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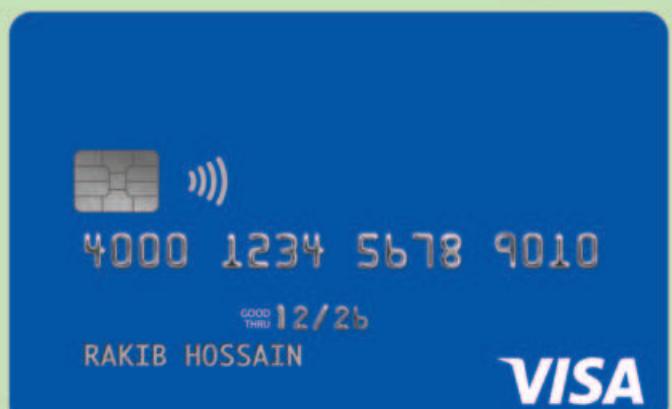


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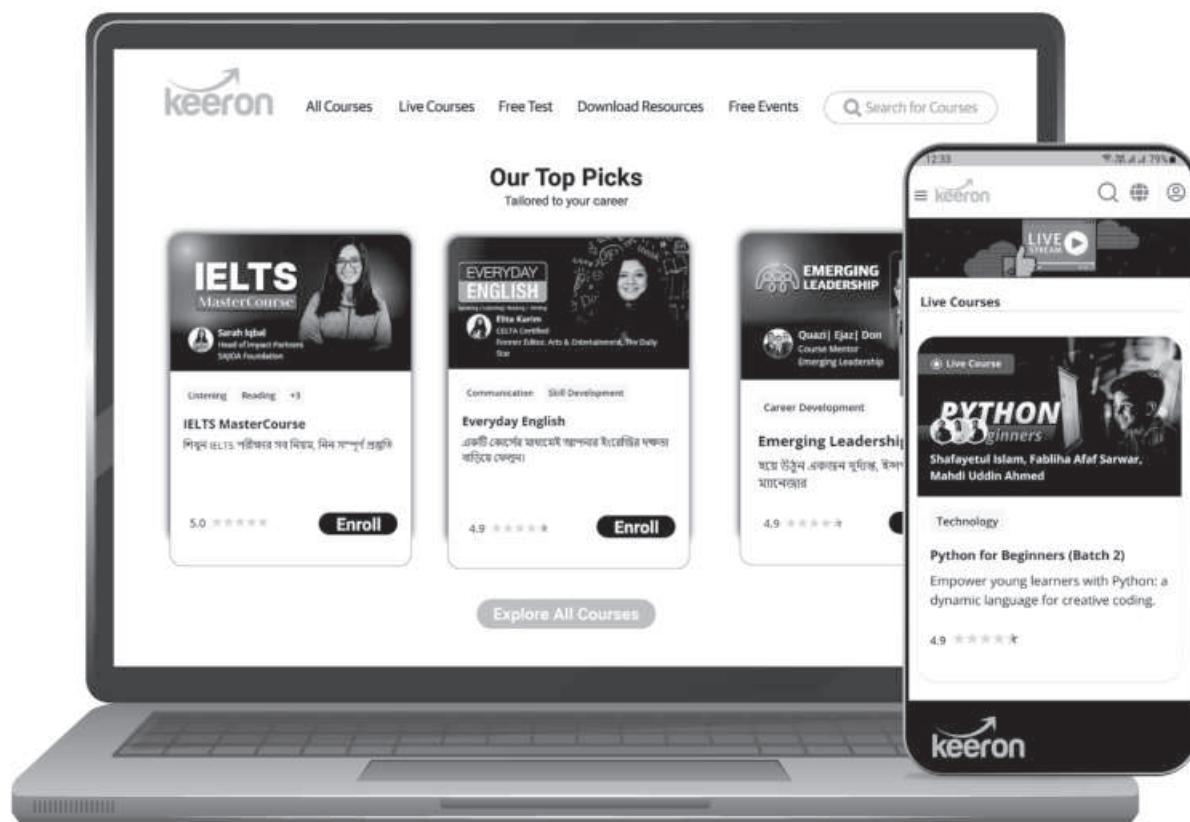
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"There is so much more work to do to keep 1.5 alive, as science demands."

UN climate chief Simon Stiell says ahead of COP30 in Brazil

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TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

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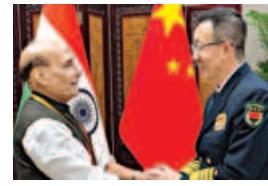
Fading
away in
silence

WR1



Tree from which
Haribhanga
mango
originated

WR2



India seeks
solution to
border dispute
with China

P8



Muslin's
revival weaves
past into
present

WR4

IMF CONDITIONS Govt pledges to track graft in tax admin

33 requirements for next loan instalment

REJAU KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The government has pledged a series of sweeping reforms to meet International Monetary Fund conditions for the next instalment of its \$5.5 billion loan, including a public survey to measure corruption in tax administration and a phased reduction of subsidies on electricity, fertiliser, remittances and exports.

The survey will be conducted every two to three years to assess whether reforms are fostering citizens' trust in tax administration, according to the IMF's latest programme report released on Thursday.

"We will take several measures to enhance transparency and governance in tax administration," the report quoted the government as saying.

The IMF has set 33 conditions -- 21 prior and structural benchmarks and 12 performance and indicative targets -- for the next loan instalment. One key requirement is that

- Tk 30,000cr additional revenue by reducing tax exemptions in FY26
- 3-year roadmap by Sept to cut gap between power generation costs, prices
- Export incentives to be phased out completely in FY26
- Remittance subsidy to end by January 2027

the government generate Tk 30,000 crore in revenue by reducing VAT and income tax exemptions in the FY26 budget.

The government has also committed that the National Board of Revenue will publish a departmental code of ethics and professional conduct for tax officials by September, with all officers affirming compliance by December.

NBR staff will be required to undergo ethics training every two to three years and affirm their adherence annually. The board will also begin publicly reporting integrity statistics, including actions against officials for misconduct, delinquency and corruption, within six months of each fiscal year's end.

Since the programme began in January 2023, Bangladesh, having one of the world's lowest tax-to-GDP ratios, has consistently missed NBR revenue targets.

Against this backdrop, the NBR has been tasked with collecting Tk 443,530 crore by June 2025 and Tk 550,700 crore by June 2026 -- ambitious goals requiring sweeping reforms, improved compliance and reduced exemptions.

Earlier this month, Bangladesh sent a reform plan to IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, outlining steps in exchange rate policy, banking and financial sector reforms, revenue collection, and central bank autonomy.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

NEXT NAT'L POLLS
BNP urges CA, CEC to disclose what they discussed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP will feel reassured if both the chief adviser and the chief election commissioner disclose to the nation what they discussed about the upcoming national polls during Thursday's meeting, the party's Standing Committee member Salauddin Ahmed said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters at his home in Gulshan, the BNP leader said the party assumed that Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus asked the Election Commission to prepare for the parliamentary polls in the week before the start of Ramadan in February 2026.

"But this is only our assumption -- we don't know whether he communicated it or gave such instructions. If both sides clarify the matter

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

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MUHARRAM 2, 1447 HIJRI



A police impound lot just north of Postogola Bridge in the capital, where most vehicles confiscated for traffic violations are battery-run rickshaws. These vehicles were seized for operating on main roads. Left exposed to the elements for long periods, the conditions of these rickshaws are gradually deteriorating. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Technical education hit by teacher shortage, falling enrolment

ARAFAT RAHMAN

Bangladesh's technical education sector is facing a slow-burning crisis, shaped by a severe shortage of teachers, poor infrastructure, and steadily declining student interest.

Despite government ambitions to expand the country's skilled workforce, the system continues to suffer from years of neglect and underinvestment, say experts.

More than half of the 15,000 sanctioned teaching posts in government and private technical institutions were vacant as of May this year, according to Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB). In many polytechnic institutes, one teacher is tasked with teaching over 100 students across multiple shifts, a workload that undermines effective teaching.

The scale of the problem is starkly illustrated by the example of Faridpur Polytechnic Institute. With over 4,000 students enrolled

in six departments, the institute needs 201 teachers to function effectively but operates with only 55. There is also a shortage of technical support staff, as 54 out of 128 positions remain vacant.

The situation is similar at Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute, which has 113 teachers for 3,392 students.

Md Abu Hanif, principal of the institute, said that more than half of the 240 teaching positions remain vacant, putting additional burden on the existing faculty.

"But we have somewhat grown accustomed to this. The situation was even worse in the past. In January, 54 teachers joined the institute, easing the burden on the existing staff."

"Previously, a teacher had to conduct 50-60 classes per week. Now, the number has come down to 20-25," he added.

The crisis in the sector is compounded by a sharp drop in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

TEACHER CRISIS

TOTAL POSTS	VACANT POSTS
15,000	Around 7,500

TOTAL STUDENT ENROLMENT AGAINST AROUND 1.71 LAKH SEATS

ACADEMIC YEAR	ENROLLED STUDENTS
2019-20	81,000
2020-21	77,000
2021-22	73,000
2022-23	71,000
2023-24	69,000



An excavator removes piles of plastic and other waste from the heavily polluted Kalyanpur Canal in the capital's Gabtoli as part of a cleaning initiative titled "Khal Bachley, Bachbe Nagar" undertaken by the Dhaka North City Corporation. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Shutdown and 'March to NBR' from today
Govt says follow-up meeting on Tuesday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The stalemate at the National Board of Revenue continued for yet another day as protesting officials remained firm about launching their previously announced programme today, refuting the finance ministry's claim that an agreement was reached.

In a statement yesterday evening, the finance ministry said NBR's protesting officials agreed to withdraw their shutdown and "March to NBR" following a meeting on Thursday.

