



"It will take strong political and legal courage to make sure every Russian war criminal faces justice, including Putin."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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'I felt like the king of the world'

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# Govt launches probe into last 3 national polls

Forms investigation committee led by ex-HC judge Justice Shamim Hasnain

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government has formed a committee to investigate allegations of corruption, irregularities, and criminal activities in the three national elections held in 2014, 2018, and 2024.

A gazette notification issued last night said the committee would also recommend steps to ensure free and fair parliamentary polls in future. It has been asked to submit its report by September 30.

According to Election Commission officials and experts, this is the first time since independence that a government has launched a formal investigation into alleged election irregularities.

All three elections were held when Sheikh Hasina was in power and her party the Awami League won two-thirds majorities.

These elections have been widely criticised at home and abroad, and there are allegations that the then ruling party was elected in these "staged" polls by "undermining" the people's right to vote in various ways, said the gazette.

"There are also serious allegations against the managers of these elections of violating the obligation of running the state through elected representatives as enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh.

"It is feared that this has endangered the rule of law, democracy and fundamental human rights in the country," the gazette said.

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PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Farm workers winnow paddy to separate the chaff from the grain in Tanore upazila of Rajshahi. This season's paddy harvesting is nearly complete in the region.

# IMF sets new loan conditions

Bangladesh must clear dues, hit steep revenue, reserve targets for next tranche

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund has set new performance criteria tied to Bangladesh's \$5.5 billion loan programme, requiring the country to significantly reduce both domestic and external arrears in the power and fertiliser sectors before the next tranche can be released.

Under the revised conditions detailed in the IMF's latest programme report released yesterday, the government must cut external payment arrears in the power and fertiliser sectors from \$870 million in June 2025 to \$562 million by December, and further to \$254 million by June 2026. Simultaneously, domestic arrears in these sectors must be halved from Tk 28,000 crore in June to Tk 14,070 crore by December, and brought down to zero by June 2026.

"External payment arrears have surfaced, notably within the power sector's state-owned enterprises, driven by limited foreign exchange availability and outstanding domestic subsidy arrears owed by the central government to the SOEs," the IMF said in the report.

In a shift with broader implications, the IMF has elevated these arrears clearance targets to the level of quantitative performance criteria, the most binding form of conditionality in IMF programmes. Failure to meet them would require Bangladesh to formally request a waiver from the IMF Executive Board before future disbursements can proceed.

Despite some improvement in the current account during the first

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# 2024 polls were 'dummy, farcical'

Ex-CEC Awal tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former chief election commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday told a Dhaka court that the 2024 national election was "dummy and farcical".

He said this during a remand hearing in a case where he is accused of election irregularities and acting with bias.

A witness highlighted the limitations of the Election Commission, saying it would not be possible to hold fair polls in Bangladesh even in the next 1,000 years unless there are fundamental reforms.

He was escorted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court with his hands cuffed around 12:50pm amid tight security. He was wearing

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



# Turmoil deepens at NBR as officials threaten shutdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesting National Board of Revenue officials have announced an all-out shutdown from Saturday if the tax authority's chairman is not removed by today.

The ultimatum comes after the protesters -- comprising income tax, VAT and customs officials -- under the banner of 'NBR Reform Unity Council' staged a pen-down strike and sit-in for the fourth consecutive day in front of the NBR headquarters in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

The demonstrations began at 12pm in front of the NBR headquarters in Dhaka.

A large contingent of law enforcement personnel, including members of the army, police, Rapid Action Battalion, Bangladesh Coast Guard and Border Guard Bangladesh, were already deployed at the site.

Protesters said no one was allowed to enter or exit the premises during the demonstration, with several employees sitting at the building's main gates.

Around 1:30pm, Council President Hasan Muhammad Tarek Rikabdar, an additional commissioner, tried to enter the NBR building but was blocked by

law enforcers.

In protest, he sat down in front of the main gate, further escalating the demonstration.

However, Asif Mahmud, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan



Police's Tejgaon Division, said the protesting officers were themselves preventing others from entering the building and the police were just providing security.

Officials from 25 customs stations including Chattogram and Mongla ports as well as the Kamalapur inland container depot as well as more than

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



# US had to enter war to save Israel

## Says Khamenei, claims Iran 'slapped America in the face'

AGENCIES

Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday said the US had to enter the war to save Israel, which almost collapsed amid Iranian strikes.

In a statement and a televised speech carried by state media, he hailed his country's "victory" over Israel and vowed never to surrender to the United States, while claiming that Washington had been dealt a "slap" after striking Iranian nuclear sites.

He also said President Donald Trump "exaggerated" the impact of US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, in his first appearance since a ceasefire in the war with Israel took hold.

Khamenei's remarks come two days after a ceasefire ended a 12-day war between Iran and Israel, the focus' deadliest

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

# Law adviser accuses Star of bias, fails to give details

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday accused The Daily Star and Prothom Alo of bias during a seminar in the capital.

Referring to The Daily Star, he cited an incident that he claimed took place 13 to 14 years ago, adding that he could provide all the evidence if asked.

However, when pressed for details later, he did not provide any as of the filing of this report at 1:30am today. He said the incident might have occurred 20 years ago and that he could not recall the specifics.

Talking to our correspondent, he also said maybe it should not have been mentioned in public, and that the matter should be let go.

Earlier, speaking at the event, organised by the Centre for Governance Studies, the law adviser had said, "I would like to talk about the code of conduct in journalism. As

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Three HSC candidates sit together for a final round of preparation before entering the exam hall at Tejgaon College in the capital. This year's HSC and equivalent exams began yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# CASES AGAINST JOURNOS

## Law ministry's 'hands are tied'

Can't do anything until trial process starts: Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law ministry has limited power to prevent cases, including those for murder, from being filed against journalists, because anyone can file a case in Bangladesh, said Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul.

The ministry's hands are tied when it comes to intervening in such cases, particularly during the initial stages of investigation, he added.

The adviser made the remarks at a roundtable titled "Media Freedom: A Review of the Legal Framework for Journalist Protection and Grievance Redressal" organised by the Centre for Governance Studies at the Cirdap auditorium in the capital yesterday.

He explained that his ministry can only intervene to withdraw a case after a charge sheet has been submitted and the trial process has formally begun. "If a case is under police investigation, the law ministry can do nothing about it. It falls under the police's jurisdiction."

Nazrul claimed that some cases against journalists were not filed over their reporting but for alleged incitement or abetment of a crime.

He also criticised the media, stating, "You, the journalists, have long been divided into factions. How will you achieve freedom if you are not united?"

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## CEC meets chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin called on Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus yesterday after the government announced a tentative election timeline earlier this month.

This was the first meeting between the two after the announcement.

The meeting took place at the State Guest House Jamuna, said Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, deputy press secretary to the chief adviser.

On June 13, Yunus said the next parliamentary election could be held a week ahead of Ramadan in 2026, provided all preparations are completed.

The announcement followed a meeting in London with BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, where the latter suggested holding the election before Ramadan.

Yunus previously said the elections could be held in the first half of April next year.

After the meeting with Tarique, he said the February timeline will depend on progress in reforms and the trials of perpetrators of killings in the July uprising.

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Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin pays a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

## Holy Ashura on July 6

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussein (RA), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the Battle of Karbala, will be observed in the country on July 6, as the moon marking the beginning of Muharram was sighted yesterday.

So, the month of Muharram of 1447 Hijri begins today. Therefore, the holy Ashura will be observed on July 6, according to an Islamic Foundation press release issued yesterday.

The decision was made at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee at Islamic Foundation conference room in the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the evening. Religious Affairs Adviser AFM Khalid Hossain chaired the meeting.

## Ukraine stopped Russian advances

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's army chief yesterday ordered defensive lines to be built more quickly in the northeastern Sumy region, as Russian forces gained ground towards the industrial Dnipropetrovsk region.

Sumy lies over the border from Russia's Kursk region where Ukrainian forces launched an audacious land grab last year that Moscow took months to push back, with the help of North Korean forces.

## Law adviser

FROM PAGE 1

far as I know, apart from Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, no other newspaper in Bangladesh has a code of conduct. A code of conduct is a form of self-regulation – you'll find it in every major newspaper in the world.

"Let me give you examples from the two dailies where there is a code of conduct. At The Daily Star, around 13 to 14 years ago ... and I can give you all the evidence if you want ... there was a lecturer at the law department of Dhaka University. I remember it clearly because of his position. He had made extremely offensive remarks about Khaleda Zia, and in response, Chhatra Dal became very angry. They began protesting and demanded his removal from the university."

He continued, "But The Daily Star turned him into a national hero – they started featuring him on the front page, calling him a professor, even though he was just a lecturer. Every day, the paper referred to him as 'professor', simply because he had insulted Khaleda Zia.

"When the Dhaka University Teachers Association unanimously decided to expel him, that news never made it to The Daily Star.

"I'm very sorry to say this ...that man was so deranged that he died by suicide a few years ago. And this is the person The Daily Star turned into a hero.

"But when he was expelled from the Dhaka University Club, no less – the first time someone was unanimously expelled in the history of that club – The Daily Star didn't print a word about it."

Turning to this newspaper's correspondent present at the seminar, the law adviser said, "If you raised this with Mahfuz bhai[the editor and publisher of The Daily Star] ...I will give it to you... This can be a classic story.

"My question is: why did this newspaper publish two incorrect pieces of information?

"First, they elevated a lecturer to 'professor' and turned him into a front-page icon. Second, when he was expelled, they completely ignored the news."

He recommended, "This is a request to journalists in general. Collectivise and suggest alternative proposals. That will surely be better than any initiative that the government comes up with."

Nazrul also said, "If journalists have inbuilt partisanship, then it will be difficult for the general public to trust them."

Following the seminar, our correspondent requested the law adviser to provide us with the details of the case he had mentioned at the seminar.

He told our correspondent over the phone that he could not recall the details of the incident. "The incident may have happened 20 years ago, and the first name of the lecturer in question may have been Shafique."

He said he did not have any further details at the moment.

The law adviser went on to reassess his action of referring to the case at the seminar. He told our correspondent, "Perhaps, this case should not have been referred to publicly. The man had committed suicide later on..."

He requested the correspondent to put the matter to rest. The Daily Star, however, believes it has a responsibility to look into it.

Later on, The Daily Star sent another message requesting him to furnish the newspaper with specifics but was yet to receive a response.

## Turmoil deepens at NBR

FROM PAGE 1

100 VAT, customs and tax offices across the country have been observing a daily five-hour work abstention since Wednesday.

The protest runs from 12pm to 5pm each day.

While export consignments are still being processed, importers say they are unable to clear their goods due to the ongoing disruption, which, in turn, is affecting exports that depend on imported raw materials.

One such aggrieved importer is Anamul Islam, owner of Golden Steel Traders.

His imported consignment of 12 containers arrived at Chattogram Port last Sunday but he is unable to complete customs clearance or pay the duty to release the goods. Due to the delay, he has to count container and port charges amounting to about Tk 1.5 lakh a day.

However, Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram Custom House Mohammad Saidul Islam said directives have been issued to ensure no file remains pending after the abstention hours.

Export operations and airport services remain functional during the protests, he said, adding that his office has not received any official complaints regarding the issue.

The average number of import consignment assessments and

inspections per day has dropped from about 4,000 to approximately 2,000 over the past few days, according to data from Chattogram Customs House.

Achieving the annual revenue target for the fiscal year is unlikely amid the protests, according to customs officials.

As of June 25, Tk 73,321 crore has been collected against the annual target of Tk 83,432 crore.

"Naturally, our revenue collection is being hampered to some extent due to the ongoing movement," said NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan at an event organised by the Economic Reporters' Forum in Dhaka yesterday.

Meanwhile, experts believe the issue is being prolonged due to ego clashes.

"It is not about anyone stepping down or serving anyone's ego – the economy is suffering due to this stalemate," said Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

An in-person meeting should take place between the high-level policymakers and the protesting NBR officials with open minds on both sides, he said.

The meeting should agree upon a joint action plan to revise the relevant ordinance, starting with a defined date, methodology, timeline and identification of stakeholders.

The following process should involve key stakeholders, including business leaders, experts and political party

leaders.

The process must remain open and transparent, focusing on creating a professional, efficient, and accountable tax system, he added.

The protesting officials though boycotted the Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed's offer of a meeting yesterday to break the impasse saying it was not an "official invitation."

However, some senior NBR officials met with Ahmed.

"We had an open discussion, and I believe this issue will be resolved soon – we plan to hold another meeting next week to finalise things," Ahmed said after the meeting.

At a press briefing following the four-day pen-down strike, the council sought Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's intervention to solve the crisis.

The council also announced a 'March to NBR' programme for June 28 during which all offices under the tax, customs and VAT departments across the country will march towards the NBR headquarters.

"A virtual meeting is underway with the top NBR officials. We are open to discussions if a formal proposal comes from the government, even if that happens on a Friday," one of the protesters told The Daily Star at 11:00pm yesterday.

culture of governance.

"We expected a different Bangladesh after the regime change, but the 'deep state' remains intact. These institutions still operate as before, and we see no signs of policy change," he said.

Prothom Alo Joint Editor Sohrab Hossain questioned the government's narrative of powerlessness.

"If the law adviser says his ministry has no role, then what is the home adviser's responsibility? The home ministry repeatedly promised to act against false cases, but what action has been taken?"

He described the current situation as an "unhealthy and abnormal time" where a culture of fear persists.

Among the topics discussed was the structural crisis plaguing the media, including ownership and financial opacity.

AB Party Chairman Mujibur Rahman Monju highlighted how business interests are crippling journalism. "We don't want to see any possibility of reforms without a revolution," he added.

Bobby Hajjaj, chairman of the Nationalist Democratic Movement, suggested that news media outlets be legally structured as non-profit organisations, with a clear separation between ownership and editorial boards to ensure independence.

CGS Executive Director Zillur Rahman, who moderated the event, concluded that while legal reforms are crucial, the rampant filing of murder cases against journalists has become the most pressing threat, acting as a "hanging sword" over the profession.

BNP activist Dr Shakhawat Hossain Sayantha, Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh; political analyst Zahed Ur Rahman, senior journalist MA Aziz, and Qadruddin Shishir, founding editor of The Dissent, also spoke at the event, among others.

face of America," he said, a reference to Iran's missile launch targeting the largest US base in the Middle East.

"I want to congratulate the great Iranian nation... for its victory over the fallacious Zionist regime," he added, claiming that Israel had "almost collapsed" because of Iran's strikes.

Both Iran and Israel had already claimed they won, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailing on Tuesday a "historic victory" for Israel.

In the United States, the leaked intelligence opened up a Pandora's box of accusations and counter-claims.

## Govt launches probe

FROM PAGE 1

"...In order to ensure the people's right to vote in future, safeguard democracy in the country and to prevent the threat of fascism and authoritarian rule, the interim government has decided to investigate the corruption, irregularities and criminal activities committed in these elections," it added.

The five-member committee is led by Justice Shamim Hasnain, a retired High Court judge and current member of the Law Commission. Other members are: Shamim Al Mamun, former additional secretary; Kazi Mahfuzul Haque (Supan), associate professor of law at Dhaka University; lawyer Tajriyaan Akram Hussain; and election expert Abdul Alim.

Justice Hasnain served at the High Court from 2005 to 2017.

Kazi Mahfuzul was a member of the Judicial Reform Commission, while Alim previously served on the Electoral Reform Commission. Tajriyaan is an advocate at the District and Sessions Judges Court, Dhaka.

The areas of the committee's work will include analysing reports by election observers, domestic and foreign monitoring organisations and civil society groups, and complaints raised in the media regarding the polls.

It will assess expert opinions on the allegations of corruption, irregularities, and criminal activities in these elections and their overall impartiality and acceptability.

The committee will analyse the role of the Awami League and those involved in limiting the participation of political parties in these elections and obstructing the people's right to vote.

It will also scrutinise the roles of the former election commissions, their secretariat, administration, law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the election process.

Allegations of financial misconduct by former election commissions will also come under review.

Based on its findings, the committee will determine the responsibility for irregularities.

It will also make recommendations on changes to relevant laws, rules and regulations, the Election Commission and administrative arrangements.

The gazette came just hours after a one-on-one meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus

## IMF sets new loan conditions

FROM PAGE 1

half of FY25, the IMF warned that the broader external position has weakened. The emergence of arrears by state enterprises, a "substantial decline in FDI inflows", and large unrecorded capital outflows are expected to widen the external financing gap to \$3.8 billion in FY25, significantly above earlier projections.

The IMF said the financing gap is expected to "remain substantial" through FY26-27. However, it said the pressure would gradually ease as capital outflows decline, supported by reserve accumulation and stepped-up financing from development partners.

In parallel, the IMF has also set a high bar for revenue mobilisation. The National Board of Revenue is expected to collect Tk 443,530 crore by June 2025 and Tk 550,700 crore by June 2026, an ambitious target that will require substantial improvements in tax compliance, administrative reforms, and reduction of exemptions.

The targets for net international

and Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the chief adviser's residence. It follows Yunus' directive 10 days earlier to probe the election commissions' role in past irregularities.

