable, so I'll have to go to a private hospital," she said.

Ahmed, head of the Ophthalmology Department at Dhaka Medical College, examined 31 individuals and recommended that they be discharged, a NIOH doctor said on condition of anonymity.

Based on the board's recommendations, hospital authorities issued discharge letters to those cleared. But tensions flared again when some protesters allegedly confined NIOH acting director Dr Zane Alam to his office and tore up the discharge letters, the doctor said.

Some of the injured protesters, however, claimed they were not even informed about the formation of the medical board.

This correspondent was unable to reach Acting Director Dr Zane Alam for comments.

Yesterday, this correspondent observed patients being treated at the emergency unit, and by 2:30pm, 76 patients had received care. Several surgeries were conducted, and 29 patients were newly admitted, mostly after receiving emergency treatment, a nurse said.

However, not all seeking care were accommodated. Priya Akhter, who came with a swollen eye, said she was denied treatment as her condition did not "qualify as an emergency" according to the doctors.

"They asked me to return to the outdoor unit on Saturday. But the pain is unbearable, so I'll have to go to a private hospital," she said.

# NEWS

## Locals block railway, seek train stop at Charchhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Train services on the Rajshahi-Dhaka route were briefly disrupted yesterday morning after residents of Rajshahi's Charchhat upazila staged a blockade, demanding an intercity train stop at Nandangachhi Railway Station.

The blockade began around 6:30am when locals, under the banner of "People of Charchhat from All Walks of Life", gathered on the tracks near Nandangachhi station.

They halted the Sagordari Express by waving red cloths as it approached, confirmed Rajshahi Railway Station Manager Moin Uddin.

He said, "The blockade ended at 8:45am. Other than the Sagordari Express to Khulna, only the Silk City Express to Dhaka was delayed in its departure from Rajshahi. All other trains departed on schedule."

The demonstrators demanded scheduled stops for four intercity trains that currently pass through without halting -- Silk City Express (Dhaka route), Barendra Express (Chilahati route), Sagordari Express (Khulna route), and Dhalarchar Express (Pabna route). They also called for the renovation of Nandangachhi Railway Station, which they say has been neglected for years.

## Easy bike driver found dead in river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police recovered the body of a battery-run easy bike driver from the Chandana river near Chandpur Bridge area under Rajbari's Kalukhali upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Aslam Pramanik, 42, said Kalukhali Police Station Officer in Charge Mohammad Zahedur Rahman.

The body was sent to the Rajbari Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the OC, adding that they are investigating the incident.

Efforts are underway to trace the missing vehicle, he added.

Aslam, who had previously worked as a manager at a brick kiln, had purchased the vehicle six months ago and had since been driving it to support his family.

Quoting family members, police said Aslam left home with the three-wheeler around 10:00am on Tuesday. His last phone conversation with his wife was around noon.

## Not April

FROM PAGE 3

"It would not be possible for a government formed in April to take up new reform projects in the next budget. But a February-elected government could," the statement said.

In this context, the coalition welcomed the planned meeting between Prof Yunus and Tarique Rahman in London, calling it a hopeful step toward resolving the current political deadlock.

"We urge both the chief adviser and the acting chairperson of BNP to seriously consider our election roadmap for the first week of February as part of their meeting agenda," it said.

The coalition said its reform proposal, based on the July Charter, includes key changes such as recognising the charter as the foundation for political consensus, introducing proportional representation in the upper house, ensuring neutrality in constitutional appointments, and holding direct elections to women's reserved seats.

It called on all major political parties, including BNP, to adopt these positions as part of a collective move toward democratic transition.

## PRAYER TIMING JUNE 12

Faiz Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4:05 12:45 5:00 6:50 8:15

JAMAT 4:40 1:15 5:15 6:55 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Under the banner "People of Charchhat from All Walks of Life," locals staged a blockade yesterday, demanding that intercity trains stop at Nandangachhi Railway Station. The protest began at 6:30am and lasted for two hours, delaying the Sagordari Express to Khulna and the Silk City Express to Dhaka.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 12, 2025  
JAISHTHA 29, 1432 BS  
The Daily Star 9



## Residents take it upon themselves to repair road

AIHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Residents of Gournagar and Binnabari villages under Pabna's Chatmohar upazila have initiated construction of a one-kilometre rural road to connect Chhoy Ani Beel after their demand remained ignored by local authorities for long.