Hours later, after 9:00pm, the NBR Reform Unity Council, the platform of protesting officials, said representatives of the council did not attend the meeting at the finance adviser's office as they were not invited.

The shutdown will be launched as planned, the council said in a statement. It added that only international passenger services will be allowed during the shutdown. The marches will be organised from the field offices of taxes, customs, excise, and VAT.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

SOCIAL BUSINESS DAY
Yunus calls for building better world for all

BSS, Dhaka



Focusing on the transformative power of social business to bring about a positive impact, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday voiced his desire to break free from the current gloom and create a beautiful and better world for everyone.

"We're not responsible for creating this gloomy world. We want to create a beautiful world, and we can do that."

He made the remarks at the inaugural session of the 15th edition of Social Business Day, jointly organised by the Yunus Centre and Grameen Group at Samajik Convention Centre at Zirabo in Savar.

This year's theme of the two-day event is "Social Business is the Most Effective Way to Ensure Healthcare for All."

Speaking as the chief guest and keynote speaker, Prof Yunus reminded all that the world is on the wrong path and only through selflessness, imagination, and social business can a just and sustainable future be achieved.

From championing "healthcare as a human right" to reimaging education that inspires "creators, not job

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

End impunity, ensure genuine accountability

Says UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has called on Bangladesh to end the widespread impunity surrounding enforced disappearances and ensure genuine accountability from its military, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies.

In a report titled "Technical Advice on Bangladesh", published on June 25 following a four-day technical visit to the country, the Working Group expressed concern at the pattern of enforced disappearances and the lack of accountability for perpetrators.

The visit, held from June 15 to 18, was conducted by delegation members Grażyna Baranowska and Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez.

"The Working Group is deeply concerned by the continued widespread impunity for enforced disappearances. All security forces, including the army, DGFI, and Rab, should make a genuine commitment to accountability by cooperating fully with relevant mechanisms," the report stated.

It added, "The only way in which security institutions can regain the trust and legitimacy of victims and the population is through genuine accountability processes within these institutions."

The report emphasised that such accountability must begin with decisive and transparent actions.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



The first motor car on the streets of Dhaka

RIDWAN AKRAM

Before we delve into the story of the first motor car in Dhaka, it's worth exploring an earlier question: When did four-wheelers first appear on the city's roads?

Back in 1790, the Collector of Dhaka noted that a group of soldiers stationed in the city had introduced a hired horse-drawn carriage service. It was likely established to transport goods from Begunbari in Tejgaon -- then an army quarters -- to the main city. However, this service did not last long.

Still, by the early 19th century, Dhaka did have at least one known horse-drawn carriage. During his visit in 1824, Bishop Heber of Calcutta noted that the Naib Nazim of Dhaka used an old landau carriage drawn by four horses of Shamsuddaula.

But for a more structured public transportation system, Dhaka had to wait a bit longer. The credit for this goes largely to an Armenian businessman named Shircore, who introduced *thikka gari* (rental carriages) around 1856. His business, Harmony Carriage, quickly became profitable, inspiring other local businessmen to follow suit.

By 1867, about 60 rental carriages were operating in Dhaka; by 1878 this number had grown to 300, and a decade later, it had doubled.

As with horse-drawn carriages, the introduction of motor vehicles in Dhaka followed the lead of Kolkata. According to



Nawab Salimullah's motorcade in Dhaka with Lady Curzon and Lord Curzon in 1904

PHOTO: FRITZ KAPP

Radharaman Mitra's "Kolkata Darpan", the first passenger motor vehicle appeared on the streets of Kolkata in 1896, though some accounts suggest it was 1897. That vehicle, used during British rule, was made by the French company De Dion-Bouton. The De Dion model was first introduced in Kolkata by H H Reynolds, and the first Bengali to purchase a motor vehicle was C Basak.

Naturally, this leads to a key question: When did the first motor car appear in

Dhaka?

Could it have been in 1904?

On February 18 of that year, the Viceroy Lord Curzon arrived in Dhaka with his wife, Lady Curzon. The Nawabs' garden house in Shahbagh was lavishly decorated for the occasion. To honour the visit, Nawab Khwaja Salimullah purchased several motor cars from Kolkata. In a historic photograph, Lady Curzon is seen with her hand on the steering wheel, Lord Curzon standing

beside her, and four cars parked in front of the house.

However, a slightly different account is found in the autobiography of British car dealer Montague Grahame-White, "At the Wheel Ashore and Afloat: Reminiscences of Motoring, Yachting and Travel Over a Period of Forty Years".

According to him, the Nawab didn't buy the cars in haste for the Viceroy's visit. In fact, the decision came after a carefully considered plan.

In January 1903, Nawab Salimullah met Montague Grahame-White. Inspired by their meeting, the Nawab decided to purchase motor vehicles. By the end of that year, three cars ordered by him had arrived at Ahsan Manzil. According to "The Motor Magazine (1943)", these included a 10-horsepower and a 15-horsepower Mors, and an 8-horsepower Renault.

As mentioned earlier, in 1904, Nawab Khwaja Salimullah showcased his newly purchased automobiles at his Shahbagh garden house. This historic moment was captured by the renowned German photographer Fritz Kapp. These early automobiles thus became silent witnesses to Dhaka's evolving history. By 1915-16, the number of cars in Bengal had exceeded 1,000. Car manufacturers began organising roadshows, distributing flyers, and launching promotions to expand the market. Over time, the fascination with automobiles spread to other parts of the region.

Govt pledges to track graft in tax admin

FROM PAGE 1

The letter, signed by Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed and Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur, said, "In response to mounting pressures from an emerging external financing gap and persistently high inflation, we remain committed to near-term policy tightening."

"We will also intensify our efforts to implement critical structural reforms. Specifically, we will prioritise the full implementation of the new exchange rate regime and take decisive steps to address the shortfall in domestic revenue mobilisation."

It further said the government aims to establish a healthy, competitive financial sector regulated and supervised in line with best international practices.

Along with the letter, the government submitted a Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) laying out the reform roadmap.

According to the MEFP, the advisory council has already approved in principle the separation of tax policy from tax administration. A new ordinance is being prepared, after which a detailed implementation roadmap will follow.

"We will intensify our efforts in FY26 to significantly raise the tax-to-GDP ratio, in line with our programme commitment," said the MEFP.

To meet the revenue target, several measures have been introduced in the FY26 budget, aimed at generating Tk 30,000 crore in additional revenue.

The government also published

its Medium- and Long-Term Revenue Strategy (MLTRS) as advised by the IMF and World Bank.

"As a priority under the MLTRS, we will also establish a new tax expenditure policy framework that sets out clear rules and procedures for the approval, modification, and repeal of tax exemptions, and assign the ultimate decision-making authority to parliament -- or to appropriate authorities in its absence."

SUBSIDY

The government has pledged to reduce subsidy spending to safeguard priority spending and devise a multi-pronged plan to reduce the spending to a fiscally sustainable level over the next two years.

As per one of the structural benchmark conditions, a three-year roadmap (FY26-FY28) will be adopted by September to gradually narrow the gap between electricity generation costs and selling prices through measures including tariff adjustments with protection for the vulnerable population.

According to the IMF, the per kilowatt loss in electricity rose from Tk 1.64 in FY21 to Tk 5.11 in FY24, with projections of Tk 5.27 this year.

To contain spending in FY25, several measures were taken to cut electricity generation costs, with the subsidy ceiling set at Tk 37,400 crore, agreed in December 2024.

"If the electricity subsidies' outturn is above the ceiling, we will revisit the existing electricity tariff only after other cost adjustment measures are

not sufficient to reduce subsidies," said the MEFP.

The government also plans to fully phase out the remittance subsidy during the remainder of the programme until January 2027, citing improved performance of the flexible exchange rate regime.

On export subsidies, the MEFP said, "We have already lowered export incentives for the apparel, leather and jute sectors in the FY25 budget and plan to phase them out completely in FY26."

For fertiliser, the plan is to reduce subsidies by increasing storage capacity to avoid peak season imports, cutting other import-related costs, and raising sale prices.

BB AUTONOMY

The government must submit amendments to the Bangladesh Bank Order, including on governance, autonomy, accountability, and transparency, to the cabinet by September and issue an ordinance by December.

A task force has already been formed to prepare broader reform recommendations by December 2025.

"We intend to align BB's mandate with the modern principles of central banking, enhance its autonomy and accountability, and facilitate effective decision-making," the MEFP said.

It added that the reform agenda includes strengthening risk management at the central bank, phasing out quasi-fiscal lending schemes, and limiting monetary financing of the government.

The report also recommended legal reforms to ensure proper prosecution of rights violations.

The Working Group also recommends foreseeing specific measures for the survivors of enforced disappearances, including access to justice and reparation, which must include legal and economic support.

This is particularly relevant in view of the information received indicating that many survivors are facing criminal proceedings that have been unjustly initiated, particularly under the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Act, as a form of harassment, without these investigations having any real factual basis."

It stressed the importance of ensuring fair trial standards in all judicial processes.

While acknowledging that the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) had initiated criminal proceedings related to enforced disappearances, the Working Group noted that "the number of such proceedings remains alarmingly low".

The report recommended steps to strengthen the tribunal, including holding perpetrators accountable, even those in command roles; ensuring investigations are backed by strong legal and evidentiary foundations; providing the ICT with necessary resources; and establishing mechanisms to keep victims and society informed. It stressed that victims must be guaranteed participation and regularly updated

on the progress of investigations and proceedings.

It is important to reveal and close all clandestine places of detention, and investigate and prosecute identified perpetrators of enforced disappearances, torture and other crimes committed in such places, it said.