In its report in February, the Electoral Reform Commission recommended introducing methods to hold election commissioners accountable for failing to do their constitutional duties. It also called for an investigation into the irregularities by "election commissioners and officials" during the last three national polls.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Electoral Reform Commission Chairman Badiul Alam Majumdar welcomed the investigation, expressing hope that justice would be served and those involved in wrongdoings held accountable.

"As far as I recall, no other government has taken such a step," he said.

Each of the three elections under review has been marred by serious controversy.

The January 2024 election, conducted by the Kazi Habibul Awal-led EC, was boycotted by major opposition parties, including the BNP. The ruling Awami League fielded independents, many of whom were party insiders, to maintain the illusion of a competitive race.

The December 2018 polls, overseen by the KM Nurul Huda-led commission, faced allegations of ballot-box stuffing on the night before voting. The Jatiya Oikya Front claimed that 30 to 60 percent of votes were cast in advance. A study by Transparency International Bangladesh corroborated this, finding evidence of overnight ballot-box stuffing at more than one centre in 33 of 50 constituencies surveyed.

The January 2014 election, held under former CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, was one-sided. With the BNP and other opposition parties boycotting, 153 MPs were elected unopposed.

The BNP on Sunday filed a case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station against the three former chief election commissioners and 22 others, including Hasina and 11 former election commissioners.

Former CECs Huda and Habibul were arrested in Dhaka on Sunday and Wednesday.

reserves (NIR) have also been revised upward. Bangladesh must raise NIR from \$17.4 billion in June 2025 to \$19.9 billion by December, and to \$22.41 billion by June 2026, as the IMF emphasises rebuilding external buffers.

The IMF programme includes three levels of conditionality: prior actions, indicative targets, and performance criteria. The latter are legally binding within the arrangement, and failure to meet them halts disbursements unless the IMF Board approves a waiver based on corrective action.

The tougher conditions come as Bangladesh faces a confluence of challenges – from high inflation and sluggish growth to US tariff pressures on key exports.

Analysts say that tying state enterprises' arrears and tax revenue to performance criteria reflects the IMF's growing concern over fiscal slippage and the risk that mounting subsidy burdens and underperforming state enterprises could derail macroeconomic reforms.





## Install solar panels on all govt building rooftops: CA

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday instructed the authorities concerned to take initiatives to generate power by installing solar panels on the rooftops of all government buildings in the country.

While addressing a meeting titled “National Rooftop Solar Programme” at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka, the chief adviser directed for prompt implementation of the programme, and instructed for necessary measures to install rooftop solar

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A boy jumps from a riverside platform into the Turag river below amid rain while his friends await their turn. In a moment, everything could go wrong and he could fall onto the stairs, leading to a major accident. The photo was taken in the Bosila area of the capital yesterday.

## HSC, equivalent exams begin

19,759 absent on first day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations began across the country yesterday with the Bangla First Paper test.

The examinations started at 10:00am at 2,797 centres nationwide. Written exams are scheduled to continue until August 10, with practical exams set for August 11–21.

A total of 12,51,111 students are registered under



different education boards to take the examinations this year. The total number of examinees is 81,882 fewer than last year.

According to the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, 19,759 candidates were absent on the first day of the exams, including 14,513 from the general education boards, 4,196 from the Madrasa board, and 1,050 from the Technical board.

Meanwhile, 43 candidates were expelled for malpractice on the first day, the committee also said.

Amid a rise in Covid-19 and dengue cases, the coordination committee has enforced strict health guidelines at all venues, said Prof Khandoker Ehsanul Kabir, chairman of the Dhaka Education Board and head of the committee.

During a visit to Vashantek Government College centre in the capital, Education Adviser Prof Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar told reporters that strict vigilance would prevent any question paper leaks this year.

## EC aims to procure polls materials by September

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has stepped up preparations for the upcoming 13th National Parliamentary Election, aiming to complete the procurement of all necessary electoral materials by September.

Speaking to reporters at the EC headquarters in the capital yesterday, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said, “The procurement process will be completed by September. Some changes are being made in one of the tenders to facilitate this, and that is already underway.”

He said preparations include printing 21 types of forms, 17 types of packets, five types of ID cards, the code of conduct, posters of electoral symbols, and training and election management manuals and guidelines.

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## Waterlogging, potholes plague Ashkona road

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and DIPAN NANDY

With her seven-year-old daughter, Mariam Begum, 32, was heading to school on a rickshaw along the road adjacent to the water pump at Ashkona in the capital's Uttara.

As they reached the pump, their rickshaw overturned into a waterlogged crater, leaving both of them seriously injured.

Bystanders pulled them out of the knee-deep water and took them to a nearby pharmacy for first aid. Such incidents have become common in the area.

Residents are frequently injured on this stretch. Locals say the road has turned into a “death trap”, with accidents occurring daily.

One resident claimed that a schoolgirl was electrocuted after falling into a ditch, although she survived after being taken to a hospital.

Despite repeated complaints, authorities have yet to begin repair work.

The road, used daily by hundreds of commuters, remains full of potholes and submerged in stagnant water, even after light rain.

Residents say it has been in this condition for over seven years.

Although development work was supposed to be completed three years ago, not a single step has been taken. According to locals, just one hour of rain makes the road unusable for more than two weeks.

“No one from the city corporation has even come to inspect the area. Had they visited, they would have seen

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

## INT’L DAY IN SUPPORT OF TORTURE VICTIMS

## ‘End immunity enjoyed by law enforcers’

Demand survivors of enforced disappearance; BLAST calls for legal reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Survivors of enforced disappearances yesterday called for an end to the blanket immunity enjoyed by law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh.

The lack of accountability has allowed systematic torture, custodial abuse, and enforced disappearances to continue unchecked, they said.

On the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, United for the Victims of Enforced Disappearances (UVED) urged the government to establish independent oversight mechanisms for all security forces and intelligence agencies and to formally acknowledge the involvement of these agencies in rights violations.

In a statement, UVED said, “Weak oversight, entrenched impunity, and political interference in law enforcement and the judiciary have enabled state agencies to commit torture with near-total immunity. Law enforcement bodies routinely operate beyond legal limits, while victims face retaliation, complex legal barriers, and an inaccessible justice system.”

The group said law enforcement agencies often use remand to extract forced confessions, extend illegal

detention beyond the 24-hour legal limit, and target political opponents.

It added that political interference, weak enforcement, and the reluctance of magistrates to challenge illegal remand practices have allowed torture to become routine.

“In practice, it [remand] has become synonymous with custodial torture and inhuman treatment,” UVED said.

The group also called for the publication of a white paper, under judicial supervision, to document incidents of torture and name those responsible.

It also urged institutional reforms to ensure that confessions obtained under duress are inadmissible and that the remand system is not misused.

UVED demanded the repeal of laws it described as repressive and incompatible with international human rights standards.

These include the Special Powers Act, 1974 and the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2013, which, it argued, have been used to justify extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances.

The organisation also called for legal reforms to recognise enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity and for anti-terrorism trials

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## Focus on girls’ edn, health to end child marriage

Says foreign adviser at meeting with new UNFPA country rep

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain has stressed the importance of keeping girls in school, expanding economic opportunities, and ensuring essential health services for underprivileged communities to end child marriage, which remains widespread in Bangladesh.

“Every preventable death is one too many,” he said during a meeting with Catherine Breen Kamkong, the newly appointed country representative of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), who presented her credentials at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage in South Asia, with 51 percent of girls married before the age of 18 between 2006 and 2024, according to the State of World Population 2025 report released by UNFPA on June 11.

Maternal health is also a major concern, with a maternal mortality ratio of 115 deaths per 1,00,000 live births, the report stated.

During the meeting, Touhid said keeping girls

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## Supporters of Ishraque call off protests

DSCC administrator joins work after 42 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Md Shahjahan Mia resumed duties at Nagar Bhaban yesterday afternoon as BNP leader Ishraque Hossain’s supporters reopened the office after 42 days.

Officials from the engineering department also returned to work.

Ishraque’s supporters also announced an end to their movement.

The protest began on May 14, with demonstrators demanding that Ishraque be sworn in as mayor. From May 15 to June 23, DSCC employees locked the main gate and departmental offices, suspending all civic services during the period.

Limited services resumed on June 23, when the

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## Weakening the executive won’t help democracy

Says BNP leader Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said weakening the executive branch will not help strengthen the state’s democratic framework.

“Right now, there seems to be a tendency within the efforts of the Reform Commission and the National Consensus Commission to regulate the executive branch as much as possible. Yes, the executive branch has acted authoritatively in the past, but that doesn’t mean we can abolish it, nor weaken it,” he said.

He made these remarks at a discussion held at Jatiya Press Club marking the anniversary of Nagorik Oikya.

“For the same reason, we cannot abolish the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## EU envoy hopes for restoration of democracy

Says Khosru



UNB, Dhaka

European Union (EU) Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller has conveyed to the BNP his hope that democratic order will soon be restored in Bangladesh through a free, fair and credible national election.

The EU envoy expressed this hope during a meeting yesterday with BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury at the party chairperson’s office in Gulshan.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Due to years of neglect, this road adjacent to the water pump in the capital’s Ashkona remains full of potholes and gets submerged in stagnant water, even after light rain, causing suffering to residents.

PHOTO: STAR



Last year, dengue claimed the lives of 575 people.


Contacted, KMP spokesperson Additional Deputy Commissioner Md Ahsan Habib said, "I don't understand why they are protesting. SI Sukanta has already been arrested."

The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of laboratory and radiology services. Besides, the posts of X-ray

Contacted, Moulvibazar Civil Surgeon Dr Mamunur Rahman said a report has been sent to the higher authorities regarding the hospital's ongoing crises.

Two people died on the spot. The injured were taken to a hospital.

Speaking at the briefing, Gazi Ataur Rahman, joint secretary general and spokesperson of the party, said, "We have invited leaders of almost all political parties involved in the anti-fascism movement. They are responding positively to our invitation."


**বাংলাদেশ দুগ্ধ উৎপাদনকারী সমবায় ইউনিয়ন লিঃ**  
 প্রধান কার্যালয়ঃ দুগ্ধ ভবন  
 ১৩৯-১৪০, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮  
[www.milkvita.org.bd](http://www.milkvita.org.bd)

স্মারক নং ৪৭.৬৭.০০০০.০০২.৩৩.০০৫.২৪- তারিখঃ ২৬ জুন ২০২৫খ্রিঃ

**বাংলাদেশ দুগ্ধ উৎপাদনকারী সমবায় ইউনিয়ন লিঃ (মিক্স ইউনিয়ন)-এর**  
**৪৪তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা-২০২৫ এর স্থগিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, গত ১৫ মে, ২০২৫ তারিখে অনুষ্ঠিত ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটির ৫ম সভার সিদ্ধান্ত অনুযায়ী সমবায় সমিতি আইন-২০০১ (সংশোধিত আইন-২০০২ ও ২০১৩) ও সমবায় সমিতি বিধিমালা-২০০৪ (সংশোধিত ২০২০) এর বিধি ১৪ এবং মিক্স ইউনিয়নের উপ-আইন অনুসরণ করে বাংলাদেশ দুগ্ধ উৎপাদনকারী সমবায় ইউনিয়ন লিঃ (মিক্স ইউনিয়ন)-এর ৪৪তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা আগামী ২৮ জুন, ২০২৫/ ১৪ আষাঢ় ১৪৩২, রোজ শনিবার, সকাল ১১:০০ ঘটিকায় মিক্স ইউনিয়নের প্রধান কার্যালয়ে (দুগ্ধ ভবন, ১৩৯-১৪০, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮) অনুষ্ঠিত হবে মর্মে স্মারক নং ৪৭.৬৭.০০০০.০০২.৩৩.০০৫.২৪-১৩৩ তারিখঃ ২০/০৫/২০২৫খ্রিঃ মোতাবেক দৈনিক ইন্ডেক্সক ও The Daily Star পত্রিকায় বিজ্ঞাপনসহ প্রয়োজনীয় দপ্তরাদেশ জারী করা হয়। কিন্তু অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ বাংলাদেশ দুগ্ধ উৎপাদনকারী সমবায় ইউনিয়ন লিঃ (মিক্স ইউনিয়ন)-এর ৪৪তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা-২০২৫ আপাতত স্থগিত করা হলো এবং পরবর্তীতে বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা-২০২৫ এর পুনর্নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময় জানানো হবে।

৩। উল্লেখ্য যে, বাংলাদেশ দুগ্ধ উৎপাদনকারী সমবায় ইউনিয়ন লিঃ (মিক্স ইউনিয়ন)-এর ৪৪তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভার স্থগিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি অত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের ওয়েবসাইটঃ [www.milkvita.org.bd](http://www.milkvita.org.bd) এ প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে।

(Signed)  
**জাহিদুল ইসলাম**  
 (যুগ্ম-সচিব)  
 ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক (অ. দা.)  
 মিক্স ইউনিয়ন

“And we have proposed a 10-year limit on the prime

PRAYER TIMING					
JUNE 27					
	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-05	12-30	5-00	6-54	8-17
JAMAAT	4-40	1-15	5-15	6-57	8-45

## গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

### জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, চাঁদপুর।

### (নেজারত শাখা)


নং : ০৫.৪২.১০০০.০৩১.০১.০১২.২৫-

তারিখ: ২৩ জুন, ২০২৫ খ্রি।

### “উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি”

০১	মহাপাশ/বিভাগ	: জেলা প্রশাসন মহাপাশ।
০২	দরপত্র অর্থব্যবহারী দপ্তরের নাম	: জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, চাঁদপুর।
০৩	কাজের সময় সীমা	: ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থবছর।
০৪	বাজেট ও তথ্যবিল উৎস	: রাজস্ব (জিওবি)।
০৫	ক্রয়ের পদ্ধতি	: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
০৬	দরপত্রের নাম	: ১। জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয় ও সার্কিট হাউজ, চাঁদপুর এ অন্যান্য মনিহারী ও ব্যবহার্য সামগ্রী সরবরাহ। ২। জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, চাঁদপুর এ কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহ।
০৭	দরপত্র সিটিউল মূল্য	: অন্যান্য মনিহারী ও ব্যবহার্য সামগ্রী সরবরাহের সিটিউল মূল্য-৭৫০ (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা এবং কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহের সিটিউল মূল্য-৭৫০ (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা যাবে।
০৮	নিরাপত্তা জামানতের পরিমাণ	: অন্যান্য মনিহারী ও ব্যবহার্য সামগ্রী সরবরাহের নিরাপত্তা জামানতের পরিমাণ ৫০,০০০ (পঞ্চাশ হাজার) টাকা এবং কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহের নিরাপত্তা জামানতের পরিমাণ ৩০,০০০ (ত্রিশ হাজার) টাকা (পে-অর্ডার/ ব্যাংক ড্রাস্ট) জেলা প্রশাসক, চাঁদপুর এর অধিনুসারে।
০৯	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান/দপ্তর	: সেক্রেটারি ডেপুটি কালেক্টর, চাঁদপুর এর অফিস কক্ষে র‍্যাকড টেন্ডার বগ
১০	দরপত্র বিক্রয় শুরু এবং শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে ২০ জুলাই, ২০২৫ তারিখ অফিস কার্যকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।
১১	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ২১ জুলাই, ২০২৫ তারিখ বেলা ১২:৩০ টা পর্যন্ত।
১২	দরপত্র বাজ খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	: ২১ জুলাই ২০২৫ তারিখ বেলা ১২:৩০ টা। মর্যাদা অথবা তার প্রতিনিধির সন্মুখে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্র খোলা হবে।
১৩	শর্ত ও নির্দেশাবলী	: ১। দরপত্র দাখিলের সাথে দাপ্তরিক তালিকার বিবরণ দরপত্রের সাথে পাওয়া যাবে। ২। কাজের গুণগত মান নিশ্চিত হওয়ার পর বিল পরিশোধ করা হবে। ৩। কাজের পরিমাণ ও বিবরণ দরপত্র সিটিউলের সাথে প্রদান করা হবে। তাৎকালিক বর্ণিত মহাপাশ হতে সফিন্যান্সারী গ্রহণ করা হবে। ৪। বিল প্রদানকালে বিলি যোগ্যকরে আয়কর ও ভ্যাট কর্তন করা হবে।

দরপত্রের সকল কার্যক্রম “পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট অক্টব্র, ২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮” মোতাবেক পরিচালিত হবে। কোন কারণে দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষেত্রে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা জেলা প্রশাসক, চাঁদপুর সংরক্ষণ করেন। দরপত্র কৃত্যাকার কর্তৃক সর্বমুখ্য দরদাতার দরপত্র গ্রহণে বাধ্য নহে।

  
(মোহাম্মদ মোহসীন উদ্দিন)  
জেলা প্রশাসক  
চাঁদপুর।

GD-1473



## MYANMAR CONFLICT

# Junta chief confirms yr-end polls plan

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta chief said the country plans to hold elections in December and January, state media reported yesterday, pressing ahead with polls denounced as a sham by international monitors.

The military deposed Myanmar's civilian government in a 2021 coup which sparked a many-sided civil war, but has promoted its election plans as a pathway to peace.

With members of the former government locked away, opposition groups set to boycott the vote and huge tracts of the country controlled by anti-junta rebels, observers say a fair poll is impossible.

State newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar said junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, speaking at a conference in the capital Naypyidaw on Wednesday, "pledged that the election will be held in December this year and January next year".

It is not clear whether the junta plans to hold the election in phases -- a potential sign it would struggle to guarantee security on a single nationwide polling day -- or whether the timetable includes a campaign period. On Wednesday, UN special rapporteur on the rights situation in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said the junta is "trying to create this mirage of an election exercise that will create a legitimate civilian government".



Women mourn over a national flag-draped coffin during the funeral of an Iranian soldier killed in an Israeli strike several days earlier, in Tehran, yesterday. Iran reopened the airspace over the eastern part of the country, state media reported.

PHOTO: AFP

## US halts funding to global vaccine group Gavi

AFP, Brussels

The head of Gavi said yesterday the organisation which vaccinates children in the world's poorest countries was "disappointed" after Washington announced it was pulling funding in an incendiary video questioning its safety standards.

A Brussels summit held by the group to raise money on Wednesday night, was overshadowed by a video message sent by US Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr, who raised sweeping vaccine safety doubts without evidence and announced an end to Washington's support.

"We were disappointed to see the video," Gavi CEO Sania Nishtar told AFP in a phone interview. "Of course, we disagree with many of the things that were narrated in the video. It's unfortunate but we are hopeful of a positive relationship with the United States. We will continue to engage them."

The United States's funding withdrawal comes as Gavi and the United Nations reported in April that outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, meningitis and yellow fever, are on the rise globally amid misinformation and cuts to international aid.

Gavi secured more than \$9 billion (7.7 billion euros) in pledges on Wednesday, short of the \$11.9 billion the group said it needed to fund its operations for the next five years, when it hopes "to protect 500 million children from preventable disease".

## Defence meet in China unable to adopt joint statement

### Says Indian foreign ministry

REUTERS, New Delhi

Defence ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in China were unable to adopt a joint statement at the end of their talks due to a lack of consensus on referring to "terrorism", the Indian foreign ministry said yesterday.

### India refused to sign document after it omitted reference to the attack on tourists in Indian Kashmir

"Certain members, member countries, could not reach consensus on certain issues and hence the document could not be finalised on our side," Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters at a weekly media briefing.

"India wanted concerns on terrorism reflected in the document, which was not acceptable to one particular country and therefore the statement was not adopted," he said, without naming the country.

Indian media reported that New Delhi had refused to sign the document after it omitted reference to the April 22 attack on Hindu tourists in Indian Kashmir, in which 26 people were killed.

India blamed Pakistan for the attack but Islamabad rejected the accusation. The attack led to the worst fighting in decades between the nuclear-armed neighbours after India struck what it called "terrorist infrastructure" in Pakistan and Pakistani Kashmir.

Pakistan denied that the targets had anything to do with "terrorism" and that they were civilian facilities.

The foreign ministries of China and Pakistan did not immediately respond to a request for comment on India's statement.

Earlier yesterday, when asked about the joint statement, a Chinese defence ministry spokesperson said the meeting had "achieved successful results", without elaborating.

## 'Death sometimes kinder than torture'

### Relatives recount Israeli air strike on Gaza that devastated their family

AFP, Gaza City

Alaa al-Najjar was tending to wounded children at a hospital in the southern Gaza Strip when the news came through: the home where her own 10 children were staying had been bombed in an Israeli air strike.

The paediatrician, with no means of transport, ran from the Nasser Hospital to the family house in the city of Khan Yunis, a relative told AFP, only to be met with every parent's worst nightmare.

"When she saw the charred bodies, she started screaming and crying," said Ali al-Najjar, the brother of Alaa's husband. Nine of her children were killed, their bodies burned beyond recognition, according to relatives.

half of war.

The air strike last Friday afternoon was carried out without warning, relatives said.

Asked about the incident, the Israeli military said it had "struck a number of suspects who were identified operating from a structure" near its troops, adding that claims of civilian harm were under review.

"I couldn't recognise the children in the shrouds," Alaa's sister, Sahar al-Najjar, said through tears. "Their features were gone."

"It's a huge loss. Alaa is broken," said Mohammed, another close family member.

According to medical sources, Hamdi al-Najjar underwent several operations at the Jordanian field hospital.

Adam had his arm severely wounded and



The tenth, 10-year-old Adam, survived the strike but remains in critical condition, as does his father, Hamdi al-Najjar, also a doctor, who was also at home when the strike hit.

Both are in intensive care at Nasser Hospital. When the body of her daughter Nibal was pulled from the rubble, Alaa screamed her name, her brother-in-law recounted.

The following day, under a tent set up near the destroyed home, the well-respected paediatric specialist sat in stunned silence, still in shock.

Around her, women wept as the sounds of explosions echoed across the Palestinian territory, battered by more than a year and a

suffers from severe burns across his body.

"I found my brother's house like a broken biscuit, reduced to ruins, and my loved ones were underneath," Ali al-Najjar said, recalling how he dug through the rubble with his bare hands alongside paramedics to recover the children's bodies.

Now, he dreads the moment his brother regains consciousness.

"I don't know how to tell him. Should I tell him his children are dead? I buried them in two graves."

"There is no safe place in Gaza," he added with a weary sigh. "Death is sometimes kinder than this torture."

## CEC meets chief adviser

FROM PAGE 2

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, in a joint statement with BNP leader Amir Khosru, said the meeting went well, and the nation can expect the Election Commission to announce a date for the election soon.

On June 15, CEC Nasir Uddin said the commission would be able to gauge the government's position on the election schedule only after

formal discussions.

On Saturday, the CEC also said that a free and fair election is not possible without the cooperation of the government no matter how independent the election commission is.

The EC is advancing its preparatory work for the upcoming national polls, he added.

The commission has asked for information from

authorities regarding minor repairs at educational institutions that are likely to be used as polling centres.

The EC said that it has already made significant progress in several key areas, including updating the voter list, finalising parliamentary constituency boundaries, registering new political parties as well as amendment to the several laws and rules.

## 2024 polls were 'dummy, farcical'

FROM PAGE 1

a police helmet and bulletproof vest.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman began the proceedings by hearing the prosecution side.

Sub-Inspector Shamsuzzoha Sarkar of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, who is investigating the case, submitted a petition seeking a 10-day remand for Awal.

Prosecutor Omar Faruk Faruqi said, "The accused served as the chief election commissioner from 2022 to September 2024. Under his leadership, a disgraceful national election was held on January 7, 2024. Except for the Awami League and one or two other parties, no others participated in that dummy election. It was one-sided, staged, and farcical. He failed to ensure a free and fair election."

Awal's lawyer argued against the remand prayer, saying, "Awal is 70 years old and suffering from multiple chronic diseases. In resisting fascism, let us not become fascists ourselves."

With the court's permission, Awal then said, "The election was indeed a dummy and farcical one."

The magistrate asked, "An election inquiry committee was formed in every district, headed in most cases by a joint district judge. Earlier, the honorarium for this was Tk 22,000, which you increased to Tk 5,00,000. Wasn't this a waste of public money?"

Awal replied that he had no knowledge of the matter, adding that the raise might

have accounted for inflation over five years.

Magistrate Mostafizur then asked if any of the inquiry committees actually visited the polling centres during the election.

Awal replied, "Each returning officer was responsible for four to five parliamentary constituencies and assisted by four to five assistant returning officers. To properly hold an election, a mere 2 percent of the responsibility lies with the Election Commission, and the remaining 98 percent with field-level officers."

Asked why he had not resigned knowing the state of the election, Awal said, "Resigning was not possible in that situation. One of my friends asked me about resigning. I replied, 'If you had told me earlier that such a terrible election was coming, I wouldn't have taken the post in the first place.'"

Awal added, "In 1973, just three months after the 1972 Constitution was adopted, the Awami League won 293 seats. That election too was not free and fair. The lust for power is such that even Sheikh Mujib couldn't resist it. In 1996, the Awami League took to the streets for a caretaker government. Later, the party itself amended the constitution to hold elections under partisan governments."

Prosecutor Omar then said, "He is trying to justify [what he had done]. He should not be allowed to make such comments."

Awal replied, "If I am not allowed to justify myself, then

shoot me dead."

Pro-BNP lawyers began a commotion after this comment.

After nearly half an hour of hearing, the court placed Awal on a three-day remand.

Police arrested Awal in the capital's Moghbazar area on Wednesday in a case filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on Sunday.

Awal and the other accused face charges of depriving people of their voting rights.

In the same case, another former CEC, KM Nurul Huda, was arrested on Sunday. The next day, a court placed him on a four-day remand.

BNP Executive Committee member Salah Uddin Khan filed the case, naming 24 individuals. Another former CEC, Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, is also accused in the case.

In another development, three more charges, including sedition, have been added to the case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Minhazur Rahman on Wednesday passed an order in this regard after the investigators filed an application, seeking inclusion of the sections 124A (sedition), 420 (cheating and dishonesty) and 406 (criminal breach of trust) of the penal code, said a court employee.

Evidence of offences punishable under these sections have been found during the investigation, according to the police forwarding report.

The total number of charges in the case now stands at 10.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

প্রকল্প পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

সম্পূর্ণ বৃক্ষে উন্নতমানের আগর রেজিন সঞ্চয়ন প্রযুক্তি উদ্ভাবন

বাংলাদেশ বন গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট, ষোলশহর, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২১১।

ফোন: ০২৪১৩৮০৭২১, ই-মেইল: awrl.org@gmail.com

ওয়েবসাইট: www.bfri.gov.bd

নং: ২২.০৪.০০০০.০৩৯.৩৫.০০০.২২-১৬২

তারিখ: ২৬ জুন, ২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

সংশোধিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি (সময় বর্ধিতকরণ)

বাংলাদেশ বন গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট, চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নধীন সম্পূর্ণ বৃক্ষে উন্নতমানের আগর রেজিন সঞ্চয়ন প্রযুক্তি উদ্ভাবন শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের আওতায় EOI এর মাধ্যমে Consultant নিয়োগের জন্য স্মারক নং ২২.০৪.০০০০.০৩৯.১১.০০৪.২২.১৪১; তারিখ: ০৩ জুন ২০২৫ এর আবেদনের মেয়াদ/সময়সীমা নিম্নোক্তভাবে বৃদ্ধি করা হলো-

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(ড. মোহাম্মদ জাকির হোসাইন)

প্রকল্প পরিচালক

সম্পূর্ণ বৃক্ষে উন্নতমানের আগর রেজিন সঞ্চয়ন প্রযুক্তি উদ্ভাবন

বাংলাদেশ বন গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২১১।

GD-1471

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

প্রকল্প পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

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GD-1472



## We cannot lose our battle against drugs

Recent findings highlight the failure of existing control measures

Given the alarming levels Bangladesh's drug crisis has reached of late, it is high time the authorities and society at large treated it with the urgency it deserves. According to an estimate by the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), there are now around 8.3 million individuals addicted to drugs, constituting 4.89 percent of the total population. This highlights the ineffectiveness of existing drug control measures that should have done better.

There are some clear patterns that can be observed among drug users in the country. For instance, the survey estimates that 7.76 million of those addicted are men, mostly young, while the most commonly used substances include cannabis (approximately 52 percent), yaba (20 percent), and alcohol (17 percent). By thoroughly analysing these demand-side factors, the authorities should be able to identify and address the social, political, and economic drivers of drug abuse. Unfortunately, the absence of large-scale initiatives in this regard shows how indifferent we have remained despite the risks of a growing drug crisis. The lack of specialised treatment centres for drug addiction has been another pressing concern. For example, the four government-run facilities in the country can accommodate only 199 patients. Although more than 300 private rehabilitation centres are in operation, there is minimal oversight of their activities—and many simply cannot afford private treatment.

On the supply side, reports indicate that large quantities of drugs are flooding the country, both for domestic consumption and transit to third countries. Both trends are deeply damaging for us. A major obstacle to curbing drug supply is the lack of resources available to our security forces, compounded by legal complexities and our geographical location—at the intersection of the Golden Triangle, the Golden Crescent, and the Golden Wedge. That we are losing the battle against drug trafficking is evident from the fact that rarely have we seen any major drug kingpins identified or arrested over the years, although couriers and low-level carriers, often driven by poverty and desperation, continue to be arrested.

The failure to apprehend domestic masterminds behind the drug trade is not only disheartening, it also suggests the deep-rooted connections they enjoy within security agencies, political circles, and other influential sectors—connections that have rendered them virtually untouchable. At the same time, given that the drug trafficking problem in Bangladesh is inextricably linked with transnational crime and criminal syndicates, it cannot be properly addressed without effective collaboration with other countries.

But first, we as a nation must realise that drug addiction is not only destroying lives but also having extremely negative effects—including increased crime, corruption, and health issues—on our society as a whole. Unless we fully recognise the danger and are sincere about preventing it, it will be impossible to address the root causes of this issue and ensure a drug-free, healthy, and happy society. We urge the authorities to take holistic measures to stop drug supply and address the underlying issues propelling its demand.

## Barguna dengue crisis exposes gaps

Authorities must take proper steps to contain its spread

We are concerned about the dengue situation in Barguna which has emerged as the worst-hit district in Barishal and perhaps in the country. The situation there has been making headlines for quite some time, and now a survey by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research (IEDCR)—conducted from June 17 to 19—has shed light on why it has become so severe. As per IEDCR, there has been an alarming level of infestation across the district, with Aedes mosquito larvae detected in 76 percent of rural homes and 31 percent of urban homes. This explains why 60 percent of all cases reported in Barishal this year came from Barguna alone. On Wednesday, the DGHS reported 326 dengue hospitalisations across the country, and 65 of them—or 20 percent—were from this one district.

Experts say this could be because of several factors. In Barguna, due to its potable water crisis, it is common to store rainwater in plastic drums or earthen pots, especially in rural areas. While it is recommended not to preserve water for more than two days, people tend to do it anyway, often mixing new water with old while leaving the containers uncovered or poorly covered. Such clean but stagnant water provides ideal breeding grounds for mosquito larvae. Moreover, cleaning and sanitation drives in Barguna have also slowed since the political changeover in August, according to local activists, who have flagged poor waste management, absence of a proper sewerage system, and public apathy as key contributors to the current outbreak. The presence of a new dengue serotype (serotype-3) has not helped either.

Unfortunately, as in many other districts and upazilas, local hospitals in Barguna lack sufficient beds, testing kits, intensive care units, and skilled manpower needed to deal with the high caseload or critical cases. Such shortages have already forced many patients to seek care in Dhaka, adding pressure on hospitals already overwhelmed by patients from nearby districts like Cumilla and Narayanganj. Health officials and experts have warned that things may worsen if outbreaks spread further into districts that lack doctors and essential equipment.

The IEDCR survey findings should, therefore, serve as a wake-up call for health authorities and local administrations across the country. Barguna needs effective, large-scale mosquito control drives and adequate treatment facilities, as do other known and emerging hotspots at the district level. If the government cannot properly respond to this crisis, things may spiral out of control as monsoon progresses.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Yen made official monetary unit of Japan

On this day in 1871, the yen was adopted as Japan's official monetary unit, when the government suspended the exchange of clan notes, money issued by feudal lords that had circulated since the 16th century.

# ‘Those responsible for custodial torture, death are rarely punished’

Nur Khan Liton, a human rights activist, discusses his experience of dealing with cases of custodial torture and deaths in an exclusive interview with Monorom Polok of The Daily Star.

**Can you describe an instance from your experience where someone became a victim of torture or died in police custody?**

We can talk about the case of Rubel. Rubel was a private university student who was arrested by the police, tortured, and murdered in custody. Police had tried to frame him with drugs, and during the torture, he died. This was clearly a case of custodial murder. When the incident became public, we started working on it.

Our methods of working at that time were different from how human rights activists work now. Nowadays, it's more organisation-centric or agency-centric. At that time, a few organisations used to coordinate and work together. We had strong coordination among ourselves. After Rubel's death, we saw his body, then tried to contact his family. They lived in Dhaka's Malibagh area, and his brother was quite cooperative in this regard.

Later, the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) provided legal assistance and a case was filed, with cooperation from Ain O Salish Kendra, Somnilito Samajik Andolon, and members of the bereaved family. When we were all convinced that Rubel had died due to custodial torture, we demanded a judicial commission. A one-member commission was formed, with Justice Habibur Rahman. Many of us, as human rights activists, gave testimonies and presented statements to the commission. The report that came out of it was one of the most detailed in recent times. It included actionable directives, which were later taken up by the High Court. We were deeply involved in the process.

This is one example. Another is our involvement in the case of Limon, the boy who lost his leg after being shot by the Rab. We worked on that case as well. This work was not done individually. All of it was done in an organised way, through the collaboration of multiple groups. That is how we were able to push these cases to a stage where justice became possible. And in Limon's case, we did see some progress towards justice. The case is still pending, awaiting its final ruling. There are many such cases.

**In any of these cases, were there obstacles to taking legal action against the police?**

Yes, we are working on many such incidents. For instance, we also worked on the case of Jonny, a Bihari youth

from Mirpur. BLAST filed a case, and a judgment was given, which created an opportunity for justice, although the case has probably not been resolved yet.