Chhoy Ani Beel is a prominent waterbody within the Chalan Beel wetland where multiple crops, including paddy, are cultivated across 500 hectares of land.

The earthen road has long been a cause of sufferings to local farmers as they face immense hassle to transport their crops after harvest using it.

On Saturday, residents of the two villages began the work to turn the earthen road to a brick road, which would in turn enable the farmers to bring their harvest from the waterbody conveniently.



Some villagers contributed by raising fund for bricks, sand and other raw materials for the road making, while others came forward with manual labour for the initiative. They aim to complete the work before possible flooding during monsoon.

"Due to lack of adequate road connectivity with Chhoy Ani Beel, local farmers have long been suffering," said Mostadul Haque, a local resident.

"Villagers have long been demanding construction of a submersible road to connect to Chhoy Ani Beel, but the authorities concerned took no steps to this end. So the villagers came forward to construct the road as a self-initiative," said Md Abdur Rouf, a former Union Parishad member.

"We need to harvest our paddy but the incessant rain over the past few days left the earthen road in such a sorry state that no wheels can run on it, making it nearly impossible to transport our crop from the waterbody," Shahin Alom, a local farmer.

"As such, we are all working together to construct a brick road. Hopefully, the work will be completed within a week," he added.

Constructed, Musa Naser Chowdhury, upazila nirbahi officer of Chatmohar, said they have a plan for constructing a road in the area.

"Local villagers have long demanded for a submersible road there. I will visit the area soon with a technical team in this regard. After getting a report from experts we will submit a project proposal to this end," the UNO said.



agriculture officer of Nesarabad upazila, said it is difficult to predict the extent of the drop in production before the harvesting period begins.

He added that last year, farmers faced difficulties in selling guava due to the

over 1,300 farmers involved.

Most of the guava is grown in Atghar Kuriana and parts of nearby Jalabari union, while some is also produced in the adjacent Kirtipasha union of Jhalakathi Sadar upazila.

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Alpana Roy, a descendant of the zamindar family who lives in Australia now, shared stories passed down from her father, Pankaj Roy Chowdhury, about the grandeur of the estate and its connection to Rabindranath Tagore.

Rakhal Chandra Roy, one of the sons of Zamindar Rajchandra, was related to the family of Rabindranath Tagore.

Several other NHRC officials said they are still in the dark about the commission's reconstitution.

Dr Mizanur Rahman identified three urgent reforms to secure full accreditation: reducing government control, allowing the commission to investigate law enforcement abuses, and ensuring financial independence from the law ministry.

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## BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

# FROM CULTURAL BEACON TO BATTLEGROUND: The DU English Department at 100

Review of 'Dhaka University's English Department: Centenary Perspectives' (University of Dhaka, 2022) edited by Nevin Farida et al.

**The book's introduction, written by the five editors who are currently teaching at the Department, traces the 100 years' journey. They share the historical aspect of the university's birth along with the Department and its contribution to the "cultural enlightenment and educational progress of the people in East Bengal".**

SABIHA HUQ

Imagine that a 104 years after its inception, the Department of English of Dhaka University wakes up on a July morning to see its rain-soaked campus abuzz with young men and women walking past the Aparajeyo Bangla, a reminder of the 1971 Liberation War, their heads drooping with the onslaught of moral policing and insurgency of reactionary student politics! Why would someone even think of such a dystopian future? The university that was once called the Oxford of the East, and was established to nurture critical thinking and state of the art knowledge, has now fallen prey to philistinism and mobocracy. The campus grounds have been polluted on several fronts since the Partition of India in 1947.

Prior to the independence of Bangladesh, the suppression of Bangla language by West Pakistan and eventual killing of students who stood against such oppression had soiled the verdant greens of the university in 1952. Mass killing of students again made the grounds gory in 1971. In post-independence Bangladesh, many were killed because of political reasons. The bankruptcy of Bangladeshi politics has been soiling the haloed ground of Dhaka University and affecting its student life for decades. Despite these onslaughts, there has been nurturance of critical thinking and humanism from the inception of the university in 1921 through the departments that began their journey from the very first year.