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The Working Group recommended reviewing cases brought against survivors of enforced disappearances, including those under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Shutdown and 'March to NBR' from today

FROM PAGE 1

The platform said they are ready to sit with Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed regarding reforms and their demand for the removal of NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan. To resolve the impasse, the council urged the intervention of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Meanwhile, in a press release issued by NBR Public Relations Officer Md Al-Amin Shaikh around 9:00pm, the NBR asked all officials and employees to stay in their offices and ensure services to the taxpayers.

The press release warned that officials would face disciplinary action for absence, late arrival, and leave without permission.

The council of protesters was formed last month to organise demonstrations against an ordinance that dissolved the NBR and separated tax policy from administration.

The demonstrations and a pendency strike by officials heavily disrupted tax operations.

The fresh round of demonstrations started last week after five officials

were transferred.

In its statement, the finance ministry said that at Thursday's meeting, the authorities assured the protesters of reviewing the transfer orders.

"The NBR Reform Unity Council, the platform leading the protests, agreed to withdraw its previously announced complete shutdown and nationwide 'March to NBR' scheduled for Saturday," the statement said.

It said the meeting, chaired by the finance adviser, lasted for two and a half hours. It was attended by the finance secretary, the secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, the NBR chairman, and 16 NBR members.

It added that a follow-up meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, at 4:00pm, aiming to discuss the Revenue Policy and Revenue Administration Ordinance, 2025, based on the finance ministry's earlier press release issued on May 25.

The government expressed optimism that consensus-based amendments to the ordinance can be finalised by July 31.

Contacted, Sehela Siddiqua, general

'Makeshift temple built on railway land' Eviction followed due process, says foreign ministry

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Responding to India's accusation that the interim government "allowed the desecration" of a Durga temple in Dhaka's Khilkhet, Bangladesh has said it remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights of all communities, including the protection of places of worship.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement last night, said Bangladesh urges all to refrain from reacting to any matter, disregarding the facts and ground realities.

At a press briefing on Thursday, India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "The interim government in Bangladesh, instead of providing security to the temple in Khilkhet in Dhaka, projected the episode as illegal land use and allowed the desecration of the temple. This has resulted in damage to the deity before it was shifted."

"... it is the responsibility of the interim government to protect the Hindus and their properties and their religious institutions," Jaiswal said.

In response to the comments, the foreign ministry in its statement said that during last year's Durga Puja, without having prior permission, the local Hindu community installed a makeshift puja mandap on a piece of land that is owned by Bangladesh Railway.

"Regrettably, after the Puja was over in October 2024, the organisers declined to remove the makeshift mandap. Rather, they established a 'Maha Kali' [Kali idol] there. In spite of repeated reminders, they unfortunately took the initiative to make the mandap permanent," the statement said.

In December 2024, railway authorities held consultations with local community representatives, organisers of the mandap and issued a public notification asking all concerned to remove all unauthorised installations, including vendors, hundreds of shops, and political party offices illegally built on either side of the rail tracks.

Over the past months, repeated reminders to the illegal land occupiers went unheeded.

On June 24 and 25, the railway finally asked all concerned to remove all unauthorised installations, including the puja organisers, the statement said.

On June 26, following due process, the railway proceeded with the eviction.

The statement added that in the course of the eviction process, the idol of the makeshift mandap was immersed in the nearby Balu river, in due reverence, with the participation of the members of the local Hindu community.

End impunity, ensure genuine accountability

FROM PAGE 1

It said, "A genuine accountability process entails the suspension of officials facing credible allegations of enforced disappearance -- including those at command and leadership levels -- pending the outcome of a full, independent, and impartial investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution; the preservation of evidence by the institutions who are investigating the cases of enforced disappearance; and a real coordination with the ICT and the Commission, including agreeing on the terms of real and effective cooperation that would have a result in terms of the searching of the people who are disappeared, and in terms of truth, justice and reparation."

It said, "Law enforcement institutions and military entities must serve as a model for the population in upholding the rule of law. This entails a commitment to preventing enforced disappearances, ensuring that those responsible are held accountable through justice processes, and fostering effective cooperation with the judiciary."

The Working Group also called for strong and independent oversight of investigations.

"The Working Group recommends

establishing an independent oversight mechanism [with the participation of institutions, the academy, civil society and victims] to ensure that all the security forces and the army are investigating impartially and that appropriate disciplinary measures are taken against any personnel found to be involved in enforced disappearances."

It stressed the importance of ensuring fair trial standards in all judicial processes.

While acknowledging that the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) had initiated criminal proceedings related to enforced disappearances, the Working Group noted that "the number of such proceedings remains alarmingly low".

The report recommended steps to

strengthen the tribunal, including holding perpetrators accountable, even those in command roles; ensuring investigations are backed by strong legal and evidentiary foundations; providing the ICT with necessary resources; and establishing mechanisms to keep victims and society informed. It stressed that victims must be guaranteed participation and regularly updated

on the progress of investigations and proceedings.

It is important to reveal and close all clandestine places of detention, and investigate and prosecute identified perpetrators of enforced disappearances, torture and other crimes committed in such places, it said.

The report also recommended legal reforms to ensure proper prosecution of rights violations.

The Working Group also recommends foreseeing specific measures for the survivors of enforced disappearances, including access to justice and reparation, which must include legal and economic support.

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus among guests at the inauguration session of the programmes of Social Business Day at the Samajik Convention Centre in Zirabo, Savar in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Biman makes emergency landing at HSIA after bird strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ABiman Bangladesh Airlines flight bound for Singapore made an emergency landing yesterday after encountering a bird strike shortly following takeoff from Dhaka.

The Boeing 737-800 aircraft, operating as flight BG 584, departed from Dhaka airport at 8:38am.

Shortly after takeoff, around 21 minutes into the flight and after reaching an altitude of over 2,500 feet, the captain reported an engine-related issue and decided to return to Dhaka.

Shahjalal International Airport authorities said the aircraft landed safely at 8:59am and was parked at Bay 14.

All 154 passengers and 7 crew members on board were safe and unharmed.

Following the landing, the relevant authorities inspected the runway but found no foreign objects or bird remains, the airport authorities said at first.

But, Biman General Manager (Public Relations) ABM Raoshan Kabir later said it was a bird strike.

Group Captain SM Ragib Samad, executive director, HSIA also confirmed later on that blood stains were found in the engine cowling after landing.

A replacement flight left HSIA at 1:45pm, confirmed HSIA authorities.

IRREGULARITIES IN POLLS Ex-CEC Nurul Huda placed on fresh four-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday placed former chief election commissioner KM Nurul Huda on a four-day fresh remand for interrogation in a case filed over alleged irregularities and bias during the past national elections.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Awlad Hossain Muhammad Jonaid issued the order after police sought a 10-day remand, said a sub-inspector posted at the court.

Huda was brought to the courtroom around 3:40pm under tight security.

He remained silent and appeared visibly upset during the 45-minute hearing. In the dock, his helmet and handcuffs were removed, though he wore a police vest.

Around 4:35pm, he was taken back to the lockup of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court after the hearing ended.

During the hearing, Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi described the case as "nationally significant", saying the actions of three former CECs "gave birth to fascism" in the country, leading to the loss of thousands of lives.

Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi argued that elections are complex operations, and since none of the accused have admitted guilt, further remand is necessary.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Patients being moved to nearby branches of Mamata Maternity Clinic after a fire broke out at its Lalkhan Bazar branch in Chattogram yesterday afternoon, reportedly triggered by an oxygen cylinder leak in the operation theatre. Though no casualties were reported, panic spread quickly following the explosion. Two firefighting units brought the blaze under control.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Dengue cases triple in June

Weak mosquito control to blame

HELEMUL ALAM

Dengue cases have nearly tripled in June compared to May, largely due to inadequate anti-mosquito drives across the country.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), a total of 9,065 dengue patients have been hospitalised so far this year as of Thursday. Of them, 4,720 cases were reported in June alone, with three days still remaining in the month. In comparison, May saw only 1,773 cases.

Dengue hospitalisations were relatively low earlier this year – 1,161 in January, 374 in February, 336 in March, and 701 in April – before the sharp rise in May (1,773) and June (4,720). Notably, cases outside Dhaka remain disproportionately high, especially in Barguna district.

Experts have warned that immediate action is needed nationwide, particularly outside the capital, to control the spread of Aedes mosquitoes, which transmit the disease.

Entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar said

the trend shows a geometric rise in cases. "From May to June, the number of cases tripled. If this continues, cases could rise four to five times in July, and by August, it could be ten times higher than in May," he said.

Bashar explained that when both Aedes mosquitoes and infected patients increase together, the disease spreads rapidly.

"Despite repeated warnings, authorities have not taken necessary action," he added.

He stressed that the government must prioritise larviciding and eliminating mosquito breeding sources instead of focusing on fogging. "Fogging should only be used in hotspots with confirmed cases. General fogging is ineffective, yet it's still the primary method used," he said.

Bashar recommended using Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs), which remain effective for up to three months. "These should be used along with larvicides. In places where chemicals aren't needed, people must clean and overturn water containers to stop breeding," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Keep ports under state control Demand leftist parties, begin Dhaka-Ctg road march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday accused "vested quarters" of using BNP's name to serve personal interests and create unrest in various offices, including the Income Tax office.

"Those carrying out movements in BNP's name at the Income Tax office or other departments are not part of BNP. They are doing it for their own benefit," he said, reports UNB.

Rizvi made the remarks at a discussion organised by Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Front at Bhasani Bhaban in the capital's Nayapaltan, marking the Rath Yatra festival.

He warned that some individuals are trying to introduce new activities using BNP's name to establish dominance in different sectors and government offices.

"All who believe in the nationalist ideology should stay alert. Tarique Rahman is taking strict action against them, but some are still tarnishing BNP's image," he said.