In these types of cases, there are always various kinds of obstacles created by the police. We've had to overcome them using different strategies. Sometimes, the obstacles are direct. Other times, pressure is applied on the victim's family. Many families, unable to bear that pressure, end up making compromises—they give in silently.



Nur Khan Liton

PHOTO: COLLECTED

In some cases, it becomes impossible to produce witnesses. Even if there are witnesses, they cannot be presented before the court for many reasons. First, no witness security exists in our country where witnesses can safely appear and testify in court. Second, the law enforcement official that is accused of torture is able to threaten the witness and victim in many ways. Sometimes the investigation report is flawed, sometimes there are major inconsistencies in the post-mortem report. All these issues weaken the case and prevent it from getting a proper conclusion.

These issues vary case by case. If we go through them individually, we can clearly see which obstacles were present in which case, what kind of weaknesses existed, and in which ones we succeeded or fell short—and why. So, broadly speaking, in cases of torture, death, or even serious injury in custody, those responsible are rarely punished.

**Can you recall any legal, procedural or institutional changes that might offer redress in these cases?**

We've been talking about these issues for a long time. The necessary areas of change have already been identified. There are certain weaknesses in the law. One key issue is the lack of a witness protection system. The issue of witness security needs to be addressed.

Also, when allegations are made against law enforcement agencies, there should be a proper system for investigating them. We have made

knowledge about what could be done in such a situation. Today, people know what human rights are and what to do if someone is tortured in police custody. Now, human rights organisations step forward with help in such situations. But 20-30 years ago, or even just 15 years back, this wasn't the case. If you look at the 15-plus years of the previous regime in particular, you'll see that there has been disorder in every institution—from the judiciary to the police. All institutions were placed in a kind of partisan servitude. In that situation, getting justice was impossible.

In the few cases where justice was achieved, it required tremendous effort. But in Bangladesh, it is simply not possible to put in that level of effort in every single case. There are only a handful of human rights organisations, and the number of such incidents is overwhelming.

**Often, victims of custodial torture do not have the mental strength or practical means to file a case themselves. In such situations, is public interest litigation (PIL) the most appropriate route?**

Look, filing a PIL can result in a court issuing a ruling or drawing attention to the issue. It can bring matters to the public spotlight and attract the attention of the state. That's a valuable outcome. But the actual work of proving a specific incident and ensuring justice for that individual often remains unaddressed.

So yes, PILs have their role: to create awareness and bring light to these issues. But we must also remember that, whatever legal route we take, there must be a supportive environment in place.

Imagine this: someone is brought before the court after being tortured in custody. Their wounds are fresh, still bleeding. Yet, the magistrate doesn't even look. The judge doesn't even look. How will justice be possible in that setting?

And then, when the victim is presented to record a statement, where they are supposed to tell the truth, often the magistrate refuses to record it, and the person is sent back into police custody instead. This kind of tactics and wrongdoings must stop. To prevent this, democracy must be institutionalised. Transparency and accountability must be ensured in every sector. Without that, no reform or litigation—PIL or otherwise—will be enough.

# Bangladesh's search for a balanced national identity



Shafi Md Mostofa  
is post-doctoral fellow at the Democracy Institute of Central European University, Hungary, and associate professor of World Religions and Culture at Dhaka University.

SHAFI MD MOSTOFA

Bangladesh stands at a pivotal moment in its political and ideological evolution. With the ousting of Sheikh Hasina's government and the appointment of an interim administration, the country now witnesses a debate over its national identity. At the heart of this discourse is the Constitution Reform Commission's proposal to replace secularism with pluralism. This shift has sparked confusion and contention among political factions and civil society.

Since independence, Bangladesh has grappled with the role of religion in governance. The founding principles of the state included secularism, a concept that was meant to ensure religious neutrality and prevent the dominance of any single faith in public affairs. However, secularism was often perceived as an imposed ideology rather than an organic evolution of Bangladesh's socio-political fabric.

Over the decades, successive governments have oscillated between reinforcing secularism and accommodating religious sentiments. The Awami League, under Hasina, reinstated secularism

in the constitution while maintaining Islam as the state religion—a paradox that reflected the country's complex religious landscape. Critics have long contended that secularism, as practised in Bangladesh, has failed to foster true inclusivity, often alienating religious communities rather than integrating them into a cohesive national identity.

The interim government's proposal to replace secularism with pluralism is an attempt to redefine Bangladesh's approach to religious coexistence. In theory, pluralism acknowledges the presence of multiple faiths and promotes their harmonious existence within the state framework. However, the term itself has led to divergent interpretations. One Islamist party leader said that they “view pluralism as a gateway to multi-religionism,” fearing that it may dilute the country's Islamic heritage or create unnecessary divisions among religious groups.

The Constitution Reform Commission's intended meaning of pluralism appears to be the recognition of all faiths within the country, ensuring that no single religion dominates the national narrative. While this approach seeks

to foster inclusivity, its ambiguity has led to concerns about its practical implementation. Without a clear framework, pluralism risks becoming another contested term, much like secularism before it.

Given the confusion surrounding pluralism, Bangladesh's policymakers must consider alternative terminologies that better capture the spirit of religious coexistence. Two potential replacements—“interfaith harmony” and “religious empathy”—offer more precise frameworks for fostering unity.

Interfaith harmony emphasises active engagement between religious communities, encouraging dialogue and mutual respect. This approach has been successfully implemented in various multicultural societies, where religious groups collaborate on social and cultural initiatives without compromising their distinct identities.

Religious empathy focuses on understanding and respecting different faiths without necessarily integrating them into a singular national ideology. By promoting empathy, the government can ensure that religious minorities feel acknowledged and valued, while maintaining the cultural and historical significance of Islam in Bangladesh.

Both alternatives provide a more structured approach to religious coexistence, avoiding the vagueness associated with pluralism. They also mirror Bangladesh's historical ethos, which has long been shaped by a mix of Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic influences.

The debate over secularism, pluralism, and alternative frameworks is not merely a philosophical exercise—it has tangible political consequences. Bangladesh's political parties are deeply divided on the issue, with some advocating for pluralism, while others push for a more religion-inclusive model. The BNP—the country's largest political party at present—faces the challenge of navigating these ideological shifts while maintaining its broad appeal.

The interim government's decision on this will set a precedent for future administrations. If pluralism is adopted without a clear definition, it may lead to further polarisation. Conversely, a well-articulated approach, through interfaith harmony or religious empathy, could pave the way for a more stable and inclusive Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's constitutional debate is more than a legal amendment. It reflects the country's evolving identity. At this crossroads, the nation must carefully consider the implications of its choices. Whether through pluralism, interfaith harmony, or religious empathy, the ultimate goal should be to foster a society where all faiths coexist peacefully, without undermining the country's historical and cultural foundations.

The coming months will be crucial. The government must engage with scholars, religious leaders, and civil society to ensure that constitutional changes reflect the will of the people. In doing so, Bangladesh can move beyond ideological confusion and towards a more cohesive and inclusive future.



TRANSITIONING FROM AUTOCRACY TO DEMOCRACY

The four challenges for Bangladesh



Ali Riaz,  
a distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, US and a non-resident senior fellow of the Atlantic Council, is the head of the Constitution Reform Commission and a member of the National Consensus Commission in Bangladesh.

ALI RIAZ

Bangladesh is in a transition phase—from autocracy to democracy. After almost 16 years of a personalistic autocracy, a popular uprising succeeded in deposing the regime in August 2024. The popular hope, in brief, is to establish a democratic accountable system of governance and prevent the recurrence of the rise of autocracy in the future. The answer to the question whether the country would succeed has implications for the future trajectory of the country as well as the body of knowledge on democratisation.

TWO CONTENDING ASPECTS OF THE JULY UPRISING

The July uprising came after at least a decade of efforts by various political parties to mount a democratic movement. While these efforts paved the way, it was a spontaneous movement of students which galvanised the people.

The uprising took place contrary to the global trend. Since 2006, the world has been witnessing serious democratic backsliding. In recent years, democratic backsliding has taken a new dimension—autocratisation has intensified. According to the Sweden-based research organisation Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, we are amid the third wave of autocratisation: that is, not only that democratic countries are regressing, but autocratic countries are also becoming more autocratic. In 2024, as many as 45 countries were autocratising. The people of Bangladesh have been able to swim against the tide and unseat a deeply entrenched autocratic regime, facing unprecedented levels of atrocities.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's experience of overthrowing an autocratic regime through a popular uprising was not an exception. Since the early 2000s, we witnessed authoritarian regimes being toppled by popular uprisings in various countries around the globe. In the early 2000s, a series of uprisings took place in the post-Soviet states: Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005, for instance. We can add the 2006 Belarus protest to the list, although it didn't succeed in deposing the regime. In South Asia, Nepal's second popular uprising took place in 2006.

But the most significant movements took place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region beginning 2010. These movements are described as the Arab Spring. Tunisia was where it all began, followed by Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, among many other countries. Beyond the region, there were other instances of large-scale popular protest: for example, Thailand in 2010, Turkey in 2013, and Sri Lanka in

**Transition from authoritarianism does not have a linear path. Jean Lachapelle, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Anna Lührmann wrote in 2021, “Mass movements that are able to overthrow a dictator do not always lead to democracy. Transition periods present narrow windows of opportunity in which activists face difficult decisions to build democracy and prevent authoritarian relapse.” The pathway to democracy is filled with hurdles and the democrats face numerous challenges. Five of these challenges are significant: i) maintaining stability; ii) establishing/building strong institutions; iii) addressing historical grievances; iv) ensuring inclusive participation; and v) autocratic nostalgia.**

2022. The year 2019 was dubbed as “the year of protest.”

THE LONGER VIEW

While I am referring to the uprisings in the past 25 years, popular uprisings have taken place around the globe since 1945 and, in many instances, succeeded in deposing autocratic rulers. Bangladesh is not unfamiliar to such an uprising; the 1990 uprising is a case in point. In the Philippines, the Marcos regime was toppled in 1986; in Indonesia, the Suharto regime fell in 1998; and the Velvet Revolution brought changes in Czechoslovakia in 1989. Nepal saw its first popular uprising in 1990, resulting in a seismic shift in the political landscape.

All these movements aspired not only to change the regime but also to establish a sustainable democratic system. Besides, two characteristics of these uprisings are

noteworthy: spontaneity and issue-based. In a large number of these movements, people's participation was not organised by existing political parties; instead, often in the early stage, these parties remained sceptical about the trajectory. Broad participation of diverse demographics has been a defining characteristic of these nonviolent movements. Secondly, these movements often started as single issue-based mobilisations that metamorphosed into pro-democracy movements. There are instances when a movement protesting a price hike of essentials transformed into a movement to depose the government.

THE BILLION-DOLLAR QUESTIONS

How many of these have succeeded in transitioning into democracy? It is a question which has both normative and political significance. In a study published in 2014, Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz showed that only 41 percent of mass uprisings that ousted dictatorships after World War II were followed by democratisation. If we extrapolate the time frame to 2024, the percentage of successful uprisings is likely to be less than 40 percent. The number is unsatisfying. But it provides us with a composite picture and triggers an important question: why are not all popular uprisings succeeding in transitioning to democracy?



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC

**TRANSITION: THE GLOBAL EXPERIENCE** Transition from authoritarianism does not have a linear path. Jean Lachapelle, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Anna Lührmann wrote in 2021, “Mass movements that are able to overthrow a dictator do not always lead to democracy. Transition periods present narrow windows of opportunity in which activists face difficult decisions to build democracy and prevent authoritarian relapse.” The pathway to democracy is filled with hurdles and the democrats face numerous challenges. Five of these challenges are significant: i) maintaining stability; ii) establishing/building strong institutions; iii) addressing historical grievances; iv) ensuring inclusive participation; and v) autocratic nostalgia.

**Maintaining stability:** The most immediate challenge to democratic transition is to maintain stability in the post-autocratic period. The upheaval disrupts the status quo and unleashes many contending forces while the government tends to be weak. The challenge of maintaining stability has several aspects, ranging from maintaining law and order to ensuring the legitimacy of the new government, especially the one that is established for the transition phase with a limited time frame. If the new government faces strong opposition from former authoritarian factions, maintaining stability becomes a challenge and often offsets its endeavours.

Economic downturn after an uprising is a likely scenario and has happened in many instances. It is largely because during an autocratic rule, a kleptocratic economic system is institutionalised and capital flights become a common phenomenon. Often, those who are key economic players with control over the market have close affiliation with the fallen regime and have little incentive to cooperate with the transitional government. These cause economic hardships, which is very much likely to fall on the marginalised groups and the middle class. This creates a serious hindrance to immediate governance and long-term transformation. The experiences of the past 25 years show that most of the countries in the MENA region failed to maintain stability, which led to widespread unrest and civil

wars in some instances. Some have managed to maintain it. Sri Lanka is a case in point.

**Rebuilding institutions:** Robust and independent institutions, such as a fair electoral system, an impartial judiciary and free press, are essential to democracy. However, the new government inherits these institutions which are weak and corrupt. Often, these institutions are hollowed out. The length and nature of authoritarianism determines the contours and power of these institutions; during personalistic autocracy, these institutions become loyal to the autocrat. Deinstitutionalisation is a key feature of personalistic autocracy. Transitioning while maintaining the status quo within these institutions has proven to be difficult.

Experiences of various democratic transitions demonstrate that two institutions emerge as critical elements in the immediate aftermath of the downfall of autocrats: the judiciary and the military/security apparatuses. In Egypt, a tussle between the Morsi government and the judiciary became a key issue after the Muslim Brotherhood was elected in the first election after the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime in 2011. A military council ruled the country during the interregnum (Feb 2011-June 2012). But under Morsi's tenure, the military declined to be subservient to the civilian authority. As Omar Ashour wrote in 2013, “The ultimate test of any democratisation process is asking whether the elected civilian institutions are in control of the armed institutions or not.” In Egypt, it was not, and the 2013 coup brought the military back to power.

In Sudan, the military, although initially appearing neutral and occasionally supportive, played key roles. The collapse of the civilian-military partnership developed after the uprising due to the military's reluctance to cede power, engendering a

authoritarianism, or systematically vitiated the process which contributed to the survival of an autocratic regime. Besides, whether those who remained supportive of the regime but didn't participate in the violence should be given space is a vexing question. This becomes a major issue regarding the authoritarian successor parties. As James Loxton wrote in 2016, “Authoritarian successor parties—or parties that emerge from authoritarian regimes but that operate after a transition to democracy—are one of the most common features of the global democratic landscape.” Fortunately, in most cases of transition, autocratic regime parties have seen leadership changes, ideological reframing, and a desire to remain relevant by adjusting their positions.

**Resurgence of autocratic nostalgia:** The democratisation process, especially after an uprising which has experienced violence or resulted in collapse of state apparatuses, was followed by disorder and instability. There are several reasons for the disorder. One of the principal reasons is the weakening of the law and order agencies. But it is also because of the rise of contending forces to capture the vacuum created by the departure of the previous regime. Under the circumstances, some citizens long for “stability.” Nadia Jmal described the phenomenon “as a longing for the authoritarian past. It seems to indicate more than a mere sentimental longing for the ‘good old days.’” She further noted, “It also reflects how political, economic, and social dissatisfaction with the present opens the possibility for backsliding under precarious democratic transition.” The phenomenon is also called “autocratic nostalgia.” In recent years, we have seen this phenomenon in the MENA region. Studies have highlighted this as a roadblock in Tunisia. Often, this is a result of misinformation and disinformation by the supporters of the deposed regime

and making concessions as the process is organised and unfolds. Political rivals must work together. The timing of the election is not inconsequential, but two points are important: first, whether it allows it to be orderly and peaceful, and second, whether the political parties can agree to a *modus operandi* that their behaviour won't be an impediment to the process. Otherwise, it would help justify the previous regime's sham elections. The transitional government, in this instance, the interim government, will have to lead the process. But it alone cannot ensure it.

**Reforming the rule of the game:** Bangladesh's history of governance, not only of the 15 and a half years but also of the past 53 years, has made it evident that return to “business as usual” is not an option for democratisation. If the institutions had worked, structures were supportive of

**While it is the responsibility of the transitional government to organise the election, the stake is far greater for the political parties who would like to see the transition to ensure that an election is not only a matter of who would get to power, but the first step to close the chapter on authoritarian regimes. This requires openness, ability to compromise, and making concessions as the process is organised and unfolds. Political rivals must work together.**

democracy, and laws were for the people, the country would not have been here. It is imperative to make structural changes to prevent a recurrence of the past. For example, the constitutional provisions that have enabled the rise of autocracy need to be revised, amended, and rewritten as needed. New institutions need to be built to create accountability mechanisms. Importantly, the inadequacies of the existing constitutional provisions, laws and institutional structures need to be acknowledged.

It is erroneous to think that all reforms are the interim government's responsibility—so is the understanding that as the reform process is a continuous endeavour, we can wait to address it at a later time. In fact, it is the responsibility of the political parties to commit and create a binding agreement with the citizens on fundamental reforms. This is the opportunity to create a new social contract. Compromise is key to this success; in some instances, transcending the party's interests is imperative. But institutional reforms, or lip service to the reforms, will fall flat, even in a short term, unless there is a change in the political culture: how parties select their leaders, how they act within the larger political domain.