The Department of English was perhaps the most progressive of these. It is therefore quite natural that graduates of the department were and are the most prominent figures in Bangladeshi cultural arena as well as governance. Today, when over 100 years have passed, the nation sees a few of its own female students being harassed by men on their own campus and a section of its own student community supports the fanatics who cause such embarrassment. Therefore, this is high time to evaluate a century of achievements as also the challenges that have come in the way of the Department of English, and of the university itself. The book titled *Dhaka University's English Department: Centenary Perspectives* may help the nation understand trajectories of the growth of English studies in Bangladesh against a wide range of



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

contexts mentioned above. Select teachers and alumni of the department have contributed to the volume of 348 pages and have written about many aspects ranging from the evolution of the syllabus to the possibility of a 'neoliberal' future.

The book's introduction, written by the five editors who are currently teaching at the Department, traces the 100 years' journey. They share the historical aspect of the university's birth along with the Department and its contribution to the "cultural enlightenment and educational progress of the people in East Bengal". Expectedly, *Macaulay's Minute* (1835) has been referred to, and there is a quick revisit of the reception history of English by the East Bengalis. Gradual changes in the nature of the Department with the political changes of the country that is Bangladesh now, are also factored. The department's glorious history of involvement in the Liberation War and martyrdom are reminisced by the editors, though they do not elaborate on the topic perhaps to focus on the 12 chapters that follow the introduction. There was however scope of dwelling on how the academic vision of the Department charted an independent course from the colonial objective of simply procuring a smooth supply of coloured servants for the

whites. In more recent times, similarly, one expected deliberations on how the Department has persistently resisted bigotry of the kind that is gnawing into the marrow of the nation as it undergoes a churning. The measure of the department's success in upholding the secular culture of the country is a tenable question though, given the fact that many of its graduates are taken in by student politics and reactionary groups, and nobody knows what the future holds.

The second chapter, titled "Revising English Literature Syllabuses", written by Fakrul Alam, gives an overview of how the curricula evolved over the decades when each revision of the syllabus was a timely step to march with the global educational perspectives. He mentions the job market and how the graduates are being benefitted from the new courses; while what is still lacking according to the graduates of the department is that the curricula need more research components to expand the opportunities for them. While new literatures, linguistics, and theories have enriched the English studies, media, cultural, gender studies and such others have made it more interdisciplinary. The third chapter complements the second with more detailed historiography of

the development of the curricula including the syllabuses of various decades, teaching methods and use of technology in pedagogy, and envisioning a possible future of it.

Niaz Zaman's chapter on "Women Empowerment and the Department of English" is enriched with historical references to the women who were themselves enlightened, empowered, and also illuminated the lives of others. The history of the first female student Leela Nag came to the nation's notice in 2021 when the Department had its centenary celebrations. This chapter talks about her as well as other illustrious women who taught, studied or held important administrative positions in the department. The fact that women dominate in numbers among the faculty and students is to be factored in vis-à-vis the current debate regarding gender quota and equal rights in the country. The chapter offers highlights of the glorious contributions of women of the department in academia, politics, cultural arena, and administration, and one can easily assess how progressive the university once upon a time was. This is sad to witness the gradual effacement of such a bright past through a bunch of murky events in the present times, which warn about a murkier future. The book is sure to initiate such thoughts while one

compares the written words with what one witnesses in a rather politicised and misogynistic campus culture.

Talking of culture, the following chapter "The Department of English: Literary and Cultural Contributions" by Syed Manzoorul Islam and Tahmina Ahmed may give a broader overview of how the department has contributed to the national cultural scene. Beginning from the very first years of the Department's establishment and through the East Pakistan period and then after the independence, its illustrious alumni participated in all kinds of literary and cultural activism that defined the evolving spirit of the Bengali nation. A plethora of great poets, writers, film makers, actors, singers, diplomats, ministers, politicians have tread the department's corridors as students, and they have etched their names permanently in the nation's history. This constant stream of erudite alumni could have been possible only because of the great teachers of the department who shaped the minds of the students. This phenomenon is also adequately exemplified in the chapter written by Bijoy Lal Basu and Farhanaz Rabbani.

In a few chapters the writers have tried to establish the interdisciplinary nature of English studies and its applicability in the job market. Media, civil service and teaching being identified as major destinations of the graduates, these chapters may open new vistas for the current students. Indeed, the last chapter talks much about the current facilities and tries to give a roadmap. The book maintains a healthy balance between the nostalgic past and a visibly certain future. With a colourful ensemble of texts, archival documents and photographs, the book has quite much to offer. English studies were introduced to Bangladesh through Dhaka University, and till date the department has proven leadership in national level decisions regarding educational matters. It is possible that teachers and alumni of the department will continue to do so. It is also expected that it will continue to take part in national crises and guide the nation as its great alumni always did, and in the next hundred years, another centennial book will sing of that glory for future readers.