Rizvi said he heard of one individual who is reportedly misusing BNP's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Starlink project; and terminating all unequal treaties with imperialist powers, particularly the United States and India, and making them public.

As part of the demonstration, activists displayed placards with slogans such as "Interim government is the gatekeeper of imperialism," "Ports and corridors are not for foreigners," "Scrap all anti-national unequal deals," and "Cancel the agreement with US company Starlink".

Speaking at the rally, Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), said, "We believe the aspirations of the 1971 Liberation War and the 2024 people's uprising are rooted in the desire for true democracy, free from imperialist dominance. We

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

JULY UPRISING District committees formed to implement programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a 35-member committee in each district, headed by the deputy commissioner, to implement the official programmes marking the student-led mass uprising.

The committees, titled "District-Level Implementation Committee for the Observance of Mass Uprising Days of Students and People," include top officials from almost all government and non-government sectors in the respective districts.

A circular in this regard was issued on Thursday by the Cabinet Division.

Among others, the members of the committee will include the district civil surgeon, superintendent of police, president of the district press club, president of the district

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

District

FROM PAGE 3

bar association, president of the district chamber of commerce and industries, principals of government and non-government colleges, chief executive officer of the district council, and heads of almost all government offices at the district level.

The committees may expand their membership beyond 35 if deemed necessary.

Earlier, the government formed a 36-member national executive committee to oversee the observance of the mass uprising. The committee is headed by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The district committees are expected to implement the plans and programmes formulated by the national executive committee to observe the July mass uprising days across the country from July 1 to August 5.

They are also expected to provide recommendations to the executive committee regarding the local context.

The committees are set to carry out any responsibilities assigned by the executive committee.



After loading a family's belongings onto the back of their pick-up truck, these movers set off -- not from inside the vehicle, but by dangerously clinging to the piled-up furniture. Their reckless ride puts their lives at serious risk as the truck makes its way to its destination. The photo was taken in the Bosila area of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ex-CEC Nurul Huda

FROM PAGE 3

He said during the 2018 election, the police and administration operated under the Election Commission, which had the authority to form inquiry committees.

Under Nurul Huda's leadership, opposition activists were allegedly assaulted and arrested at home, and candidates' houses vandalised without recourse. Faruqi claimed that by 3:00am on election night, 200 candidates were already declared winners and presiding officers were instructed to conduct "night-time voting".

He called the election a "stage-managed poll" and said interrogation was needed to uncover who gave the directives and what role the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina played.

He also accused Huda of abusing power to secure a nomination for his nephew in Patuakhali 3.

In response, defence lawyer Touhidul Islam argued that the remand prayer was almost identical to the one submitted on June 23, with no mention of progress made during the previous remand.

BNP Executive Committee member Salah Uddin Khan filed the case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on June 22, naming 24 people, including former CECs Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, KM Nurul Huda, and Kazi Habibul Awal.

4.8 lakh narcotics

FROM PAGE 3 major reason for delays, with only one judge per 90,000 people.

"Despite legal provisions, dedicated narcotics courts have not been set up, overburdening general courts. Poor training, political appointments, inadequate evidence collection, and frequent procedural delays reduce conviction rates under 10 percent," he said.

He said the 2018 anti-drug drive caused a large increase in case numbers.

According to him, the majority of the accused are small scale users or low-level dealers from low-income groups.

Wrongful arrests are common due to procedural flaws, and youth, low-income, and marginalised groups are disproportionately affected. The large number of narcotics cases has burdened the judiciary and led to overcrowded prisons, he said.

He said the filing of so many cases causes rights violations, as prolonged detentions and extrajudicial actions take place.

Manir recommended setting up dedicated narcotics tribunals, increasing the number of judges, prosecutors, and investigators, and improving training and use of forensic tools.

Muhammad Majharul Islam, secretary general of Bangladesh Judicial

LAWACHARA NAT'L PARK

Speed limit for trains, vehicles still ignored, wildlife at risk

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The government imposed a 20kmph speed limit for trains and vehicles passing through Lawachara National Park in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar in 2023 to protect

wildlife. The magistrate noted that the defence addressed all points except the allegation of night voting. When another defence lawyer pointed out that no media outlet had provided supporting documents, the court rejected Huda's bail plea and granted the remand.

Huda was arrested on June 22 after being assaulted by a mob at his Utara residence and handed over to police. The following day, the court granted a four-day remand.

However, even after three years, the directive remains largely unimplemented. As a result, rapidly moving trains and vehicles have led to multiple wildlife fatalities, endangering the forest's fragile ecosystem.

To make matters worse, tourists visiting the forest, often with children, are regularly seen walking, sitting, and posing for photos and selfies along the rail tracks, ignoring the ever-present risk of fatal accidents from passing trains.

A tourist reportedly died in an accident on the rail track within the forest recently.

Miftaul Islam, a tourist from Dhaka who was seen taking photographs on the rail track with his wife and three children, said,

"Everyone is taking pictures here. The view is beautiful. So, we took photos too. But yes, it's risky."

Another tourist, Sajjadul Islam, said, "Most of my friends uploaded nice photos to Facebook that were taken here. I came for the same."

Several railway staff on the site said such scenes have now become common.

Kazi Nazmul Haque, ranger at the

Forest Department data shows that in 2022, steps were taken to implement a uniform speed cap on vehicles and trains inside Lawachara.

The following year, the directorate general of Bangladesh Railway instructed relevant departments to enforce the restriction.

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BAGERHAT MUNICIPALITY

Waterlogging, potholes plague bus terminal

PARtha CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

The central bus terminal in Bagerhat has been in a poor condition for over 20 years, with large potholes and craters damaging vehicles and causing suffering for drivers and passengers.

Transport workers and bus owners allege that no repair or maintenance work has been done since the terminal was built in 2004.

"There are potholes all over the terminal. Vehicle parts are frequently damaged when buses go through them," said Narayan Das, a transport worker.

According to the bus owners' association, each bus pays a daily toll of Tk 50 to use the terminal.

"We have been paying tolls every day, but not a single major renovation has taken place since the terminal's construction," said Jasim Uddin, a bus owner.

During rainfall, the entire area becomes waterlogged, making it nearly impossible to walk or operate vehicles within the terminal premises.

"The condition of the central bus terminal is very poor. In the rainy season,

we have to wade through dirty water just to get tickets. Sometimes, passing buses splash water and ruin our clothes," said Bellal Sheikh, a resident of Bagerhat town.

Rahim Sheikh, a commuter from Basabati area, said, "I have been travelling through this terminal for nearly ten years. The situation has remained unchanged. There are potholes everywhere, making it difficult to walk. Vehicles also get damaged when they sink into these craters."

The terminal, built on two acres of land, accommodates at least 200 vehicles and operates buses to 16 local routes and several inter-district destinations including Khulna, Barishal, Pirojpur, and Gopalganj. Around 100 buses use the terminal daily, transporting thousands of passengers.

Transport workers and bus owners also raised concerns over the lack of basic facilities.

"There's no proper passenger shed either. The lights are broken and lying unused," said Fuad Hasan, another bus owner.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Children play football in a Kishoreganj haor. This entire area will be submerged in just a day or two, but until then, children continue to play and cattle graze on the dry land. The photo was taken in the embankment area of Nikli Sadar recently.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

Bypass road turns dumping ground amid landfill crisis Locals blame RCC, officials deny

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Garbage is being dumped in the open along the bypass road connecting Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj, causing nuisance to local residents and passersby.

Locals alleged that the waste is being dumped by the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) itself. RCC officials, however, denied the allegation.

According to sources, the city's only landfill, which is about 15.95 acres in size, has largely run out of space. Even though garbage is still being dumped there using excavators, it is not enough. As such, some garbage is being dumped along both sides of the city bypass regularly.

"We have to use this road daily. The bad odour makes it very hard for us to move around here. Also, leaving garbage in the open like this can proliferate pests and spread diseases," said Md Raihan Ali, a shopkeeper at a city market.



"The situation is only getting worse every day. The authorities should take action quickly," said Md Shwapon, a local college student.

However, RCC officials gave a different explanation.

"We always dump waste in the designated landfill. The garbage along the bypass road was not from city institutions. People from outside the city are dumping waste there illegally at night. We've tried to nab them and taken action several times," said Selim Reza Ronju, deputy chief cleaning officer of RCC.

When told that garbage trucks from the city corporation were seen dumping waste there, Selim Reza admitted, "Yes, before Eid-ul-Azha, some city waste was dumped there because a livestock market was set up near

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



S DILIP ROY

Once hailed as the lifeline of Rangpur city, the historic Shyamasundari Canal has been reduced to a mere drain due to rampant encroachment and pollution.

The 16-kilometre-long canal was excavated under the initiative of Maharaja Janaki Ballav Sen in 1890 for vital urban drainage.

It used to be a scenic waterway spanning 60 to 120 feet in width, with boats navigating its clear waters to connect rural areas.

However, its heydays are long gone. At present, it has become a dumping ground, narrowed down to around 15 feet in width.

Both banks of the canal have been heavily encroached upon by numerous residential and commercial structures. Households and shops routinely discard garbage, kitchen scraps, plastic waste, and sewage directly into

the water, choking the canal with filth and turning it into a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

"During monsoon, filthy water from the overflowing canal submerges our homes. Mosquito infestation has become unbearable. Urgent measures are needed to improve the situation," said Jahid Uddin Bepari, a resident of Munshipara area.

Over the past two decades, around Tk 150 crore has been spent on various restoration projects by the district administration, municipality, and city corporation. Yet, residents say the canal's condition has only worsened.

The Bangladesh Water Development Board has recently taken up a new project worth Tk 15 crore to clean and excavate the canal, along with tree plantation and beautification work along its banks. The project, however, has yet to

commence.