**Trials of the autocrats:** Democratisation, after a violent past, requires addressing the crimes committed under the previous regime. Those who bear the “command responsibility” must be tried, otherwise they will be emboldened. The behaviour of the leaders of the Sheikh Hasina regime after the uprising—especially their lack of remorse, unwillingness to accept the responsibility, and threats of reprisal—are deeply worrying. These behaviours are different from other instances, except in those situations where the country descended into a civil war. As the governance of the previous regime was largely based on force, violations of human rights were rampant, and there have been many instances of crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute, to which Bangladesh is a signatory.

**Preparing for the great game:** Global geopolitics has been in flux over the past decades; the rise of China and resurgence of Russia combined with the weakening of the US's global role have made the situation volatile. With impulsive characteristics of the Trump administration and policies of protectionism and “go alone” attitude, the world will witness more volatility in the near future. For Bangladesh, the challenge is not only to navigate through the great game that has started in the Asia-Pacific region but also to face a hostile neighbour. India, which extended all-out support to the Hasina regime, shows no interest to recalibrate its policy towards Bangladesh. Harboursing Hasina is one thing; allowing her to engage in instigating violence is a different matter. The interim government is managing daily diplomacy, but it cannot devise a long-term strategy. That is why the political forces, whether vying for power in the future, should delineate their perspectives and strategy where possible.

The July uprising in 2024 created an opportunity of democratic transition, but its success is not guaranteed as the global experience. How the political forces in Bangladesh deal with these challenges will have a determining effect on the transition process and the trajectory of the country.

*The opinion expressed in this article is the author's own and does not represent any commission the author is involved with.*



# A CITY GASPS, A PARK RESISTS

## Panthakunja protest redefines civic action

**On a drizzly afternoon in Dhaka, where traffic fumes mix with the noise of construction, a quiet but determined protest unfolds at Panthakunja Park. Panthakunja has become the front line for Dhaka's cultural resistance. There are no street blockades here—only guitars, paintbrushes, puppet shows, and poetry. For over six months, artists, writers, urban planners, and ordinary citizens have transformed this endangered green space into a stage of creative resistance, camping on park grounds and enduring bitter cold, dust, summer heat, and monsoon rains.**



PHOTOS: NAIM UL HASAN, AHADUL SERAJ & AMIRUL RAJIV/BANGLADESH TREE PROTECTION MOVEMENT

DOWEL BISWAS

Over 45 cultural events have taken place during this time—ranging from sports events, music recitals, performing arts, street plays, critical discussions, and environmental lectures to medical camps and art workshops for children. The aim is not performance for its own sake but to awaken public consciousness and demand accountability. Artists and illustrators across the country and abroad have also expressed their solidarity through digital arts, illustrations, animations, stop-motion films, and more.

"This is a fight to protect not just trees, but memory, air, childhood, and biodiversity," said Amirul Rajiv, coordinator of the Bangladesh Tree Protection Movement. "We are trying to defend what's left of Dhaka's soul."

Panthakunja, located on Sonargaon Road, was once a rare oasis in the capital, lush with native trees, birds, and daily visitors. But the park has suffered years of neglect and encroachment. First came a long enclosure by the Dhaka South City Corporation in the name of beautification. Then came the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project, which has now taken over two-thirds of the park.

Where thick greenery once stood, there are now gaping holes and concrete piles. A massive boring machine remains abandoned mid-operation, surrounded by fences and slogans. In the heart of this

altered space, protestors have created a new landscape—sculptures, murals, tents, and even a makeshift stage for performances.

According to environmentalists, over 2,000 trees have been felled in Panthakunja and Dhanmondi alone, part of a citywide toll of more than 4,200 trees lost last year. Activists claim that construction is ongoing without valid environmental clearance, as the original permit expired in December 2023 and was never renewed.

Despite these violations, government's response has been minimal. Three senior

Bangladesh Tree Protection Movement, added, "One of the major focuses of our movement is to make people realise that the issue of the environment is universal and impacts us all. So, we tried to make the movement as inclusive as possible by incorporating people from all sorts of backgrounds. Moreover, we felt that the environmental discourse at the policy level in our country is still stuck at a primitive stage. We want this movement to start a deep ecological discourse at the policy level."

Rajiv described how the movement has deliberately avoided aggression. "We've



advisers visited the protest site in December, a c k n o w l e d g e d concerns, but made no commitments.

Still, the resistance continues. Every week, the park hosts a variety of cultural programmes that draw in local families, students, and passersby. "Children now call this 'the camp where the tree people sing,'" said one volunteer.

Rajiv explained the strategy behind this unique form of protest. "This protest is born from common sense and social conscience. Dhaka ranks among the most climate-vulnerable cities in the world, yet there's very little effort to preserve its parks and water bodies."

He continued, "Panthakunja is just one example of how our governance is failing the capital's ecological balance. Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has playgrounds and parks in only 16 of its 54 wards, while Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has them in only seven of its 75 wards—and most of those are either misused or leased out. Over two million people rely on these spaces directly or indirectly."

"We're not just resisting tree-cutting," Rajiv said. "We're protecting what makes this city liveable. If even one bird finds shelter or one child grows up with clean air because of our protest, that's reason enough to continue."

Naim Ul Hasan, another coordinator of the

designed this as a cultural resistance—over 45 events, from concerts and film screenings to art installations."

"This is no longer just a protest—it's turning into a full-fledged citizen movement. We've spoken with local communities. They're with us. Cultural expression helps people connect to the cause in ways that facts and figures often cannot."

The contradictions are stark. While the city corporation has raised concerns about the expressway, it has also built a garbage transfer station and a public toilet within the park. WASA, Drinkwell, and even private corporations have claimed pieces of this five-acre park.

The wildlife feels the impact, too. "Birds were visibly disturbed after the last tree-cutting in December," Rajiv noted. "They were here before us. They have as much right to this land as we do."

On the 168th day of the sit-in protest, a public hearing was organised where the coordinators presented their case to a panel of judges consisting of Prof Giti Ara Nasreen, Prof Anu Muhammad, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Jyotirmoy Barua, and Shamsi Ara Jaman. After hearing the case, the judges called for halting the construction work in the park and reopening it to the public. They also requested the activists to pause the sit-in protest for now.

As the monsoon clouds build, the sit-in protest is paused, but the performances at Panthakunja will continue, insisting that the fight for a park is, ultimately, a fight for a liveable future.

## MAMUNUR RASHID makes long-awaited return with 'Choron Chhuye Jai'

Renowned playwright and director Mamunur Rashid is returning to television with *Choron Chhuye Jai*, a 100-episode drama set to premiere on Channel i this week.

Airing Saturdays to Wednesdays at 7:50pm, the series marks Rashid's comeback after a significant hiatus.

The narrative exploring family conflicts and the emotional depth of ordinary lives was written and directed by the veteran artist himself.

It delves into themes of patriotism, grief, and longing, offering a layered portrayal of everyday life beyond conventional romance.

"It's not a love story—it's about wounded lands and burning hearts," Rashid expressed.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The ensemble cast includes Chanchal Chowdhury, Shamima Tushti, Ahsan Habib Nasim, Azad Abul Kalam, and Rashid himself.



## Zohran Mamdani convinced Mira Nair to choose 'The Namesake' over 'Harry Potter'

New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani, who won Tuesday's Democratic primary, played a pivotal role in his mother, acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair's, career. He persuaded her to direct *The Namesake* instead of a *Harry Potter* film.

In a resurfaced 2018 conversation at Jaipur Lit Fest, Nair recalls seeking her teen son's advice while grieving the loss of her mother-in-law, after being offered *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

Mamdani had told her, "There are many who can direct *Harry Potter*, but only you can direct *Namesake*." He also influenced casting by championing Kal Penn, who later wrote Nair a heartfelt letter.

*The Namesake* became a landmark film. Though Mamdani didn't pursue filmmaking, he gained attention through music and now politics, using Bollywood-style campaigns in his historic run for Democratic primary.

## Daisy Edgar-Jones to lead new 'Sense and Sensibility' film adaptation



Daisy Edgar-Jones has been cast as Elinor Dashwood in a new film adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, currently in development at Focus Features.

*Sense and Sensibility*, also famed as Jane Austen's 1811 debut novel, follows the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, as they navigate love and loss after being displaced from their family home.

Set to be directed by *Blue Jean* filmmaker Georgia Oakley, the screenplay is penned by Diana Reid. The project is produced by Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner of Working Title Films, India Flint of November Pictures, and Jo Wallett.

Known for *Normal People*, Edgar-Jones has also starred in *Where the Crawdads Sing* and *Twisters*.



## 808 institutes, structures renamed

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and divisions were changed. Of these, the highest number – 205 institutions and structures – were under the ministry of youth and sports.

This was followed by the secondary and higher education division (181), the primary and mass education ministry (84), the ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs (59), the ICT division (49), local government divisions (39) and defence ministry (24).

In addition, the renaming process for 134 institutions under the secondary and higher education division and 28 under the local

government divisions is underway.

The names of at least 240 institutions, structures and awards named after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman have been changed. Besides, the process of changing the names of 79 more institutions and structures is in progress.

The names of four cantonments – Bangabandhu Cantonment in Tangail, Bir Muktiyoddha Abdul Hamid Cantonment in Kishoreganj, Sheikh Hasina Cantonment at Lebukhali in Barishal and Sheikh Russell Cantonment at Zajira in Shariatpur – have been changed.

The name of the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre has also been changed.

The government has revoked the Bangabandhu Janaprashan Padak and Bangabandhu Jatiya Krishi Padak and renamed Bangabandhu Satellite-1 as Bangladesh Satellite 1.

The authorities are also in the process of changing the name of Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy Shishu Park.

Discussions are ongoing with relevant authorities regarding the renaming of several sites in India under the foreign ministry. These include the Bangabandhu

Smriti Kokkho, Bekar Hostel, Maulana Azad College and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Sarani, which is the road in front of the Kolkata Mission.

Discussions are also ongoing on the Sheikh Mujib bust in front of Sealdah Railway Station and the Bangabandhu Mancha in Kolkata.

The cancellation process of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Education Scholarship in New Delhi is also underway.

The Bangabandhu Lounge at Bangladesh's UN Mission in New York has already been renamed as Auditorium Lounge, the statement added.

## 89% drug cases

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evidence. “Many officers don't carry out thorough probes, which weaken the cases.” Bashir Ahmed, director (operations) at the DNC, said they strive to submit charge sheets on time. “The courts deliver verdicts after considering various aspects. On our part, we make every effort to prove the charges. Investigators are also provided with regular training and guidance.”

He added that the DNC is focusing on enhanced training and increased supervision to improve the quality of probes.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi said that there used to be dedicated courts to deal with drug cases in the past, but the cases are now being handled by regular courts.

“With such a large number of cases, it is often observed that no witnesses are present when the court is ready to proceed. In drug cases, seizure witnesses are crucial.

However, courts usually do not accept claims made solely by the police. In many instances, the witnesses lack proper addresses, making it difficult for investigators to locate them. As a result, many cases have remained pending for years due to the unavailability of witnesses.”

**PRISONS FOR ADDICTS** Expressing concern over the growing drug menace, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said people from all walks of life are getting involved in drug-related crimes.

He added that the use of women, children, and teenagers in this illicit trade was alarming.

Drug trafficking and abuse pose serious threats to public health, law and order, and the economy, the adviser said while speaking as the chief guest at a discussion organised by the DNC in Dhaka to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2025.

He said the government plans to establish separate

prisons and rehabilitation centres for drug addicts in each divisional city. A Tk 1,400 crore project to build drug rehabilitation centres in seven divisional cities has already been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne).

Jahangir also pointed out new challenges, including the rise of synthetic and semi-synthetic drugs, especially New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Legal measures have been taken to control these substances, while law enforcement and intelligence agencies remain vigilant.

He said the DNC currently has 2,943 personnel, including 1,622 enforcement officers, serving a population of about 18 crores. Despite limited workforce and resources, efforts are ongoing to strengthen the DNC's capacity.

Under the DNC Weapon Procurement and Usage Policy, the first batch of officers has completed firearms training to improve operational efficiency and safety.

## Israeli fire, strikes kill 56 in Gaza

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cooperation deal with Israel.

The comments represent the strongest condemnation to date by the Socialist leader, an outspoken critic of the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Speaking to reporters before an EU summit in Brussels, Sanchez mentioned a recent human rights report by the bloc's diplomatic service which, he said, addressed “the catastrophic situation of genocide unfolding in Gaza”.

The report published last week found “indications” that Israel was breaching its human rights obligations under the deal, which forms the basis for trade ties.

In the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said four people were killed in two separate incidents on Wednesday evening, including a 15-year-old boy who it said was shot by Israeli troops.

## ‘Energy budget mirrors past regime’s policies’

FROM PAGE 14

so, given the inability of oil-based power plants to make adequate contributions, the paper also mentions.

The interim government aspires to shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy, aiming for a green and sustainable power and energy sector, but the slowdown in policy shift does not reflect that aspiration, it added.

Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the companies involved in power generation and supply are still logging substantial profits while the public continues to suffer.

“The people's voices are not being heard. There's almost no point in talking to the government anymore.”

He provided the example of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation's recent decision to increase the Padma Oil Company's profit margin by 76 percent for supplying jet fuel to airliners at a time when the company has Tk

2,100 crore in reserves.

“They [Padma oil] are building two giant offices in Dhaka and Chattogram, operating schools and hospitals with the profit money from the public... This is not fair.”

He went on to say that if the ongoing gas crisis at industries lingers any longer, most of them will go bankrupt soon.

Faisal Samad, a director at the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the government has no plan to mitigate the energy crisis in industries. “We need an immediate short-term plan on how to increase gas supply to the industries.”

He suggested some solutions, such as suspending gas bills for a few months or waiving interest payments on bank loans for industries.

Razeeb Haider, director at Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, said, “We need the pressure to be at least 6 psi [pounds per square

inch] to keep all of our six machines operational. When the pressure is 2 psi, we need to shut down at least four of them.”

He, however, said that after the energy adviser's recent visit to their factories, the gas supply has increased. “But we don't know how long it will continue.”

He recommended conducting studies to assess the extent of production losses caused by disruptions in power and gas supply.

Akhter Hossain Apurbo, vice-president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the gas price was hiked based on the assurance of an uninterrupted supply.

“But the situation didn't improve... After the LDC graduation, the government will no longer allocate subsidies to the garment sector. But they can provide indirect subsidies through the power and energy sector.”

He said that when the fabric dyeing process is

initiated, it takes around six to eight hours to complete. “In that period, uninterrupted gas supply is absolutely essential; otherwise, the products risk ruin.”

Shafiqul Alam, a lead energy analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, said that although the government has announced plans to drill around 100 gas wells in the near future, there is no sign of that promise in the budget.

M a q b u l - E - E l a h i Chowdhury, a former member of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, said gas theft disguised as system loss should be checked.

“We had forced the transmission company to install zonal meters to reduce system losses. The readings of the meters should be published every month to show how much gas is being stolen in what areas,” he said, adding that around 400-500 million cubic feet of gas could be saved and served to the industries only by reducing system losses.

## 30 individuals involved in Abu Sayed murder

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The investigators told The Daily Star that the involvement of high-ranking officials, including the then Rangpur Metropolitan Police commissioner Moniruzzaman and former RMP deputy commissioner (crime) Abu Maruf Hossain, was found.

The other accused include the then vice-chancellor of the university Prof Hasibur Rashid, former proctor Shariful Islam, former assistant sub-inspector of police Amir Hossain, former constable Sujjan Chandra Roy, and Chhatra League leader Imran Chowdhury

Akash.

They are accused of crimes against humanity. Of the 30 accused, only Shariful, Amir Hossain, Sujjan and Imran have been arrested.

Some of the accused remain at large, while warrants have yet been issued for several newly identified accused, said a prosecutor.

The complaint was filed by Sayed's elder brother Ramzan Ali with the ICT's prosecution wing. He accused former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 23 others over his brother's death.

Soon after Sayed was killed in police firing seen on

TV, Sub-inspector Bibhuti Bhushan Roy, then in charge of the campus police camp, filed a First Information Report which said Sayed was not a victim of police firing.

“The protesters fired weapons and threw chunks of bricks from different directions, and at one stage, a student was seen falling to the ground,” read the report.

It added that Sayed's classmates took him to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

The SI accused 2,000-3,000 unidentified people, including BNP and Jamaat activists, in the case.

An assistant professor of forensic medicine at the Rangpur Medical College, Rajibul Islam, stated in his autopsy report that Sayed had died from shotgun pellet wounds. The doctor later said he was forced to change his findings several times.

He said he had to mention head injuries, other wounds, and blood clots. He concluded that the cause of death was shock and haemorrhage resulting from injuries.

Sayed's defiance inflamed students across the country and galvanised the widespread protests, as people began to join in ever larger numbers.

## 52 pushed in from India

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They include four men and two women. All of them are Bangladeshi citizens and they were handed over to Kamalganj Police Station, Lt Col Zakaria said.

In Khagrachari, 15 people were pushed into Bangladesh – nine through Shantipur border under Matiranga upazila and six through Panchari upazila border.

Khagrachari Deputy Commissioner ABM Iftekharul Islam Khandker confirmed the push-ins to The Daily Star.