**Sabiha Huq** teaches English at BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

# The evolution of theater magazines in Bengal

Review of 'Theaterer Kagoj Jotorokom Daay' (Troyee Prokashon, 2025) by Dr Babul Biswas

TUSAR TALUKDER

Dr Babul Biswas's *Theaterer Kagoj Jotorokom Daay* is a thoughtful and detailed study of the evolution of theater in Bengal and Bangladesh, through the lens of theatre-focused little magazines. Divided into three structured parts, the book offers a chronological narrative that highlights how these publications contributed to the growth of theater culture and critical thought in the region. The author not only traces their development but also probes into the challenges that led to their decline despite their pivotal roles.

The first part of the book addresses the emergence of theater magazines in pre-partition Bengal. Magazines like *Samakal*, *Mashik Mohammadi*, and *Sawgat* played crucial roles in providing platforms for discourse on theatrical art, performance, and criticism. These magazines acted as bridges between theater practitioners and the larger intellectual and cultural movements of their time. Dr Biswas shows how they nurtured a culture of discussion and reflection, helping to shape an evolving Bengali theater identity during a politically charged and artistically fertile era.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

Dr Biswas then shifts his focus to the post-partition period, specifically looking at East Pakistan and later, Bangladesh. The sociopolitical context here is significantly different, and theater becomes a medium for expression of national identity, protest,

and social consciousness. Magazines like *Shilpkala* (jointly edited by Abdul Mannan Syed and Abdus Selim) and *Theater* (edited by Ramendu Mazumdar) are discussed for their critical role in promoting new playwrights, experimental performances,

and cultural analysis. These publications provided intellectual grounding and space for collaboration among theater critics, directors, and writers. They documented both mainstream and fringe movements, preserving otherwise ephemeral elements of the theater scene.

The third part of the book is perhaps the most introspective. Dr Biswas explores why so many of these impactful little magazines ceased publication. He identifies reasons such as financial hardship, lack of institutional support, the absence of a consistent readership base, and changing media consumption patterns. These challenges reflect broader shifts in the cultural economy and priorities of artistic communities. However, even in their disappearance, these magazines have left behind a substantial legacy—a rich archive of creative and critical voices that continue to inform contemporary theater studies.

A notable point comes in the book's preface, where Ramendu Majumdar—one of the leading theater proponents, a prominent actor, and editor of *Theater*—praises Dr Babul Biswas's rigorous research. Majumdar highlights how the author has enriched the manuscript with well-

documented facts and practical examples drawn from the theater world, offering a rare and valuable insight into the cultural history of Bengal and Bangladesh.

One of the book's core arguments is that little magazines were instrumental in forming the intellectual and aesthetic landscape of Bengali theater. By offering a space for criticism, reflection, and innovation, they helped theater activists and critics engage with both local and global trends. Through editorials, essays, interviews, and reviews, they created a vibrant ecosystem for ideas to flourish.

*Theaterer Kagoj* is a valuable contribution to South Asian theater studies. Dr Babul Biswas not only documents the forgotten efforts of little theater magazines but also revives interest in their cultural responsibility. His work underscores the urgent need to preserve such platforms—whether in print or digital form—for future generations of artists, critics, and cultural historians.

**Tusar Talukder** teaches English at Central Women's University, Dhaka. He can be reached at writing.tusar@gmail.com.

## Hamza, Shamit deserve a system, not just a jersey

ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's 2-1 defeat to Singapore in the Asian Cup Qualifiers wasn't just a defeat -- it was a missed opportunity to build something better with the right tools finally in hand. And that's exactly what former striker and Mohammadan's league-winning coach Alfaz Ahmed is talking about: we finally have the parts, but we don't know how to assemble the machine.

For the first time in years, the Bangladesh team have access to quality midfielders in Hamza Choudhury and Shamit Shome -- players with international pedigree and the technical capability to dictate play. Yet, on the night it mattered, they were left stranded, victims of a system that failed to support them.

"Hamza found the ball but whom he did he get to play it to?" Alfaz asked, bluntly summing up the disjointed midfield.