"The project has been approved. Work will begin in the upcoming fiscal year. We'll implement it in three phases in collaboration with Rangpur City Corporation and the Forest Department," said Rabiu Islam, executive engineer of BWDB in Rangpur.

Dr Tuhin Wadud, director of Riverine People and a faculty member of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, stressed the need for coordinated efforts involving the district administration, city corporation, BWDB, and local residents to bring the canal back to life.

Md Rabiul Faisal, deputy commissioner of Rangpur, said, "We've already prepared a list of illegal occupants of the canal and they will be evicted through drives in phases. Once implemented, the BWDB's project will revive the canal."



In Rajshahi, breeding geese is a popular livelihood for many villagers. They sell a pair of goose eggs for around Tk 1,000. The photo was taken in Darshanpara area of Paba upazila recently.

PHOTO: AZAHL UDDIN

SHYAMASUNDARI CANAL IN RANGPUR

Once a lifeline, now on death bed

BSF pushes in 31 people thru Sylhet border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

India's Border Security Force (BSF) pushed 17 Bangladeshi nationals into the Minatila area in Jaintiapur upazila of Sylhet early yesterday, according to Border Guard Bangladesh.

A patrol team of the Minatila Border Outpost under the Sylhet BGB Battalion detained them approximately 200 yards inside Bangladesh territory.

Lt Col Mohammad Nazmul Haque, commanding officer of Sylhet BGB-48 Battalion, said the group consists of five men, five women, and seven children.

The detainees are residents of Kurigram district. They will be handed over to the Jaintiapur Police Station. Legal procedures are underway, he said.

Earlier on Thursday, BSF pushed 14 Rohingyas and 17 Bangladeshis into Bangladesh through the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Youth killed as bus crashes onto divider in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A pedestrian was killed on the spot and another injured when a bus veered off course and mounted the road divider at the Technical intersection in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Anisuzzaman, 18, a day labourer from Pabna, said police. The incident occurred around 12:45pm while the traffic signal was red, said Mirpur Police Station OC Sajjad Rumon.

"Traffic was at a standstill when a speeding SB Super Deluxe bus operating on the Dhaka-Kushtia route suddenly climbed onto the road island, running over a pedestrian who was standing near it. He died on the spot," the OC said.

Another person sustained serious injuries in the crash and was taken to a hospital, he added.

The bus driver, Billal Hossain, 40, attempted to flee the scene but was caught by police. The vehicle has been seized. Legal proceedings are underway.

The OC said they think the brakes failed on the bus, which is why the driver was unable to stop it. He said the matter is being investigated.

BEATING OUR OWN SCORES

During March to June '25
we have handed over **6** PROJECTS

AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

DULCE DOMI | Uttara
7 months ahead

THE PALMS | Aftabnagar
5 months ahead

ON TIME

HAPPY DAYS | Bashundhara R/A

SUNLIGHT | Bashundhara R/A
2 months ahead

GREEN VIEW | Mirpur
7 months ahead

SPARKLE | Bashundhara R/A



SCAN HERE



Fix NBR crisis before it does more damage

Why is this issue being dragged on for so long?

It is deeply alarming that even after around 40 days, the stalemate at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) remains unresolved. We must say that this crisis—along with the Nagar Bhaban paralysis that continued almost simultaneously until Thursday—has set a bad precedent, even by the standards of our often fractious and crisis-ridden public administration. And the longer it drags on, the more it disrupts administrative functions, damages the economy, and undermines public trust in the government's ability to handle sensitive reform processes.

According to media reports, the protesting NBR officials issued an ultimatum that if the NBR chairman was not removed by this Friday, they would go for a total shutdown from Saturday. The protesters—comprising officers across income tax, VAT, and customs departments—have been staging daily pen-down strikes and sit-ins in front of the NBR headquarters for several hours since June 22. Earlier protests in response to the NBR bifurcation ordinance announced on May 12 had failed to yield any result. Since Wednesday, most NBR offices across the country have also observed work abstention, with only export processing and international passenger services remaining operational.

The wider effect of such disruptions cannot be overstated, with vital revenue collection activities being halted at a time when the government needs every taka to replenish its coffers and maintain macroeconomic stability. With a full shutdown now being threatened, the situation could deteriorate even further. Perhaps this is what the protesters intended—using the disruption and the resulting losses and suffering as a bargaining chip—but as we have warned before, there can be no justification for the way they have chosen to protest. What troubles us more is how preventable this crisis was from the outset. The government should have adopted a more consultative approach when drafting the NBR ordinance. Even after protests had dragged on for weeks, it failed to engage properly with the protesters' demands for prioritising revenue cadre officers in key positions and withdrawing recent punitive transfer orders.

This has only fuelled resentment among protesters who are now doubling down on their forceful tactics. This is totally unacceptable. An administration cannot be held hostage by its employees, nor can it remain blind to their legitimate grievances. It is possible, as some experts say, that the stalemate is being prolonged due to "ego clashes." Whatever the reasons may be, we believe it is high time the chief adviser intervened directly to resolve the issue. A clear roadmap, including a timeline for any ordinance revision, must be announced without delay so that everyone can return to work.

Stop the sewage pollution in Dhaka

Protect water bodies, rivers from unchecked contamination

It is most unfortunate that a megacity like Dhaka still does not have a proper sewage management system. A recent survey has revealed that 59 percent of households in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) dispose of their sewage (human waste) directly into drains and canals, as they are outside Dhaka WASA's sewer network. Although buildings are required to use septic tanks for sewage treatment, these households or owners rarely do. Instead, they secretly discharge waste into drains, which then flows into canals, eventually contaminating our rivers and other water bodies. Surprisingly, many of these buildings are located in posh residential areas such as Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and Niketan. Reportedly, among the 524 houses surveyed in Gulshan, 367 had direct drainage lines connected to water bodies.

A decade ago, Dhaka WASA adopted a master plan to bring all buildings under a sewage network. As the plan has not been implemented, around 90 percent of the city remains outside this network. This has resulted in rampant pollution of water bodies in and around the city. As a recent study by the River and Delta Research Centre has revealed, pollution sources have nearly doubled over the last five years. The study, based on field surveys and satellite imagery, found severe pollution in the Buriganga, Turag, Shitalakkhya, and Balu rivers, all connected to Dhaka. It also identified 393 discharge points, including 102 industrial sources, 75 municipal sewer connections, and 216 smaller private outlets—all discharging untreated waste directly into rivers. Moreover, contaminants were found to be channelled to the rivers through 38 sluice gates and 62 service canals, alongside 441 dumping stations and points. The level of pollution thus generated is extremely worrisome.

Due to Dhaka's high population density and space constraints, building and maintaining large-scale treatment infrastructure is a challenge. The authorities, therefore, should discard the old master plan and develop a new one prioritising localised, executable solutions, such as mandatory septic tanks in each building, small-scale treatment plants, and strict enforcement of building regulations. Since the Dasherkandi plant, which took a decade to construct, currently operates outside the sewerage network, it should be urgently integrated into WASA's system. Additionally, there must be clear provisions ensuring that every large housing project installs its own treatment plant. Only well-planned and coordinated efforts can help curb Dhaka's widespread sewage pollution.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Prelude to World War I

On this day in 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his consort, Sophie, were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo, Bosnia, precipitating the outbreak of World War I.

EDITORIAL

Media reform shouldn't be left out of the July Charter



Kamal Ahmed
is head of the Media Reform Commission
in Bangladesh and an independent
journalist. His X handle is @ahmedkal.

KAMAL AHMED

As political negotiations intensify across party lines, the possibility of a national reform consensus—once unthinkable—now appears within reach.

Over the past weeks, Bangladesh has witnessed a marathon of political dialogues involving all openly active parties, ranging from allies to adversaries, aimed at reaching common ground on vital constitutional, electoral, and institutional reforms. These discussions, under the aegis of the National Consensus Commission created by the interim government, mark a significant departure from past political norms.

Until recently, talks were verging on a deadlock, particularly over key constitutional issues: limiting the prime minister's terms, creating a National Constitutional Council, and establishing a second chamber in Jatiya Sangsad. Encouragingly, parties have begun softening their stances, suggesting that consensus may be possible. Such agreement is essential for drafting what is being called the July Charter, a foundational document based on cross-party consensus.

However, the final shape of this charter remains unclear.

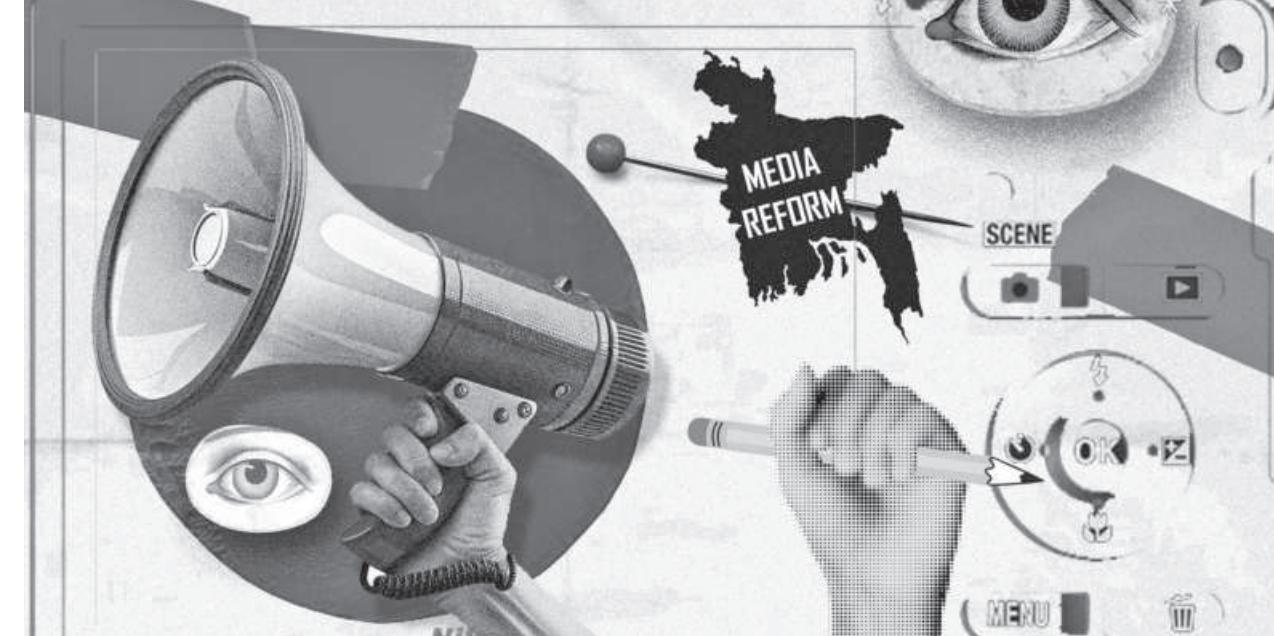
In a nationally televised address on June 6, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus expressed hope that the charter would be finalised and presented within the month. Calling it "a pledge," Yunus explained that it would codify agreed reform proposals from the reform commissions. Political parties, by signing the document, would commit to implementing these reforms.