Contacted, Matiranga

UNO Monjur Alam said BGB personnel detained the individuals, including seven women and two men, after they were pushed into Bangladesh by BSF.

They were kept at a local school under the supervision of BGB and the process to verify their identities was going on, the UNO added.

Panchari UNO Farhana Nasrin said the six people pushed into Bangladesh through the border in the upazila include five women and a man.

In Meherpur, eight people were pushed in through the Rangmohol border under

Gangni upazila. The group includes two children, three women, and three men, said Lt Col Mahbub Morshed Rahman, commanding officer of BGB-47 Battalion in Kushtia.

A BGB team detained them while they were moving along the border road inside Bangladesh territory after they were pushed in by BSF, he said.

All of them are Bangladeshi nationals. After verifying their identities, they were handed over to Gangni Police Station.

In Feni, four people of

a family were pushed into Bangladesh allegedly by BSF through Joar Kachar border under Sadar upazila.

They were detained by BGB and later handed over to police, said Lt Col Mir Ali Ejaz, commander of BGB-10 Battalion in Cumilla.

Contacted, Feni Model Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Md Shamsuzzaman said the detainees are Bangladeshi citizens and they would be handed over to their relatives.

[Our correspondents in Moulvibazar, Chattogram, Benapole and Feni contributed to the report]

## Install solar panels on all govt

FROM PAGE 3

systems on the roofs of all government buildings, schools-colleges-madrasas and all government hospitals.

“Consider whether the installation of solar panels in government buildings can be done by private initiatives. Those who install them will maintain it in their own business interests, operate it effectively. Only the roofs will not have to pay electricity bills for electricity

rest of the work,” he said.

Yunus also said the government must know the experience of all the institutions that have installed rooftop solar systems so far. “We need to know what kind of problems they have faced. We need to move towards resolving those problems.”

In this process, the government schools, colleges, and madrasas will not have to pay electricity bills for electricity

consumption and the institutions will get rent for the roofs used for solar power generation.

Officials present at the meeting said according to the 2024 report of the International Renewable Energy Agency, Bangladesh only generates 5.6 percent of the total electricity demand from solar power, far behind its neighbouring countries in expanding solar power generation and meeting the set targets.

## Waterlogging

FROM PAGE 3

our suffering,” said Sumon Mia, a grocery store owner in the area.

Sanchita Mallic, another resident, said, “It becomes very difficult to get ambulance service, especially during the monsoon, as the road goes completely underwater.”

The road falls under the jurisdiction of Dhaka North City Corporation.

Former councillor of Ward 49, Anisur Rahman Naim, was responsible for the area until he went into hiding after August 5.

Residents alleged that they were harassed when seeking help from him. After the appointment of the DNCC administrator, the situation remained unchanged.

Contacted, Khondoker Mahbub Alam, superintending engineer (civil) of DNCC's Traffic Engineering Circle, said the city corporation had already issued a tender to repair the road and assigned the project to the army.

Asked about the delay, Alam said, “The project director assured me that work would start soon. If needed, we will formally write to him again.”

Lt Col Md Masud, the project director, said he visited the site last Thursday and found the drainage system near the road had collapsed, causing water to remain stagnant over a 150-foot stretch.

“I recently took responsibility. After visiting the area, I contacted DNCC and asked them to clear the drainage so the condition

can improve slightly,” he added.

“We may start repair work after the monsoon. If we start now, it will worsen the suffering of commuters. In the meantime, we plan to sit with DNCC again and coordinate with other relevant agencies,” he also said.

During a visit to the area on Monday, auto-rickshaws, pickup vans, and private cars were seen struggling to pass through the waterlogged, pothole-ridden stretch near Ashkona Bazar.

The road resembled a waterbody.

Parents taking their children to school were seen getting off rickshaws and wading through water along the roadside to avoid deeper sections. Shops on both sides of the 300-yard stretch were closed due to the waterlogging, and the entire road was almost unusable.

Standing beside the road, another resident, Nasrin Akhter, said, “Our lives have become a curse because of this road. It feels like we committed a sin by building homes here.”

Asked about the delay in the army-led work, Director of Inter-Services Public Relations Lt Col Sami-Ud-Daula Chowdhury said the army usually completes such projects swiftly.

“Work on the Ashkona water pump road will begin very soon. We have discussed the matter with relevant officials and are hopeful the public suffering will soon come to an end,” he said.

## Focus on girls’ edn, health

FROM PAGE 3

in school and addressing the needs of underserved populations – especially in urban slums – through improved access to economic opportunities and health services are key to building a more just and equitable society.


Catherine Breen

Kamkong acknowledged Bangladesh's progress in reducing maternal mortality, saying the country's achievements – including increased life expectancy, particularly among women – are internationally recognised.

She said the UNFPA is

committed to supporting Bangladesh in addressing both persistent and emerging challenges, including reducing inequities, advancing gender equality and sexual and reproductive health, and ending gender-based violence and child marriage.

“We are working on it,” he said.



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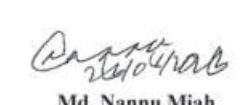
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# “I felt like the king of the world”

Mountaineer Shakil reflects on his Sea to Summit expedition

ABIR HOSSAIN

Like many, Ikramul Hasan Shakil has also assumed many roles. When asked to introduce himself, he first mentioned his involvement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a youth advocate to raise awareness about the perils of plastic pollution and then, expanded on his literary journey as an author of eight books. Yet, Shakil is best known as a mountaineer. But to describe him as just that is a disservice to the insurmountable feats he has gone on to conquer. His latest expedition perhaps best

immediately cross the border then as it had gotten pretty late when I arrived there. So, I stayed at Naxalbari at the home of an auto-rickshaw driver. They were really welcoming and accepted me as one of their own,” he said. “The auto-rickshaw driver’s wife treated me like her own son. When I left their place, she kept telling me that I have my mother’s blessing, referring to herself.”

After crossing eight districts in Nepal, Shakil finally arrived at the Everest base camp on April 29, where his main journey began. He set out on his expedition on May 6 late into the night and made his

them also began retreating.

“At a certain point, I got a little scared. Right around South Summit, the weather got really bad to the point where you couldn’t see anything due to the whiteout. Not only was it very windy but there was also snowfall. I began to doubt whether or not I could even make it to the top,” he recollected.

However, Shakil knew he had to persevere with whatever willpower he had left. “I had carried the Bangladeshi flag with me all the way from Inani Beach. I had to hoist it up at the peak,” he asserted. Even then, a barrage of hurdles awaited him — a rope crossing at Hillary Step, the uncertainty that it imposed, and yet another reminder of what was at stake: survival.

“There was only one of two options then: either I make it to the top or die trying,” he said.

Against all odds, however, Shakil made history. He made it to the summit. What awaited, even at the peak, was frostbite on his hand and snow blindness. Shakil knew he didn’t have a moment to spare; he had to descend quickly. It wasn’t until he made it back to the base camp that it occurred to him the incredible feat he achieved.

“Everyone asks me how I felt at the summit but

plastic?” he asks.

Our conversation then focused on what measures he took, both physically and mentally, to prepare for the expedition. He emphasised that mountaineering as a sport might just require more mental strength than mere physicality. “To be able to maintain composure under harsh conditions, which is constant throughout any of our expeditions, is a requirement,” Shakil said. Additionally, he also trains regularly, with his routine consisting of running, free hand exercises, and being mindful about his diet.

Shakil also discussed the many challenges he faced before undertaking the expedition. “One of the biggest challenges I faced was sponsorship. My journey was a costly one, and securing adequate financial support proved to be difficult,” he lamented.

Shakil also had to overcome hurdles in terms of visa processing. “When I applied for the SAARC visa, I was rejected four times,” he said. “I had to wait till the last minute to get it. I might have gotten the visa but others might not be able to get it. What about them? If we do not receive support from government institutions, it becomes difficult for us to represent our nation.”

Shakil consistently underpinned the significance of institutional support for mountaineers as it is a sport that not only requires them to travel abroad but also demands economic assistance. Thus, he urged all establishments to extend their support to mountaineers and the sport.

One other thing that he sought to bring attention to is the beauty of Bangladesh and the potential it has to become a hub for tourism. Despite the serenity that spans throughout the nation, the mountaineer believes we are unable to leverage it.

“I wanted to divert more attention towards Cox’s Bazar through my expedition. If anyone seeks to find out where I started my journey from, they will be directed there, which could translate to genuine interest,” he elaborated. “I wanted to be a global ambassador on behalf of my country and the youth.”

To conclude, Shakil iterated that there is a distinct Mount Everest we all seek to conquer and we mustn’t forego these dreams even in the face of adversity. As for mountaineering itself, he stressed the risks involved with the sport which is why anyone who intends to pursue it must do so with a degree of vigilance, intention, and a well-thought-out plan.

“It is usually a life-or-death situation. We unfortunately witness deaths all the time in this sport. Thus, one must prepare themselves mentally to become a mountaineer, undertake training, and not jump right into it. My advice to the youth is to stick to a plan,” he concluded.

the answer still evades me,” he said. “This is what I fought so much for. I made it to the top of the world. I felt like the king of the world.”

While Shakil’s expedition in itself is exemplary, its significance is reinforced by the message at the heart of it. Through the journey, he sought to raise awareness about plastic pollution, the effects of which he encountered throughout.

“As I walked the entire path, I wanted to point out that the volume of plastic we see strewn everywhere can be curbed if each one of us spared a second not to dispose of it just anywhere. And that starts with being aware,” Shakil affirmed.

“My primary goal is to remind everyone that if I can walk all the way to the summit of Mount Everest, why can’t we all be a little more mindful about disposing of



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

encapsulates his fervency. An adventure of epic proportions that has only been repeated once before by Australian mountaineer Tim Macartney-Snape, it is a feat that has propelled Shakil into the status of a national hero and etched his name in history.

The “Sea to Summit” expedition is distinct in that he climbed atop Mount Everest having begun his journey from Inani Beach at Cox’s Bazar. Covering approximately 1,400 kilometres on foot and swimming across the Jamuna River, Shakil’s journey was not merely a test of perseverance; it is a testament to the indomitable spirit of the human psyche.

We sat down with Shakil to have him elaborate on his journey, flesh out his message against plastic pollution, and discuss the support required to push mountaineering forward.

“While the entire expedition took me 84 days to complete, it took me 64 days to reach the base camp, from where I began the climb. To get to the basecamp, I had to swim across the Jamuna River because I was not granted permission to walk on the Jamuna Bridge, despite trying till the very last minute,” said Shakil.

“I went from Banglabanda to Phulbari, where I spent a night at a friend’s place. The next day I began my journey again and eventually arrived at Panitanki, near the India-Nepal border. I couldn’t

way to Khumbu Icefall, which he referred to as one of the most challenging places on Mount Everest.

Nonetheless, Shakil made his way past the region, advancing through the first and second camps and onto the third, from where he descended back to the previous camp. “We have to let our body adjust the higher we climb,” he explained. “After going back to the second camp, we descended even further back to the base camp. Because I had exposed myself to the atmosphere at an altitude of 7,000 metres, my body had somewhat acclimated to it.”

On May 15, Shakil, along with his Sherpa guide, advanced directly towards the second camp again, from where they progressed to the third camp. Before the break of dawn, on May 18, Shakil marched towards the fourth camp.

“It was right before camp four that we first saw a corpse right after crossing Lhotse. I recognised the body. It belonged to a mountaineer I had spent time with at the base camp. It shook me,” Shakil said.

Although Shakil had made commendable progress by then, the journey was far from over as he had to overcome more obstacles, notably, the harsh and unpredictable weather. Shakil recalled running into people who had left for the expedition before they did, climbing back down due to the harsh weather. Others who were advancing with



Ikramul Hasan Shakil on the slope of the Lhotse face, right before arriving at the third camp.

PHOTO: TASHI GYLAZEN SHERPA



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

## Ways to overcome physical distance in your friendships

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

One of the harsh realities of life is that one day, you will have to walk different paths from your closest friends. Oftentimes, the paths you take end up being physically distant from each other as well, with one or more of you packing their lives up and relocating to a whole new geographic location.

Many friendships have fizzled out in this manner. Long years passed with no words exchanged may turn all parties into different people. At some point, you might think that they’ve now comfortably settled under the “pleasant acquaintance” label rather than the “friend” one.

Of course, there are always those friends with whom it’s never awkward to reconnect, even after years of no contact. But there are also those whose company you simply don’t want to let go of, despite the fact there’s probably a continent, an ocean, and a time zone of approximately half a day between you.

However, there are some things you should remember before you make the transition from seeing them whenever you want to maybe once every few years. Both parties need to make the effort to show up for the other, but you also have to respect their space and not hold it against them if they fail sometimes. This goes for friends who live nearby as well. But if you’re working with different time zones, try not to feel sidelined when your friend chooses to go to bed after a long day instead of hearing you out.

One of the biggest complaints my friends had shortly after moving is the difficulties in socialising. That, added to the fact they’re missing friends and family back home, ends up causing them to feel isolated and lonely. This generally improves over time, but you can help make the process a little smoother by checking up on them often.

**There are always those friends with whom it’s never awkward to reconnect, even after years of no contact. But there are also those whose company you simply don’t want to let go of, despite the fact there’s probably a continent, an ocean, and a time zone of approximately half a day between you.**

The debate on the ups and downs of technology may not be a conclusive one. However, you can’t deny that there has never been a better time to keep up with friends who live across the globe than now. After all, almost every other app has a video call option much smoother and less laggy than ever.

It’s also best to advise them to get out of their comfort zones and socialise. That way, you’ll have a lot more to talk about and not end up becoming their only source of human connection.

That being said, moving abroad is still an isolating experience. Not being able to celebrate festivals or simply join in when your friends are hanging out gets depressing. So while informing your long distance friend may slip your mind when you’re maneuvering life and the major developments it throws your way, a simple update through text or video chat helps keep them in the loop, keeping more distance from forming.

Keeping a connection from weakening is all about mundane activities and exchanges. Sure, daily life is embarrassing sometimes. Sometimes a bird will drop a present on your head or you may trip in front of the person you find attractive. You may want to look nonchalant and contain the spread of information, but at some point in your life, your friend probably would have been there to share the experience with you. You may get made fun of for your foolishness, but these simple anecdotes are all you need to feel each other’s proximity.

At the end of the day, though, it’s up to you and your unique dynamic. Watch movies together, play video games, or spontaneously call them during ungodly hours. Don’t be afraid to tell them you miss them, and take the initiative to reconnect if you’ve lost touch for a while.





ট্রেডিনি রিজুট কনস্টেবল (টিআরসি) পদে নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোনো প্রকার আর্থিক লেনদেনে কোন প্রার্থী জড়িত থাকলে নিয়োগ বাতিলসহ সংশ্লিষ্টদের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে। আবেদনপত্রে কোনো মিথ্যা বা ভুল তথ্য প্রদান করলে নিয়োগের অযোগ্য বলে বিবেচিত হবে।



ESSAY

# Who is feminist LITERATURE FOR?

TASNIM ODRIKA

Feminist literature in the 21st century largely centres on intersectionality, recognising and exploring how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, disability, and other identities to shape women's experiences and struggles. For today's feminists, the focus isn't just on challenging or breaking social norms, but also on asking, who gets to break these norms? And to what extent?

But even as this body of work grows

by everyone. I felt seen, affirmed, understood and all those other words. And that's usually how I feel when reading most contemporary feminist writing. But "most" is the key word here. These books rarely challenge my beliefs; they tend instead to affirm them or provide better language for me to articulate what I already feel.

So, a lingering question always remains: who, exactly, are we talking to when we write or read feminist literature?

geography, and language that shape women's realities. And that's a gap many contemporary feminist works share, one that becomes especially visible when we consider how geography shapes access to feminist writing in places like Bangladesh.

Writing this piece in English, for an English-language literature magazine in Bangladesh, already narrows its audience. It assumes a reader who is not only fluent in English but also has access to a certain kind of education, leisure, and class position. So, what does that mean for feminist literature's broader goals of empowerment and justice?

A lot of the feminist literature I've read, books that are widely recommended, quoted, and shared, tends to circulate within a specific kind of audience. It's usually those of us who are already aligned with the core messages.

Of course, affirmation is important, especially for those who haven't seen their experiences reflected in mainstream discourse. But I can't help asking, if the literature is only reaching people who already identify as feminists, then who is being left out? And what happens when literature starts functioning more as a mirror than a provocation?

There's a risk that we create what feels like a "feminist echo chamber," where the same ideas circulate in familiar language, among familiar people, reinforcing a sense of moral clarity without necessarily pushing for deeper structural change. When we're constantly consuming texts that make us feel good about what we already believe, we may forget that literature can, and should, also make us uncomfortable. So, what's the political use of literature that doesn't push us out of our comfort zones? If the only readers are people who already agree, can the literature still call itself radical? These are the questions I keep returning to, especially when we hold up certain books as essential

without asking who actually gets to access them, or who might be excluded from their language, framing, or assumptions. Much of the most visible feminist literature today is written in or translated into English, which means that in places like Bangladesh, it often remains out of reach for large swathes of the population.

If mainstream feminist literature often misses the mark in terms of accessibility, then maybe the answer lies in looking closer to home, at the writers, artists, and communities who are already working to make feminist conversations more inclusive and locally grounded.