It's a valid point. You don't bring in a Leicester City-bred midfielder like Hamza just to recycle possession sideways or to rely on individual hustle. You bring in players like him and Shamit to control the tempo, launch transitions, and create space for attackers. But what was witnessed instead was tactical confusion -- a midfield too narrow, wingers isolated, an attack that lacked punch, and overall a pattern of play that went missing.

This wasn't just about

underutilising individuals. It was about wasting a system's potential. Alfaz pointed to the lack of width, where left-footed Sohel Rana could have unlocked the left flank. Instead, the team became lopsided. While Hamza funnelled most passes to the right, Mohamad Ridoy offered no support on the left, cutting the field in half -- limiting options, and predictably, Bangladesh's threat.

Then there's the question of selection. Alfaz questioned the

omission of Taj Uddin, who had impressed against Bhutan. The same goes for Sohel, another performer option wasted in a rigid 4-2-3-1.

Let's be honest -- what was Bangladesh's game plan? Sit deep, defend, and maybe pounce on a counter? That strategy collapsed within 45 minutes.

"The defensive organisation was also not good because the defenders should close down the shooting space of Singapore's unmarked No. 7 while we conceded the first goal.

There were no steps to go follow-through after the goalkeeper punched the ball," Alfaz noted. The first goal, a simple failure in defensive tracking, said it all.

But beyond tactics, there's a psychological weight the team

carried. Expectations were sky-high at home. The stadium was packed. The fans were ready. And yet, the players looked more burdened by the occasion than inspired by it.

"High expectation was another factor," Alfaz said. "They played all out only after losing everything."

It's the oldest problem in football: pressure without purpose. Instead of setting up the team to play to its strengths -- midfield control, width, pace on the flanks -- we boxed ourselves in with conservative decisions.

And here's where Alfaz hit hardest: What's the point of having overseas talents if they're not used effectively? The entire narrative around Bangladesh's football "turnaround" revolves around the inclusion of foreign-born or foreign-trained players. If they're shoehorned into outdated systems or asked to play roles that negate their strengths, then we've learned nothing.

Hamza and Shamit can be game-changers. So can Rakib Hossain, Faysal Ahmed Fahim, and Fahamed Islam, if they get the ball in the right spaces. But none of that matters if the coach doesn't build a system that gels them together and brings the best out of them.

If Bangladesh want to dream of getting into the Asian Cup after 47 long years, the time for safe football is over. It's time to play smart, play bold -- and most importantly -- play to the team's strengths.

Otherwise, it's just dressing up talent in red and green and asking them to fight with one hand tied behind their back.



South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada emerged as the chief destroyer as he picked up his 17th five-wicket haul to bundle out Australia for 212 in 56.4 overs on Day 1 of the World Test Championship final at Lord's yesterday. The Proteas pacers made early inroads, reducing defending champions Australia to 4-67 before Steven Smith (66) and Beau Webster (72) hit half-centuries to stop Australia's slide. But the pace quartet of Rabada (5-51), Marco Jansen (3-49), Wiaan Mulder, and Lungi Ngidi kept the pressure on to bowl out Australia cheaply.

PHOTO: AFP

## Sammy fears more shock retirements

AGENCIES



West Indies coach Daren Sammy has said he was not surprised by Nicholas Pooran's shock retirement from international cricket -- and even predicted that more players may follow suit early in their careers.

"Surprised? No, I'm not surprised," said Sammy, who captained West Indies to T20 World Cup titles in 2012 and 2016. He added that he had already begun planning for a future without Pooran before the announcement came.

Pooran, 29, announced his retirement from international cricket on Monday. Though he never played a Test and last featured in an ODI two years ago, he is West Indies' all-time leading run-scorer in T20Is. His decision -- just eight months before a T20 World Cup -- shocked many, especially considering his success in the global franchise circuit.

"I'm pretty sure more will follow in that mood, in that direction," Sammy said after West Indies suffered their sixth consecutive white-ball defeat on the ongoing England tour. "That's the way T20 cricket is now -- especially for players from the West Indies, given the challenges we face in keeping them motivated to play for the crest."

"I said something to the guys in the team meeting today: we don't have control. It's up to each individual," he said. "I made my debut in 2004 at this very ground. Today, I saw the same loyal fans in the stands -- the same people from 21 years ago, bringing food, cheering us on."