Yunus also pledged immediate government action on key reforms outlined in the charter. "We are committed to implementing the urgent reforms according to the July Charter," he said. "We also want to begin working on other parts. Hopefully, the remaining parts will be carried forward by the next elected government."

Following the mass uprising that toppled Sheikh Hasina's autocratic regime last year, the interim government launched 11 reform commissions—six initially, and five more later. However, the staggered timeline meant that only the first six

commissions' proposals entered the consensus-building process.

These six commissions, focusing on the constitution, election, public administration, judiciary, police and anti-corruption, form the basis of current negotiations. The remaining five, covering media, labour, women's rights, health and local government, have been sidelined. The National Consensus Commission has not



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

formally reviewed their findings, raising critical questions: are these areas considered less urgent? Or is consensus assumed, with implementation deferred?

The late submission of these second-phase reports (two to four months after the formation of the consensus commission) prevented their integration into the core discussions. This omission has had real consequences.

Take the Media Reform Commission, for example. It recommended limiting restrictions on the freedom of expression—especially those related to national security or foreign relations—to wartime only. This proposal was excluded from the Constitution Reform Commission's summary and thus not debated. It also suggested legal

safeguard investigative journalism. These recommendations, too, remain unaddressed.

Even the Constitution Reform Commission's 40-point list of fundamental rights and freedoms has been compressed into five general categories by the National Consensus Commission.

If party leaders rely only on the summary instead of reviewing the full report, critical elements may be left out of the final draft.

Some issues, like granting autonomy to the state-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar, have long enjoyed public support and are part of the historical reform agenda.

Yet, despite repeated promises, implementation remains elusive.

Other proposals remain politically sensitive or require sustained

commitment. For example, while the right to form trade unions is enshrined in the constitution, real progress on minimum wage laws, labour rights, and workplace safety remains slow. In a reformed political order, will workers have recourse—or even the voice—to demand justice?

At its heart, the July Charter aims to replace entrenched authoritarianism with accountable, democratic governance. But institutions such as parliament, the judiciary, public administration, law enforcement, and even the media have often served narrow interests. Without meaningful reform, they risk doing so again.

In the current market-driven environment, state-run media's autonomy is not enough. Private media must also be held to ethical standards. The Media Reform Commission warned about the corrosive effects of

A quiet shift in South Asia's energy landscape



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MD. IBRAHIM KHALILULLAH

Not many people paid attention when, on a humid June morning, 40MW of electricity began making its way from the rivers in central Nepal to the grids of northern Bangladesh. There was no grand summit, but make no mistake: this unassuming cross-border trade could be the opening act of something far more ambitious, possibly even transformational.

The idea is simple on paper. Nepal, long known for its snow-fed rivers and hydro potential, now finds itself in a position to export power. Bangladesh, in need of diversifying its energy sources and weaning off an overdependence on fossil fuels, has emerged as a willing buyer. India, which sits geographically between them, agreed to let the current pass through its territory.

The wires, in a very literal sense, are now connected. Electricity started flowing on June 15, 2025, under a deal signed eight months ago. And with that, South Asia saw the first instance of a functioning, trilateral power trade arrangement.

Forty megawatts will not rewrite anyone's energy future overnight. But that's not the point. This moment isn't about the size of the deal; it's about its structure, its precedent, and the quiet tectonic shift it represents in how the region could approach energy

cooperation going forward.

For decades, South Asia has struggled to build the kind of shared infrastructure that's taken for granted in other parts of the world. Energy, in particular, has remained largely siloed within national borders, even though the logic for integration has always been relevant.

The geography alone suggests potential: hydropower-rich nations like Nepal and Bhutan upstream, densely populated and energy-hungry economies like India and Bangladesh downstream. But until now, politics, red tape, and mistrust have kept those connections mostly theoretical.

This deal changes that. It's modest, seasonal, and very much a pilot in nature—power will only flow during Nepal's monsoon months, when river-fed turbines are at their peak. Yet, it proves something many had quietly doubted: three countries with distinct interests can make cross-border power trade work. The electricity is drawn from Nepal's Trishuli and Chilime hydropower stations. It then travels through a 400kV line stretching from Muzaffarpur in India to Bheramara in Bangladesh. Nepal handles the losses and logistics up to the Indian border; Bangladesh takes over from there.

The pricing is competitive, pegged at 0.064 per unit—enough to justify the costs on both ends, but not so high as to discourage future expansion.

Nepal, a country that was dealing with daily power cuts not too long ago, now sees hydro exports as a ticket to broader economic transformation. Its energy sector is scaling fast: installed capacity has nearly tripled in under a decade, and the potential still dwarfs what's currently online.

With more than 40,000MW considered economically viable, the possibilities are enormous. Revenue from exports could help ease the trade deficit, attract foreign investment, and breathe life into local economies where many hydropower projects are based.

Bangladesh, for its part, needs this kind of diversification. Its power system has grown rapidly, but it remains tethered to gas and imported petroleum, which are becoming more volatile. Hydropower from Nepal offers cleaner energy, as well as a hedge against global price swings and supply disruptions. Even small amounts of imported clean power help chip away at emissions, which is no small consideration for a country so vulnerable to climate impacts.

India's role is significant. By facilitating the trade, not just diplomatically, but also by allowing its grid to serve as a conduit, Delhi signals that regional energy cooperation is no longer just a talking point. Stability and growth in neighbouring economies serve India's long-term interests, especially energy security and climate resilience across the subcontinent.

But none of this is smooth sailing. The arrangement, while promising, is still fragile. It depends on a narrow seasonal window when Nepal's rivers

run high. Once the dry months arrive, the surplus dries up. Grid balancing, load forecasting, and backup generation all become harder. And that's before you get to the regulatory entanglements: every cross-border energy transaction still needs to navigate a maze of licences, tariffs, and political risks.

The recent delay in Bangladesh's letter of credit, which pushed back the timeline by months, is a case in point. These are not just bureaucratic hiccups; they can threaten confidence in the entire model. Add in climate variability—flash floods, glacial shifts, and erratic monsoons—and even the most carefully laid plans start to look uncertain.

Then there's the question of scale. Forty megawatts is an important start, but South Asia's energy future will be written in thousands, not dozens, of megawatts. Nepal has outlined ambitious goals: over 28,000MW in generation capacity and 15,000MW in exports by 2035. Whether that vision materialises will depend not just on hydropower output but on transmission capacity, investment appetite, and—perhaps above all—trust among neighbours.

What happened on June 15 may seem small, but it matters precisely because it's real. It's not a memorandum or a vision document—it's electricity, flowing today, thanks to years of diplomacy, engineering, and patient negotiation. In a region often defined by its fractures and flashpoints, the current moving through these lines carries more than power. It carries proof that cooperation, when grounded in mutual benefit and quiet persistence, is possible. And perhaps, in a warming, wired world, that's exactly the kind of energy South Asia needs most.



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

At eight in the morning, the university gates open to a stream of students, faculty members, and staff. Among them is a young woman, hurriedly pushing a stroller with one hand while balancing a laptop bag on her shoulder. She kisses her child goodbye—hesitantly—and rushes to her classroom. This scene, while increasingly common in our academic spaces, is also deeply revealing. It tells the quiet story of working mothers in Bangladesh, one rarely acknowledged in institutional policy, yet urgent and emotionally resonant. The question is no longer whether we need daycare centres in educational institutions, but how much longer we will deny their necessity.

In Bangladesh, as of 2023, women accounted for 65.5 percent—roughly 252,000—of primary school teachers. In lower secondary and secondary education, women made up 23.5 percent and 25.4 percent of teaching staff, respectively. At the tertiary level, the figure stood at 27.76 percent. While this progress is commendable, it uncovers an institutional paradox: women are encouraged to enter education, but the support systems necessary to retain them—such as on-campus daycare—remain grossly inadequate.

In a country where over 42.68 percent of women participate in the labour force, the absence of institutional childcare support forces many to underperform, take extended leave, or leave the workforce altogether. This is not just an economic issue; it is a question of social justice.

When a new mother returns to work after maternity leave, her most daunting challenge is not academic performance or professional capability—it is childcare. Who will hold her baby while she lectures? Who will feed her child when she is busy grading papers?

Extended families, the once-trusted support system, are no longer a viable option, especially in urban nuclear households.

Domestic workers are both hard to find and, more importantly, often untrained and unsupervised. As one working mother shared, "Since I have no relatives in Dhaka, it was extremely difficult for me to take care of my child during office hours. I was constantly anxious at work until I found a reliable daycare." Her story is echoed in thousands of households.