Bangladeshi writers like Neelima Ibrahim, Shaheen Akhter, and Jahanara Imam have, in different ways, brought feminist themes into public discourse through Bangla literature. Ibrahim's *Ami Birangana Bolchi* (Jagriti, 1994) foregrounds the testimonies of women who survived sexual violence during the Liberation War, challenging the silence imposed on them by both society and the state. Akhter's fiction often explores the inner lives and resilience of women navigating trauma and war, particularly through her novel *Talaash* (Mowla Brothers, 2009), which also focuses on biranganas. Imam's *Ekattorer Dinguli* (Shandhani & Charulipi Prakashani, February 1986), though a wartime memoir, offers powerful reflections on motherhood, grief, and moral resistance, centering a woman's experience in a national narrative often dominated by male voices. These writers not only broaden the scope of Bangla literature but also root feminist discourse in local language, memory, and history, making it more accessible to readers outside elite, anglophone spaces.

There is also a slowly growing body of work that speaks to the complexities of modern-day Bangladeshi womanhood. Authors like Sadaf Saaz use poetry (*Sari Reams*, University Press Ltd, 2013) and performance to explore taboo subjects, expanding feminist discourse beyond

historical trauma into the textures of contemporary womanhood. But there remains a noticeable gap when it comes to traditionally published books by younger, Bangla-first feminist authors. Beyond traditional publishing, groups like Bonhishikha—Unlearn Gender produce zines and street performances in Bangla, addressing consent, sexuality, and bodily autonomy back-to-back with urban youth audiences. The Young Feminism Network (a collaboration between Naripokkho and Goethe-Institut Bangladesh) supports Bangla-language storytelling through digital narratives and workshops, by and for millennial feminist voices across the country. Similarly, organisations like the HerStory Foundation and its Sister Library initiative (in partnership with Goethe-Institut Bangladesh) offer zine-making workshops, live readings, and community discussions that invite participation across age, class, and language divides.

What's important here is not just the language of the literature, though that matters, but how it is delivered and whom it is meant for. That's why it's pertinent to create and support more spaces where literature can be encountered in varied, accessible ways. A poem performed in a local theatre, a short story printed in a low-cost magazine, or a zine circulated through student networks might reach more diverse audiences than a glossy international bestseller ever could. Feminist literature doesn't always need to look like a hardcover book published by a global press.

The more we broaden what counts as feminist literature and who it is intended for, the more possibilities we open up for connection, resistance, and change. If the goal is empowerment, then the form, language, and price point of that empowerment matter just as much as the ideas themselves.

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ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

increasingly intersectional in theory, a key demographic seems consistently overlooked. These are the readers without access to the dominant language or cultural capital of feminist discourse.

I remember reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* (Fourth Estate, 2014), a concise and widely circulated text that presents a compelling case for why feminism should be embraced

I mention Adichie's book here because its widespread global appeal has positioned it as one of the most influential feminist texts of the 21st century. After its publication, a free copy of the book was even given to every 16-year-old Swedish girl to help spark conversations about equality and feminism. But that very appeal also reveals a limitation: in its effort to universalise feminist values, it often flattens the very differences of class,

## BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

# Reading Baitullah Quaderee: A critic's view of a poetic decade

Review of 'Bangladesher Shater Dashaker Kabita' (Nobojug Prokashoni, 2021) by Baitullah Quaderee

SALAHUDDIN AYUB

When I picked up Baitullah Quaderee's *Bangladesher Shater Dashaker Kabita*, it wasn't particularly out of scholarly curiosity. The book is, by design, a doctoral thesis—its structure conventional, its chapters arranged by academic demand—but what caught my interest was not the format, nor even the topic. It was the author himself.

I have long paid attention to Baitullah as a poet, especially because he writes sonnets, and writes them well. In a time when free verse has become a default posture, rarely earned through prior discipline, his fidelity to meter and form is notable. Baitullah's literary sensibility, as shown in this book, is shaped by that same commitment to structure. What he offers here—perhaps without fully intending to—is a ledger of lines, a record of poets who once cared deeply about craft.

To that end, the most rewarding sections of this book are those where he compiles, excerpts, and reflects on individual lines, metaphors, and rhythms from poets of the 1960s. This is where his voice as a poet-critic quietly emerges. As Abdul Mannan Syed often said, all criticism is selection. And Baitullah, with a poet's ear and an academic's patience, has done just that.

The structure is conventional: a thesis in three parts, with historical background, thematic content, and formal analysis. But in the latter half, something else begins to take shape—a register of lines, metaphors, rhythms, and images that bear witness to a time when Bengali poetry was still deeply serious about form. This catalogue of fragments, drawn from the likes of Rafiq Azad, Abdul Mannan Syed, Mohammad Rafiq, Abul Hasan, Nirmalendu Goon, and others, is Baitullah's most valuable contribution. It is a ledger of attention.

Of course, questions of periodisation haunt any project like this. Among them, Baitullah's inclusion of Shahid Qadri as a poet of the 1960s is open to debate. Qadri, in my view, belongs more convincingly to the circle of the 1950s—not merely because of his publication history or age, but because of the poetic company he kept. In the first edition of



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

his book *Sonali Kabin* (1973), Al Mahmud dedicated the book to "Shamsur Rahman, Fazal Shahabuddin, Shahid Qadri", writing in it, "may our shared-era friendship and ongoing poetic envy live on". That legendary line, widely recognised in the literary community, confirms what many have always known: Qadri stood among the younger figures of the 1950s. Stylistically, too, Qadri shared the lean, urbane, metrically resistant mode pioneered by Samar Sen—drawing from the Euro-American modernist archive without fully absorbing its formal discipline. His place in the literary history of Dhaka is important, but to call him a poet of the 1960s in the same breath

as Abdul Mannan Syed or Rafiq Azad seems, to me, a misalignment—historically and poetically—despite the affectionate authority with which Mannan Syed, often imitating the stylised Old Dhaka accent, would refer to him as "ustad."

Qadri's poetry is often said to embody themes of urban alienation, loneliness, and detachment. But these themes, already explored (and exhausted) by Buddhadeva Bose and the 1930s generation, were never quite authentic in Bengali poetry. Even Rabindranath questioned their sincerity. What the 1960s inherited—through Qadri and others—was not existential angst, but a

stylised echo of it.

In that sense, much of what passes as "urban modernism" in Bengali poetry of the 60s was not rooted in lived experience. It was secondhand—filtered through the literary experimentation of earlier decades and repurposed in Dhaka under the guise of innovation. That Baitullah treats these motifs with respect is understandable; that he need not regard them as historically original is also, I believe, worth saying.

If one wishes to speak of originality in the context of post-1947 East Bengal—and later Bangladeshi—poetry, one must begin with Farrukh Ahmad and Al Mahmud. Of

course, Jasimuddin before them, and Nazrul even earlier, were also original in powerful ways. Jasimuddin's rural realism created an entirely new idiom, and Nazrul's revolutionary lyricism altered Bengali's rhythm forever. But both belonged to a slightly different arc—Nazrul to the Bengal of resistance, and Jasimuddin to a rural Bengal that still spoke from within undivided cultural memory.

Farrukh's *Sat Shagarer Majhi* (1944) must be seen as a transitional volume—standing at the cusp of the old and the new. Composed while Farrukh was studying English literature at Scottish Church College in Calcutta, alongside Subhash Mukhopadhyay, the book reincarnates, quite explicitly, the metaphysical undertow of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*—though Bengali critics have largely failed to grasp the extent of that intertextuality. The sailor who sets out across seven seas evokes not only the *Arabian Nights* but also the symbolist drift of Western Romanticism. And crucially, the sailor is not bound for any clear political telos—not Jinnah, not Pakistan, not even East Bengal as a nationalist project. The destination is unknown. It is this radical, almost visionary, indeterminacy that gives the poem its force. Written just three years before the Partition, the poem is haunted by a sense of uncharted destiny—a Romantic sublimity rare in Bengali verse of the time. The power of the text is amplified by its prosodic precision: composed in 'matrabritta', a meter that, as Abdul Mannan Syed noted, was beloved by both Nazrul and Farrukh. Though Farrukh did not possess deep training in Arabic or Persian, he deployed those linguistic reservoirs with exceptional rhythmic judgment—never ornamental, always musical.

This is an excerpt. Read the entire article on [The Daily Star and Star Books and Literature's websites](#).

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On a day that totally belonged to hosts Sri Lanka, Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das had one thing to celebrate as he surpassed veteran Mushfiqur Rahim for most dismissals with the gloves as a Bangladeshi yesterday. Having drawn level with Mushfiqur's tally of 113 dismissals during the first Test last week, Litton moved ahead by taking a simple catch behind the stumps to dismiss Dinesh Chandimal in the final session. The dismissal marked his 114th overall -- comprising 99 catches and 15 stumpings. Litton achieved the feat in just his 65th innings, whereas Mushfiqur had taken 97 innings to reach his total.



SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh first innings:**  
247 all out in 79.3 overs  
(Shadman 46, Taijul 33;  
Dinusha 3-22, Asitha 3-51)

**Sri Lanka first innings:**  
290 for two in 78 overs  
(Nissanka 146 not out,  
Chandimal 93, Udara 40; Taijul  
1-90, Nayeem 1-45)

Sri Lanka lead by 43 runs

**Bangladesh veteran Mushfiqur Rahim and Sri Lanka opener Pathum Nissanka wear broad smiles as they walk out of the ground at the end of the second day's play in their second and final Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo yesterday. The picture, however, reflects half-truth about yesterday's proceedings as hosts Sri Lanka dominated throughout, with Nissanka notching his fourth Test ton. Nissanka remained unbeaten on 146 with nightwatchman Prabath Jayasuriya on 5 not out as Sri Lanka reached 290 for two in their first innings, leading by 43 runs.**

PHOTO: AFP

## From 'chapter over' to 'Al Nassr forever'

AFP, Riyadh

Cristiano Ronaldo inked a two-year extension with Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr, the club announced Thursday, following months of speculation over which team he would sign for next season.

"Cristiano Ronaldo is staying at @AlNassrFC until 2027," the club wrote in a post on X.

Minutes before the official confirmation, the team posted a teaser video, with the 40-year-old Ronaldo walking along a beachfront and saying: "Al Nassr forever".

Ronaldo later posted a message on his Instagram, confirming the extension.

"A new chapter begins. Same passion, same dream. Let's make history together," read the post.

The Portuguese superstar arrived in 2023 in the kingdom to play with the club, heralding a rush of players in the latter stages of their careers to the oil-rich country.

Last month, Ronaldo posted "This chapter is over" hours after the Saudi Pro League wrapped up with Al Nassr finishing third and trophyless once again.

Although Ronaldo was the Pro League's top scorer with 25 goals, he has been unable to win a Saudi or continental trophy with Al Nassr, who lost in the Asian Champions League semifinals last month.



## Lankans provide lessons for Bangladesh

ASHEFAQ-UL-ALAM

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto was left scratching his head throughout the day -- figuratively, for ideas, and literally, out of frustration -- as Sri Lanka bolstered their control over the Colombo Test, thanks to Pathum Nissanka and Co on the second day of the second and final Test yesterday.

Off-spinner Taijul Islam put in a 32-over shift, keeping things tight on one end only to see pressure getting released from the other, as Bangladesh were unsuccessful in breaking the resolve of Nissanka, whose unbeaten 146 catapulted the hosts to 290-2 and ended the day with a 43-run lead.

The pitch that had shown signs of life on Day 1 looked completely docile yesterday once the Sri Lankan innings began.

But more than the pitch actually settling down and improving for batting, it was the controlled aggression of the Sri Lankan batters and inconsistent bowling from the visitors that made it seem that way.

Taijul, who earlier in the day pushed the team's total to 247 with a 33-run knock, delivered 41 percent of the total deliveries Bangladesh bowled on the day, conceding 90 runs at an economy rate of 2.81 and claiming one wicket.

The rest of the five bowlers banded together for the remaining 46 overs, which went for 200 runs at 4.35 runs per over.

Openers Nissanka and Lahiru Udana set the tone of the innings with the opening stand, as they pounced on every bad delivery from the Bangladesh pacers and brought up the team 50 in just 53 balls.

Taijul broke the opening stand on 88, trapping Udana lbw for 40, but that didn't alter the momentum at all as Nissanka and the experienced Dinesh

Had the Lankan batters not played their shots and instead scored at the same rate as Bangladesh had done in the first innings, 3.10, they would have ended the day still trailing Bangladesh by five runs.

But Sri Lanka remained consistent with their batting approach as Nissanka and the others took the game by the scruff of the neck with their proactive batting.

The positive intent shown by Sri Lanka is not an anomaly, as teams currently are progressively scoring at a higher rate in red-ball cricket, with the game in general shifting towards a more result-oriented approach.

Bangladesh showed no real intent to push for a win in the earlier Test, scoring at a run-rate of 3.27 in the second innings, and as a result, a three-hour rain interruption on the final day did not leave them with enough time to take 10 wickets in the second innings and the match ended in a draw.

But even if rain plays spoilsport in the following three days, Sri Lanka are now well-positioned to earn a sizeable lead and test Bangladesh in their second innings.

Favourable conditions coupled with the correct approach have placed Sri Lanka in a position of strength in Colombo, and along the way, they have also imparted a lesson for Bangladesh on what the batting approach should be in these conditions.

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Chandimal maintained the same tempo in a mammoth 194-run second wicket stand.

Chandimal missed out on a hundred, getting caught off Nayeem Hasan late in the day, but the damage had already been done for Bangladesh.

Overall, Sri Lanka scored at a run-rate of 3.71, almost identical to their run-rate in the first innings of the previous Test in Galle, which was 3.69.

## BCB marks milestone with 'limitations'

SPORTS REPORTER

Marking the 25th anniversary of earning Test status, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) staged a celebratory event at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Most members of the inaugural Test squad attended the occasion. However, the absence of some key figures made the celebration feel somewhat underwhelming.

Notably, former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury and ex-general secretary Syed Ashraful Haque -- instrumental in initiating Bangladesh's Test status campaign -- were neither mentioned during the two-hour programme nor invited to the event.

Meanwhile, former Test captain Naimur Rahman Durjoy, despite receiving an invitation, was unable to attend. Moreover, former players Akram Khan and Khaled Mashud Pilot were also missing due to personal commitments abroad.

The event began with a speech from the board president Aminul Islam Bulbul, who announced a decentralisation initiative to strengthen grassroots cricket.

"Today, on the occasion of our 25 years in Test cricket, I want to declare that we have selected four regions to form four mini BCBs," Bulbul said during the ceremony.

"There will be a head of cricket in each of the four regions, monitoring everything in their respective regions. We are thinking of holding premier league matches, coaching development



programmes, and introducing a funding model so that they don't need to depend on Mirpur every time," he further informed.

Meanwhile, chief guest and Youth and Sports advisor Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan pledged support, announcing plans to install synthetic pitches in 100 schools across the country through BCB.

The board honoured the inaugural Test cricketers -- who will mark the silver jubilee of their maiden Test this November -- with commemorative blazers, as the players shared memories while signing a ceremonial jersey on stage.

"I'm feeling so great to meet all those players with whom I played the inaugural Test 25 years ago. I hope to see similar programmes continue in the coming years as well," left-arm spin maestro Mohammad Rafique said in his speech.

A Test players' honours board was unveiled following the formalities. The evening concluded with a cake-cutting and group photo session.

Ultimately, while it is commendable to honour the legacy of the frontliners, the contributions of those who laid the foundational groundwork 25 years ago should ideally not have been overlooked. BCB boss Bulbul, who assumed leadership on May this year, justified the omissions. "The programme was arranged within a small capacity and we only targeted those who played [the inaugural Test]," he told reporters after the event.

"Their names are always in the core of our hearts. But such were the limitations."



Bangladesh kicked off their training session yesterday morning at Training Field 1 in Yangon, ahead of their AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers opener against Bahrain on Sunday. Ranked 128th, Bangladesh face a daunting challenge in a group that includes hosts Myanmar (55th), Bahrain (92nd) and Turkmenistan (141st), but expectations have recently escalated following spirited performances against stronger teams like Jordan and Indonesia.

PHOTO: BFF

## IT'S ALL YELLOW

### Brazilian clubs bridge the Europe-South America gap

KHALID HOSSAIN

For decades, the FIFA Club World Cup has been viewed largely as a European procession; a stage where the continent's financial and sporting powerhouses have reigned supreme. The 2025 edition seemed destined to follow that script. Yet, as the tournament unfolds on American soil, Brazilian clubs have dramatically rewritten the narrative.

Flamengo, Palmeiras, Botafogo, and Fluminense have emerged as the tournament's surprise protagonists, defying expectations and the prevailing assumption of European dominance.

Together, they've lost just once in 12 group-stage matches.

Flamengo's emphatic 3-1 win over Chelsea in Philadelphia, powered by a sea of black and red fans, sent a clear message. Botafogo stunned the tournament with a 1-0 upset over Champions League holders Paris Saint-Germain, while Palmeiras dominated their group with strong performances. Meanwhile, Fluminense's resilient 0-0 draw against Mamelodi Sundowns in Miami yesterday secured their place as group runners-up.

"It's not a surprise to us. We know



our level," said Fluminense midfielder Nonato. "But now we get to show the world."