"The passion they have, traveling from all over just to watch us -- not because we're great, but because of what West Indies cricket means to them. It gave them pride when Sir Viv [Richards] and Clive [Lloyd] came here in the 80s and won. That legacy matters."

"It's up to each player to understand what the crest represents, and to play with that passion. I can speak about it, but I can't force anyone to feel it -- just as I can't decide when someone retires."

## No buzz in Mirpur as Tigers' practice game begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The two-day intra-squad practice match between BCB Red and BCB Green began in Mirpur yesterday in humdrum fashion as instead of a large media contingent with cameras capturing even the minutest action, which is usually the case, there was hardly anyone present, creating an eerie environment that did not go unnoticed.

The team began training for their Sri Lanka tour on Monday during the ongoing Eid vacations, which somewhat explains the absence of fans who usually come to the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium to watch training sessions.

However, the number of reporters at the venue was less than even when the team had held closed-door training sessions in the past, which reinforces the public perception of cricket's waning popularity in Bangladesh.

Usually during practice matches, it's difficult to draw attention of the coaching staff. But yesterday, even the coaches were seen casually walking by the boundary ropes.

"Who is the top-scorer today?" this reporter asked Bangladesh's spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed who was near the sidelines. "Mominul Haque," he replied. But when he asked how many runs, all the coach could say was, "More than 50."

BCB Red's Mominul had actually made 78 off 131 balls, but he played two innings on the same day.

As it is an intra-squad match, the hard and fast rules of first-class cricket did not apply, allowing Mominul to bat again after he got run out at the non-striker's end when Najmul Hossain Shanto's straight drive ricocheted off Nahid Rana's fingers and onto the stumps.

In his second opportunity, Mominul batted for a long time under extremely hot conditions before Ebadot Hossain's plan of bombarding him with short deliveries eventually worked as he flashed one to deep third-man. Ebadot in total claimed three wickets, earlier having seen the back of Shadman Islam (17) and Mushfiqur Rahim (0).

On the other hand, skipper Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who opened the innings, scored a positive 39-ball 40 but fell leg-before, trying to execute a reverse-sweep.

Nayeem Hasan also bagged three wickets while Liton Das got 43 at number six as BCB Red managed 247 for 9 before declaring. BCB Green, in reply, reached 31 for 1 at day's end.

The Bangladesh contingent is set to leave for Sri Lanka in two batches on Thursday and Friday in what is shaping up to be a tough assignment.

If interest in cricket is really waning, the day's progress showed that performances alone can reclaim what is being lost.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Vinicius Junior fired Brazil to a 1-0 win over Paraguay, handing coach Carlo Ancelotti a perfect 66th birthday gift and preserving Brazil's unique record of appearing in every World Cup. Australia beat Saudi Arabia 2-1 to qualify from Group C. England, meanwhile, suffered a shock 3-1 home defeat to Senegal in a friendly match -- their first ever loss to African opposition.

PHOTO: AFP

## Olympic return demands cricket's best

AGENCIES

Cricket will mark its Olympic return after 128 years at the 2028 Los Angeles Games, featuring six-team men's and women's T20 tournaments.

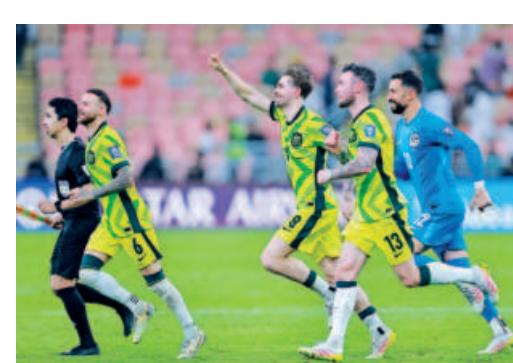
But the host nation's chances of participation remain uncertain, as many in the cricketing world push for only the highest-ranked teams to compete -- regardless of geography.

The U.S. sits 17th in the men's rankings and 24th in the women's, making automatic qualification unlikely.

"I'd love an associate member to get in there but let's be realistic," Sumod Damodar, who represents associate members like the U.S. in the ICC Chief Executives' Committee, told Reuters.

"Should the U.S. get an automatic place? I'll say let's put the best that we can on show."

"We're coming back into the Olympics after 128 years. We need to make that impression so that people will say, 'Okay, we don't want them to go back and beg 'please include us' before every Olympics.'