While workplaces must adapt to the changing contours of the workforce, universities carry an added moral burden. They are institutions of enlightenment, equality, and future-building. Yet, they are often the last to adapt to gender-sensitive infrastructure. A university without a daycare centre is an environment that punishes women for choosing both motherhood and career. It sends a message, deliberate or not, that the ideal academic is childless or male. For student-mothers and faculty alike, this results in missed classes, disrupted research, and emotional stress.

Moreover, universities are uniquely equipped to provide quality daycare facilities. With departments in psychology, early childhood education, or nursing, many campuses could develop high-standard, supervised centres that double as experiential learning labs. It's a win-win: educators can teach, students can learn, and children can thrive.

Let's be clear: daycare is not just a holding room. It is a place of cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

High-quality daycare centres are structured around a child's needs. Trained caregivers follow regimented schedules that include nutritious meals, story time, group play, arts and crafts, and basic literacy work. A growing body of research shows that children who attend structured daycare are more emotionally resilient and perform better academically in their early school years. In Bangladesh, this is especially important, given the rampant inequalities in early childhood education

access. Moreover, daycare centres, when well-regulated, play a preventive role in child abuse. They reduce the dependency on untrained domestic help or leaving children unattended, both of which are common risk factors for neglect and trauma.

Section 94 (1.2) of Bangladesh Labour Act mandates that every institution with more than 40 female employees must provide a daycare facility for children under six.

a symbol of parental failure or laziness. Others believe young children must remain in familial settings. But these myths are increasingly out of touch with urban realities.

The truth is, even stay-at-home mothers can benefit from daycare facilities. Children need socialisation with peers. They need space to run, explore, and engage. No amount of screen time or solitary play can

public institutions. Every university, college, and school must have a functioning, safe, and affordable daycare facility.

This is not just about mothers. It is about the next generation of Bangladeshis—whom they grow up to be, how they socialise, what opportunities they receive, and whom they trust. A society that refuses to hold its children with care cannot claim to hold a future worth striving for.



Daycare is a place of cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

FILE PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

However, enforcement is lax, and compliance is more the exception than the rule. Many institutions offer a "sick room" or a single nanny in an empty office room, which is a far cry from what children or their mothers deserve. The few quality daycare centres that do exist remain expensive and inaccessible to most middle- and lower-income families. The market cannot solve what policy refuses to address.

There remains significant stigma around daycare use in Bangladesh. Some see it as

replace the developmental advantages of structured group interaction.

Moreover, with proper training and regulation, daycare workers can offer a level of specialised developmental care that most homes cannot. From speech therapy to emotional support, their role is indispensable.

If we are serious about building an inclusive, equitable Bangladesh—one where women can thrive as mothers and professionals—we must reimagine our

As a nation, we have spent years trying to increase women's participation in education and employment. Now, we must complete the loop. We must invest not only in women's work but also in what makes their work sustainable: comprehensive childcare.

Let us remember the wisdom of Kahlil Gibran, who once wrote, "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself." If life longs for anything, it is care, continuity, and compassion. Let us not fail it at the gate.

Why Dhaka has become unliveable



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ZAKIR KIBRIA

Picture this: you're standing in the middle of Shahbagh at 8:30am. The sun is already a vengeful orb, the air tastes like exhaust fumes and unfulfilled promises, and the traffic—oh, the traffic—is a fossilised river of cars, rickshaws, and humanity. A man in a sweat-soaked shirt argues with a CNG-run autorickshaw driver over a fare increase of Tk 10. A schoolgirl hops over a sludge-filled pothole, her uniform skirt flapping like a surrender flag. Somewhere, a protest slogan echoes, muffled by the honking symphony. Welcome to Dhaka, the city that never sleeps, because it's too busy being stuck in traffic, dodging waterlogged streets, or wondering if today's political demonstration will be the one that finally tips the collective sanity into the abyss.

A recent editorial by *The Daily Star*, titled "This is not how a city can survive", is a primal scream into the void. It catalogues Dhaka's daily crucifixion: protests that gridlock entire neighbourhoods, infrastructure that crumbles faster than a biscuit in *cha*, and a government that seems to treat citizen welfare as an afterthought in

its grand political opera. But how does one survive here? Not just exist, not just endure, but carve out a sliver of dignity—or at least a functioning Wi-Fi connection—amid the chaos? Let's muse.

Dhaka operates on a unique principle: maximum effort, minimum progress. You leave home at 7am to reach your office five kilometres away by 9am, only to discover that a spontaneous protest has turned the road into a car park. The protesters, bless their democratic hearts, are exercising their right to dissent. The traffic police, meanwhile, are exercising their right to vanish. You sit. You sweat. You contemplate the existential irony of a metro rail gliding overhead while your CNG-run autorickshaw dies.

The editorial nails it: this isn't just inconvenience, it's systemic erosion. When protests metastasise into daily blockades, when VIP movements reroute entire neighbourhoods, when monsoon rains turn roads into Venetian canals (sans the romance), the city becomes less a habitat and more a stress simulator. The elderly, the sick, the parents hauling toddlers through

sludge—these aren't extras in a dystopian film. They're us. And the tragedy isn't just the suffering, it's the normalisation of it. We have mastered the art of shrugging, "Ki ar korar? Eita to Dhaka."

But here's the twist: Dhaka's chaos is also its alchemy. The same streets that trap you for hours host impromptu tea stalls where strangers bond over shared misery. The protests that infuriate you also remind you that dissent, however disruptive, is a heartbeat this city refuses to silence. Survival here isn't about avoiding the chaos; it's about learning to dance in the rubble.

Let's be honest: optimism in Dhaka feels like bringing a parasol to a tsunami. The just-revealed Global Liveability Index 2025 ranks us 171st out of 173 cities, below even Kyiv, a city currently hosting an actual war. Our air quality rivals industrial chimneys. Our infrastructure budget seems to evaporate faster than rainwater in July. And don't get me started on the mosquitoes—*Aedes aegypti*, the unofficial mascot of our public health nightmares.

Yet, cynicism is a luxury this city can't afford. The editorial's plea to prioritise citizens' well-being isn't just a policy suggestion; it's a survival manifesto.

The government's inertia—whether in tackling air pollution, fixing roads, or addressing inflation—is a masterclass in absurdity. The new metro rail? A Band-Aid on a bullet wound. The real solution—disciplined traffic management, green spaces, functional public transport—remains as elusive as a quiet afternoon in Gulistan.

Surviving Dhaka demands a sense of humour. Not the slapstick kind, but the gallows variety. Take the Great Waterlogging Chronicles: you invest in waterproof shoes, only to discover the real enemy is the floating garbage island blocking the drain. Or the VIP Movement Saga, where your entire commute is derailed because someone's convoy needs to glide through the city like a pampered comet. And then there's the Protest Paradox: you support the right to demonstrate but draw the line when it turns your 20-minute errand into a three-hour odyssey.

The editorial's call for "responsible protest" is noble but feels like asking a tornado to mind its manners. Protests here aren't just political theatre; they're catharsis. When the system grinds you down, blocking a road feels like the only megaphone you've got. The problem isn't dissent—it's the collateral damage. A city can't thrive when its arteries are clogged daily, when ambulances are trapped behind slogan-chanting crowds, when students miss exams because the streets are a battleground.

But imagine this: What if protests were organised with precision? What if the government actually planned for them, rerouting traffic, designating zones, ensuring that emergencies aren't collateral damage? What if, instead of adversarial standoffs, we had dialogue?

To survive Dhaka, you need a strategy. Start by embracing the absurd: treat every crisis as a plot twist. Stuck in traffic? Perfect time to memorise a poem. Power outage? Candlelit introspection hour. Find your

oasis—a rooftop garden, a quiet cafe, a library corner—and claim a sliver of peace amid the bedlam. Channel your inner Tagore; the man wrote about birds and freedom while colonialism loomed. Create beauty anyway. Demand better, but build resilience: advocate for change, but don't wait for it. Plant a tree. Mentor a kid. Fix a pothole yourself (if the city won't). And above all, laugh. Loudly. Because if you don't, you'll cry.

The editorial ends with a plea for collaboration—government, parties, citizens—to stop treating civic life as a hostage. But collaboration requires trust, and trust is in shorter supply than parking spots here. Yet, hope persists, in the students demanding safer streets, architects designing vertical gardens, journalists chronicling both collapse and resilience.

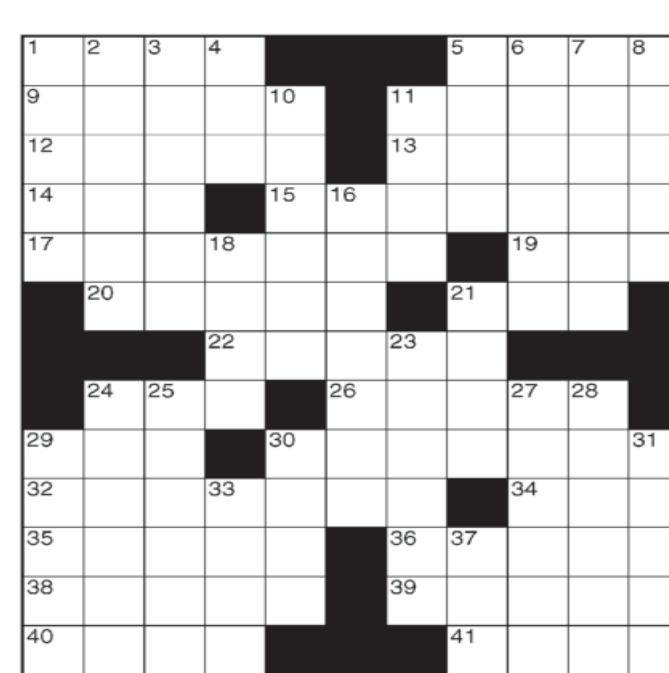
Dhaka is a city of contradictions. It's a place where you can attend a rooftop art exhibition overlooking a slum, where a phuchka vendor philosophises about inflation, where the smell of rain on concrete mingles with the stench of neglect. It's unliveable. It's home.