This resurgence is the result of a perfect storm of timing, tactical evolution, and sheer determination. European sides arrived drained from exhausting seasons, struggling to adapt to the humid American summer. Brazilian clubs, by contrast, are in peak season rhythm and have taken full advantage.

Across stadiums in New York, Los Angeles, and Miami, Brazilian fans have transformed these arenas into carnival grounds.

"The synergy between the team and fans is unbelievable," added Nonato, whose team will face a daunting test

against Italian giants Inter Milan -- runners-up in last season's Champions League -- in a clash that could define the tournament's new balance of power.

Even European coaches acknowledge the challenge. "Nearly every game for a European team is like an away game," said Bayern Munich head coach Vincent Kompany.

No team embodies this renaissance better than Botafogo. Just four years ago, they battled in Brazil's second division; and tomorrow, they prepare to face Palmeiras in the Round of 16, guaranteeing a Brazilian quarterfinalist.

With a heritage rich in legends like Garrincha, Didi, and Jairzinho, Botafogo's rise feels like a revival of Brazil's golden past.

Perhaps most importantly, this club-level surge offers hope for their national team, record five-time world champions.

The Selecao Canarinho ("Canary Squad", after their bright yellow jersey) have not lifted the World Cup since 2002 and have struggled to produce a unified core of stars. But with Carlo Ancelotti now guiding the national side, and forwards like Raphinha and Antony finding form, the winds of change may be blowing strong.



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## 30 individuals involved in Abu Sayed murder

### Say ICT investigators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The investigation agency of the International Crimes Tribunal has found involvement of 30 individuals in the murder of Abu Sayed, prosecutor Mizanul Islam told a press briefing yesterday.

The Begum Rokeya University student was shot dead during the mass uprising in Rangpur on July 16 last year.

Mizanul said the prosecution had received the investigation report along with some documents and was making preparations to press charges at tribunal 2 on Sunday.

The report identified the involvement of 30 individuals, and through review, the number of accused may be increased or decreased, he added.

ICT investigators say they submitted the probe report to the prosecution on June 24. The investigation took four months.

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Mourners cry near the body of a Palestinian child who was killed in what the Gaza Health Ministry said were overnight Israeli airstrikes on tents sheltering displaced people, at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Israeli fire, strikes kill 56 in Gaza

### Say medics; six of them waiting to collect aid

AGENCIES

Rescuers in Gaza said Israeli gunfire and airstrikes killed 56 people in the territory yesterday, including six who they said were waiting to collect aid.

Local health authorities said an Israeli airstrike killed at least nine people at a school housing displaced families in the Sheikh Radwan suburb in Gaza City, while another strike killed nine people near a tent encampment in Khan Younis in the south of the enclave. Several people were injured in both strikes.

The new deaths come as Arab mediators, Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, reached out to the warring parties in a bid to hold new ceasefire talks, but no exact time was set for a new round, according to Hamas sources, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, Israel has halted aid supplies to Gaza for two days to prevent them being seized by Hamas, an official said yesterday after images circulated of masked men on aid trucks whom clan leaders said were protecting aid, not diverting it to the Hamas members.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that aid deliveries had been temporarily suspended for two days to allow the military time to develop a new plan.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez yesterday said Gaza was in a "catastrophic situation of genocide" and urged the European Union to immediately suspend its

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## 89% drug cases filed in 5 years still pending

MUNTAKIM SAAD

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) filed over 1.22 lakh drug-related cases in a little over five years, but only 11 percent of those have been disposed of.

It paints a grim picture of the country's anti-narcotics efforts.

According to DNC's latest annual report, only 13,376 of the 1,22,422 cases lodged between January 2020 and April 2025 have been resolved.

Among the disposed cases, accused in 7,539 cases or 56.36 percent were acquitted, raising concerns about the quality of investigations and prosecutions.

The report also shows that 1,30,882 people were arrested in the 1,22,422 cases. However, only 14,329 faced trials.

The trend continues this year as well. In the first four months of 2025, 1,073 drug cases were resolved. Of them, 599 resulted in acquittals. At least 1,143 accused were tried and 632 of them were cleared.

Officials involved in dealing with drug-related cases have blamed weak evidence, poor case preparation, and delays in legal proceedings as the key reasons behind the high rate of acquittals.

Mukul Jyoti Chakma, DNC deputy director, told The Daily Star that charge sheets are submitted within 15 days if all the accused are arrested and the evidence is ready. If not, investigators can seek an extension of 30 days, and further time if needed.

However, he acknowledged that in many cases, reports are submitted within 15 days regardless of the cases' readiness.

"The disposal of cases depends on the courts, but issues like weak evidence and inadequate case preparation can delay proceedings."

Another DNC official said that in the rush to meet deadlines, investigators often rely heavily on the FIRs. As a result, charge sheets are submitted without proper

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## 808 institutes, structures renamed

### They had been named after Sheikh family members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has so far renamed 808 institutions and structures across Bangladesh that were previously named after ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family members, including her father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The renaming process for another 169 structures bearing the names of the former premier and her family members is currently underway, according to a statement from the chief adviser's press wing yesterday.

Since 2009, 977 public infrastructures and institutions were named after Hasina, her family members and Awami League-affiliated politicians, it said. These included military cantonments, air bases, naval ships, major bridges, roads, buildings, educational institutions, hospitals and research centres.

The names of various organs under 34 ministries

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## 'Energy budget mirrors past regime's policies'

CPD says lingering crises in power sector still not addressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

By not introducing any major changes in priorities, the interim government appears to have followed the previous administration's approach to preparing the budget for the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) observed yesterday.

Speaking at a discussion, CPD analysts said the government has no plans to address the financial crisis facing the Bangladesh Power Development Board, nor is there any move to prioritise domestic gas supplies over imported liquefied natural gas (LNG).

They pointed out that although the government has doubled the Energy Division's budget, the allocation remains insufficient to realise its plans to reduce import dependency and boost domestic supply by investing resources in gas exploration.

Flawed fuel pricing mechanisms remain in place, and there is still a lack of major investment to accelerate the transition to renewable energy, they further noted.

A panel of experts made the observations at a discussion titled "Can the Interim Government

Meet Expectations?" organised by the think tank at the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

The proposed budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year was presented earlier this month and approved by the Cabinet on June 22.

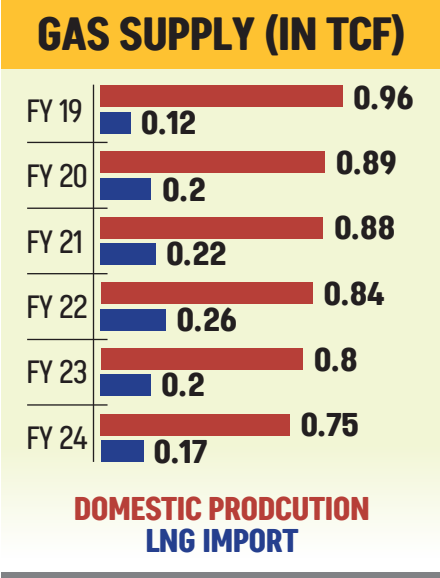
According to the budget, the allocation for the Power Division has been slashed by nearly 30 percent, with the government aiming to reduce the subsidy burden by around Tk 11,000 crore.

"Most of the cost-cutting was done in the development budget. But there has been an increase in the operating budget, from which the unnecessary expenditures were supposed to be reduced," said the CPD's senior research associate Helen Mashiyat Preoty while presenting the keynote paper.

The Power Division has urged the finance ministry to convert its substantial losses from purchasing electricity at high prices from private rental, quick rental, and independent power producers, revealed the keynote paper.

The share of coal and LNG used in power generation has increased and will continue to do

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## Zurich researchers pioneer recycling rare earth from e-waste

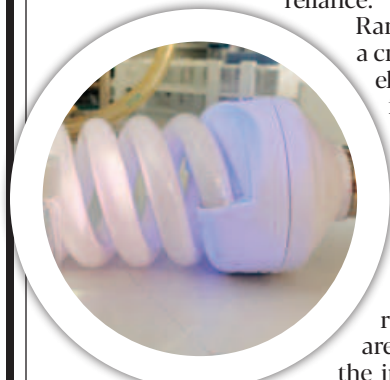
REUTERS, Geneva

Researchers at ETH University in Zurich have developed a new method to efficiently recover rare earth elements from electronic waste, advancing sustainable recycling and reducing mining reliance.

Rare earth elements play a crucial role in modern electronics, powering fluorescent lamps, magnets in hard drives and are used in the production of generators for wind farms.

Currently less than one percent of rare earth materials are recycled, due to the immense energy and chemical effort to separate elements in the materials, which comes at significant expense, according to ETH Zurich University.

ETH Pioneer Fellow, Dr Marie Perrin and her supervisor Associate Professor at the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences, Professor Dr Victor Mougel developed a new method that allows the efficient separation of these elements, using a specially designed extractant to alter their solubility.



## SAVIOURS OF THE SWAMPS

A yellow monitor lizard slithers through a waterbody in Khulna's Bilpabla. Also known as the golden monitor, these reptiles are found across Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and parts of Pakistan. Common near wetlands, farmlands, and village edges, they are often mistaken for snakes due to their forked tongue. Feeding on rats, insects, snakes, frogs, fish, and carrion (decaying flesh of dead animals), they play a vital role in controlling pests and cleaning up the environment. Despite their ecological value, they are widely hunted and nearing endangered status. Locally called "guishap", these shy, misunderstood reptiles are crucial for a healthy ecosystem.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## 52 pushed in from India

STAR REPORT

At least 52 people were pushed into Bangladesh allegedly by India's Border Security Force through different borders in four districts yesterday.

At least 25 of them were pushed through two areas in Moulvibazar – 19 through Kakmara in Sreemangal upazila and six through Dhalai in Kamalganj upazila, police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) said.

Md Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sreemangal Police Station, confirmed that all 19 were citizens of Bangladesh.

They were wandering in the border area, he said, adding that police detained them upon being informed by locals.

Sreemangal Upazila Nibahi Officer (UNO) Md Islam Uddin, however, said the authorities were verifying the identities of the 19 people after police detained them.

In Kamalganj upazila, at least six people were detained after being pushed into Bangladesh through Dhalai border early in the morning, said Lt Col ASM Zakaria, commander of BGB 46 Battalion.

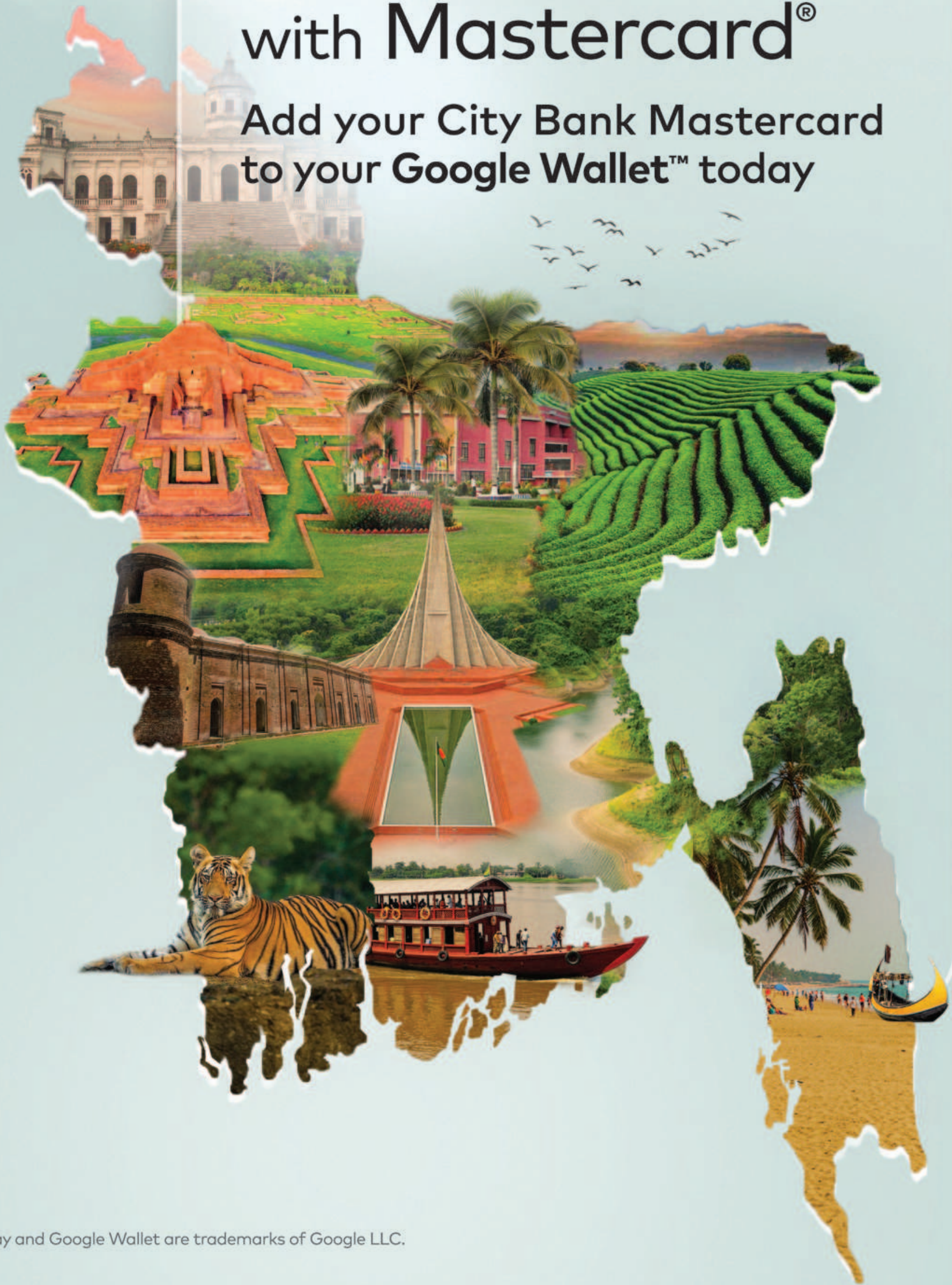
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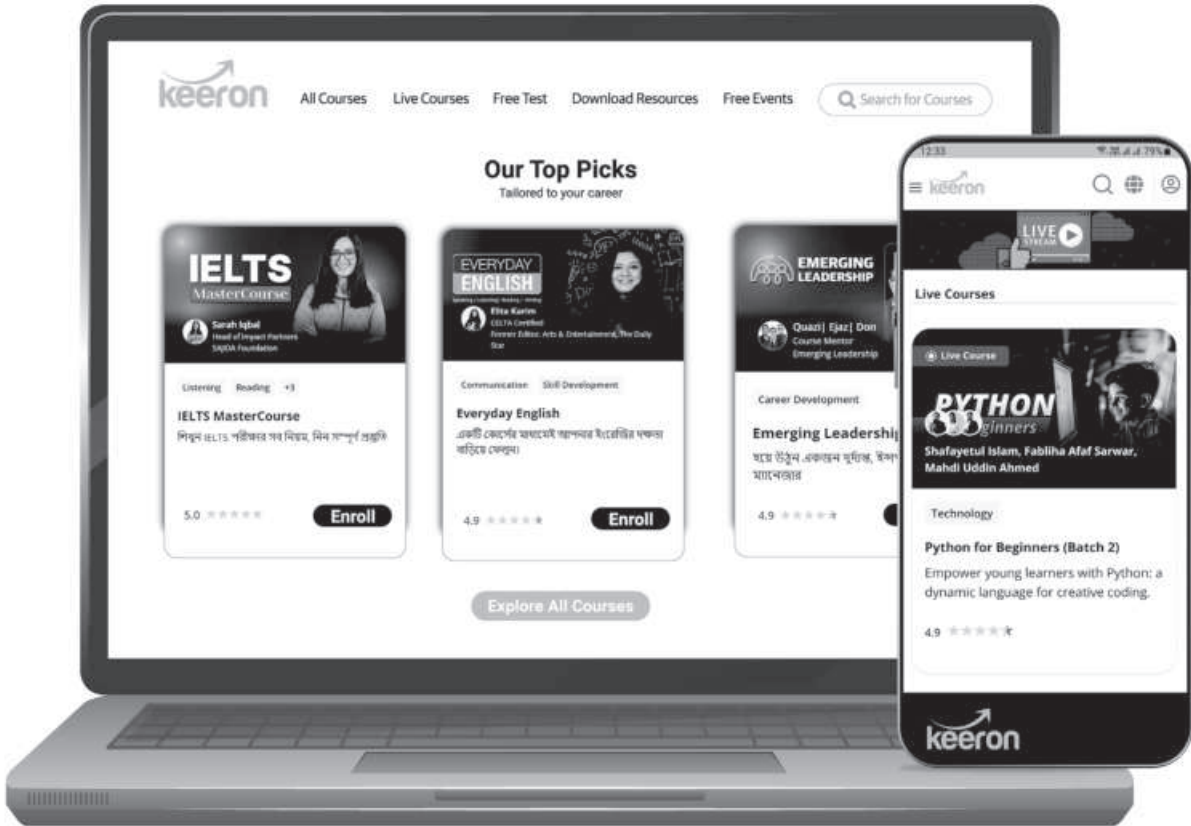
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