## THIAGO ALMADA

### The making of Argentina's midfield maestro

AGENCIES

In a year of transitions and trials for Argentina, one name has risen steadily from promise to prominence: Thiago Almada.

The 24-year-old, long tagged as a "gamble" in Argentina's setup, has finally shed that label and cemented his place as a genuine national team player.

Though Almada was part of the World Cup-winning squad in Qatar, his minutes were limited. It wasn't until 2025 that he truly stepped out of the shadows. With Lionel Messi absent for three of Argentina's four matches this year, Almada embraced the responsibility and the spotlight.

His performances in March and June have transformed him from squad player to central figure.

Against Uruguay and Brazil, Almada didn't just fill in, he led. A stunning goal against Uruguay capped a second-half resurgence he largely orchestrated. In the



emphatic 4-1 win over Brazil, he didn't appear on the scoresheet but was instrumental in the build-up play.

June brought further validation. With Messi watching from the bench against Chile, Almada

delivered again, assisting Julian Alvarez for the match-winning goal.

Even when Messi returned to the starting lineup versus Colombia, coach Lionel Scaloni found no reason to sideline Almada. The duo shared glimpses of a potentially potent partnership. And when Argentina were a man down and trailing, it was Almada who salvaged the draw with an 81st-minute equaliser -- a thunderous strike.

Almada credits his growth to the rigors of Brazilian football and his recent move to French side Lyon. "Lyon gave me rhythm and helped me settle in Europe," he said. "Brazil prepared me to play every three days. I think I adapted well, and I hope to keep showing I'm in good form."

Scaloni, clearly impressed, praised Almada's fearlessness and maturity: "He takes on the challenge. He asks for the ball. He keeps us calm."





## NAT'L EYE INSTITUTE Thousands denied treatment over two weeks

Some services to resume today amid standoff between July protesters and hospital staff

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Thousands of patients have been deprived of treatment as most services at the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital (NIOH) in Dhaka remained suspended for two weeks until yesterday.

Hospital authorities plan to partially resume outdoor services from 8:00am today, with full resumption expected from Saturday.

However, some staffers, including doctors, remain sceptical about fully restoring services, as several individuals injured during the July uprising continue to "occupy" a section of the hospital despite having been issued discharge letters.

"The authorities are planning to fully resume operations from Saturday, but everyone is still panicked about the previous incidents. Given the current situation, we remain sceptical about a full resumption of services," said a doctor on condition of anonymity.

Staffers also alleged that some of the injured July protesters -- referred to as July Joddha (warriors) as per a government notice -- have been misbehaving with hospital personnel, and that a few were involved in malpractices such as brokering patient admissions and giving bribes to fast-track surgeries.

On the other hand, several of the injured protesters

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## Dengue cases surge outside the capital 288 people hospitalised in a day across country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 95 percent of the dengue cases reported in the country yesterday came from districts outside Dhaka and experts are urging immediate action to prevent a more severe outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), of the 288 people hospitalised with dengue yesterday, 276 were from areas outside the capital. This marks the highest daily tally of dengue cases reported so far this year.

The trend follows a broader pattern observed in 2025: of the 5,303 dengue cases recorded to date, 4,012 -- more than 75 percent -- have been reported from outside Dhaka. At least 1,271 cases have been reported within Dhaka city -- 478 in Dhaka North City Corporation and 793 in Dhaka South City Corporation.

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Bangladesh is experiencing more dengue cases in 2025 than during the same period last year. As of May 25, 2025, the country had recorded 3,972 cases and 23 deaths, compared to 2,853 cases and 41 deaths by the same date in 2024.

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## Israel kills 120 in Gaza

At least 71 aid-seekers among dead; Gaza-bound activist convoy crosses Libyan capital en route to Cairo

AGENCIES

Israeli gunfire and airstrikes killed at least 120 Palestinians in Gaza yesterday, many of them near an aid site operated by the US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in the centre of the enclave, local health officials said.

Gaza's health ministry said at least 57 people were killed and 363 wounded as they approached a food distribution centre near the former Jewish settlement of Netzarim before dawn.

Israel's military said its forces fired warning shots overnight towards a group of suspects as they posed a threat to troops in the area of the Netzarim Corridor.

Later yesterday, health officials at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip said at least 14 people had been killed by Israeli gunfire as they approached another GHF site in Rafah.

At least 474 people were also injured across Gaza in the past 24 hours, officials in Gaza said.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed 55,104 people, mostly civilians, according to health authorities in Gaza, and flattened much of the densely populated strip, which is home to more than two million

people. At least 127,394 people have been also injured.

Most of the population is displaced and malnutrition is widespread.

The UN condemned the killings in Gaza, which it says is the "hungriest place on Earth".

The UN has refused to supply aid via the foundation, which uses private contractors with Israeli military backup in what they say is a breach of humanitarian standards.

Elsewhere in Gaza, its health ministry said at least 11 other people were killed by separate Israeli gunfire and strikes across the coastal enclave yesterday.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio condemned the sanctions imposed

Tuesday by Britain and other nations against two Israeli cabinet members accused of repeatedly inciting violence against Palestinians.

Britain's foreign ministry earlier announced that Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir will be banned from entering the UK and will have any assets in the country frozen.

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Norway have also imposed fresh measures against the ministers.

- US slams sanctions by UK, allies on far-right Israeli ministers
- Greta Thunberg back in Sweden after deportation from Israel
- Israel urges Egypt to block convoy



Musk regrets some of his Trump criticisms

AFP, Washington

Elon Musk, the world's richest person and Donald Trump's former advisor, said yesterday that he regretted some of his recent criticisms of the US president after the pair's public falling out last week.

"I regret some of my posts about President @realDonaldTrump last week. They went too far," Musk wrote on his social media platform X.

Musk's expression of regret came just days after Trump threatened the tech billionaire with "serious consequences" if he sought to punish Republicans who voted for a controversial spending bill.

## 51% Bangladeshi girls married off before they're 18

Finds UNFPA report on world population

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia, with 51 percent of girls married before turning 18 between 2006 and 2024, according to a report released yesterday by the United Nations.

**In contrast to Bangladesh's figures, only two percent of girls in the Maldives were married before 18, compared to 10 percent in Sri Lanka, 18 percent in Pakistan, 23 percent in India, 26 percent in Bhutan, and 35 percent in Nepal.**

The findings are part of the State of World Population 2025 report, titled The Real Fertility Crisis, published by UNFPA.

The report highlights significant variations in child marriage rates across South Asia.

In contrast to Bangladesh's figures, only 2 percent of girls in the Maldives were married before 18, compared to 10 percent in Sri Lanka, 18 percent in Pakistan, 23 percent in India, 26 percent in Bhutan, and 35 percent in Nepal.

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## 1 dies as BNP factions clash Widow wants justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Nganj

The body of BNP supporter Mamun Bhuyan, the man who got shot during a clash between two groups of BNP's affiliated bodies, was brought to his home in the Majhipara area of Bhulta, Narayanganj, yesterday afternoon.

His wife Emma Akter was inconsolable and fainted several times.

"My two innocent children... He left, placing them in my arms. How will I survive with these children?" she wailed.

When Mamun, 32, a supplier of gas cylinders, got shot near his home on Tuesday, Emma and her two children, both aged below 10, were not home. She came back after hearing that Mamun had been shot and learned at night that he had died.

"He is innocent. I want justice for him. Everyone involved should face trial," she said between sobs.

Mamun's elder brother

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Fishermen readying their nets and trawlers to sail out to the Bay of Bengal as the two-month ban on marine fishing ends at midnight. The photo was taken yesterday in Daulatkhan upazila of Bhola. Story on page 4.

## 1 killed, 5 hurt in clash over sexual harassment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

One person was killed and at least five others injured in a clash triggered by an incident of alleged sexual harassment in Dhanachapur village of Netrokona's Kendua upazila on Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Anisul Islam, 43, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kendua Police Station, adding that the clash began in the afternoon and continued until nightfall.

Quoting the victim's family, the OC said that around 5:20pm, several women from Anisul's family were gathered outside their home when a group of young men -- including Amin, 24, and Sajib, 30 -- allegedly made obscene remarks and sang lewd songs.

When the women protested, neighbours intervened and drove the men away.

However, about 10 minutes later, a group of 10 to 15 individuals, reportedly led by Md Siddiq Mia, 40, launched an attack on Saidul's home.

Armed with locally made weapons, the attackers vandalised the house and assaulted both male and female members of the family, the OC added.

Police arrived shortly after and brought the situation under control.

Those injured included Anisul's

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