The editorial is a mirror held up to our collective face, reflecting exhaustion, yes, but also a stubborn refusal to surrender. Survival here isn't passive; it's a daily rebellion. So, the next time you're trapped in traffic, roll down your window. Share a snack with the rickshaw wala. Complain about the potholes. Dream of a better city. And remember: Dhaka's chaos is also its pulse. As long as it beats, so do we.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Bar mixer
5 Used the pool
9 Sports spot
11 Biscotti flavor
12 Deadly
13 Blog entries
14 Greek vowel
15 National League team
17 National League team
19 Gift from Santa
20 Cologne's river
21—Alamos
22 Nick of "Affliction"
24 Chips buy
26 Sub sounder
29 "Roses—red"
30 National League team

32 National League team
34 Casual top
35 Wall climbers
36 Martini garnish
38 Davis of "Thelma & Louise"
39 Witch trial town
40 Helper: Abbr.
41 Go by
DOWN
1 Less dangerous
2 Stump figure
3 Tear off
4 "Knives Out" star de
Armas
5 Winter weather
6 Aware of



SATURDAY'S ANSWERS



Lanka court stops state land grab from Tamils

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's top court yesterday halted a government move to acquire land in northern regions still reeling from the consequences 16 years after the end of a decades-long civil war.

Sri Lanka's north bore the brunt of the conflict in the 37-year-long Tamil separatist war, which was brought to a bloody conclusion in May 2009.

Many among the Tamil minority lost their land title deeds during the years of displacement, and the area was also hit by the 2004 Asian tsunami.

The Supreme Court order concerning nearly 6,000 acres (2,428 hectares) of land came a day after UN human rights chief Volker Turk ended a three-day visit, during which he urged the authorities to return private lands still occupied by troops.

NORTH PAKISTAN

Nine dead as floodwaters sweep away children

REUTERS, Peshawar

At least nine people died when floodwaters swept away children in a river in northern Pakistan and relatives jumped into the water to try to save them yesterday, officials said.

The family was having a picnic breakfast by the Swat River and the children were in the water taking photos when the sudden flood hit, district administrator Shehzad Mahboob said.

Relatives rushed in but were also caught up in the deluge which had been swollen by monsoon rains, he added.

It was still too early to say how many children and how many adults had died, Mahboob told Reuters. Nine bodies have been recovered so far, he said. Four members of the family were rescued alive and another four are still missing.

The family group were tourists from Pakistan visiting the Swat Valley, local mayor Shahid Ali Khan said. Locals and more than 80 rescue workers were searching for survivors, rescue official Shah Fahad said.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority later issued an alert saying there were high flood levels and warning people to take precautions.

Heatwave across Med sparks health, fire warnings

AFP, Paris

Southern European countries yesterday braced for a punishing weekend heatwave, with temperatures predicted to hit up to 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and beyond, prompting health warnings for residents and tourists plus fears of wildfires.

The searing heat spreading across the Mediterranean from the Iberian peninsula to the Balkans and Greece comes as climate scientists warn that galloping human-induced climate change is causing more extreme weather, including longer and more intense heatwaves.

Tens of millions of people have already been sweltering in what the National Weather Service called an "extremely dangerous" heatwave across the eastern United States, including in New York and Washington, straining the power grid as people cranked up air conditioning.

Across the Atlantic in Spain, emergency medical staff readied to deal with an expected surge in heatstroke cases, particularly among vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses.

In neighbouring Portugal, the national meteorological agency IPMA said the heatwave would hit from today, with temperatures passing 40C in the south of the country as well as in the central Tagus and the Douro valleys in the north.

Sunday will be even hotter, the agency added, and two-thirds of the country has already been put on orange alert. Temperatures are expected to hit 42C in the capital, Lisbon. The risk of fire is at its highest inland in the northern half of Portugal, as well as on the Algarve coast popular with holidaymakers in the south.



A man with crutches walks through rubble following Israeli strikes in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday. Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) called for a controversial Israel- and US-backed relief effort in Gaza to be halted, branding it "slaughter masquerading as humanitarian aid".

PHOTO: AFP

NATO SUMMIT IN THE HAGUE

Trump, Europe at odds over Putin's ambitions

REUTERS, The Hague

For US President Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin is a man looking for an off-ramp to his bloody three-year assault on Ukraine.

But according to Nato



bloc's main foil.

That is despite some lawmakers in Trump's own Republican Party hardening their rhetoric in recent weeks, arguing that while the president's ambition to negotiate an end to Russia's war in Ukraine is laudable, it is now clear that Putin is not serious about coming to the table.

In Wednesday

"I know one thing: He'd like to settle," Trump said. "He'd like to get out of this thing. It's a mess for him."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio echoed Trump's view in a sideline interview with Politico, saying the US was holding off on expanding its sanctions against Moscow, in part to keep talks going.

"If we did what everybody here wants us to do - and that is come in and crush them with more sanctions - we probably lose our ability to talk to them about the ceasefire," he said.

The message from others at the summit was starkly different.

A senior Nato official told reporters in a Tuesday briefing that Putin was not in fact interested in a ceasefire - or in engaging in good-faith talks at all.

"Regardless of battlefield dynamics, we continue to doubt that Russia has any interest in meaningful negotiations," the official said.

Russia's ambitions, the senior official said, go beyond control of "certain territories at their administrative lines," as Rubio put it. Putin is instead bent on imposing his "political will" on neighboring states. Rutte put the Russian threat in existential terms.

"If we do not invest now," he said on Tuesday, "we are really at risk that the Russians might try something against Nato territory in three, five or seven years."

- US, Nato allies disagree on Putin's ultimate aims
- Rubio says Russia wants Ukrainian territories; Rutte warns of attack on Europe
- Lack of Russia strategy a blot on otherwise successful summit

press conference, Trump conceded that it was "possible" Putin had territorial ambitions beyond Ukraine. But he insisted that the Russian leader - buffeted by manpower and materiel losses - wanted the war to end quickly.

Armenia cops, clergy scuffle as standoff escalates

AFP, Yerevan

A scuffle broke out in Armenia yesterday between clergymen and police, part of an escalating standoff between the influential Church and the Caucasian nation's authorities.

Two sides have been at loggerheads since Catholicos Garegin II -- the church's spiritual leader -- began calling for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign over Armenia's military defeat to Azerbaijan in 2020.

The loss of the disputed Karabakh region to Azerbaijan in 2023, Armenia's arch-foe, has divided the country and escalated the dispute.

On Wednesday, the Armenian authorities said they had foiled a coup plot involving a senior cleric who had rallied opposition to Pashinyan and more than a dozen other suspects.

The latest confrontation erupted after police arrived at the residence of the head of the Apostolic Church to arrest another senior figure, archbishop Mikael Adjapahyan.

He is accused of publicly calling for the government to be overthrown.

Masked police attempted to enter the residence of Garegin II to arrest Adjapahyan.

BORDER DISPUTE

India calls for a permanent solution with China

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told his Chinese counterpart that the two countries should seek a "permanent solution" to their decades-old border dispute, in a new push for a conclusive outcome.

Singh met China's Dong Jun on the sidelines of the meeting of the defence ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Qingdao on Thursday and stressed on solving issues between the countries through a structured roadmap, India's defence ministry said in a statement yesterday.

"Singh also stressed on border management and to have a permanent solution of border demarcation by rejuvenating the established mechanism on the issue," the statement said, referring to the border talks process between the Asian giants.

New Delhi's stress on a permanent solution is considered significant as India has in the past generally used phrases such as seeking an early resolution to the dispute.

Beijing says the border dispute should not affect the larger relationship and differences should be managed properly until a mutually acceptable solution is found through dialogue.

There was no Chinese defence ministry statement yet on the meeting and its foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on India's statement.

The world's two most populous nations - both nuclear powers - share a 3,800 km (2,400 mile), largely undemarcated and disputed border in the Himalayas and have gone to war over it.

Would consider bombing Iran again: Trump

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump said yesterday he would consider bombing Iran again if Tehran was enriching uranium to a level that concerned the United States.

"Sure, without question, absolutely," Trump said when asked about the possibility of new bombing of Iranian nuclear sites if deemed necessary at some point.

At a White House news conference, Trump said he plans to respond soon to comments from Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who said Iran "slapped America in the face" by launching an attack against a major US base in Qatar following last weekend's US bombing raid.

Later, in an extraordinary outburst on his Truth Social platform, Trump said he had saved Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei from assassination.

Trump posted: "I knew EXACTLY where he was sheltered, and would not let Israel, or the U.S. Armed Forces, by far the Greatest and Most Powerful in the World, terminate his life."

"I SAVED HIM FROM A VERY UGLY AND IGNOMINIOUS DEATH, and he does not have to say, 'THANK YOU, PRESIDENT TRUMP!'"

Trump said that he had been working in recent days on the possible removal of sanctions against Iran, one of Tehran's long-term demands.

"But no, instead I get hit with a statement of anger, hatred, and disgust, and immediately dropped all work on sanction relief, and more," Trump added, exhorting Iran to return to the negotiating table.

Iran's foreign minister on Wednesday denied it is set to resume nuclear talks with the United States, after Trump said at a NATO summit in The Hague that negotiations were set to begin again next week.



People deported from the United States disembark a repatriation flight as US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem (not pictured) tours Department of Homeland Security operations at La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on Thursday.

Japan executes 'Twitter killer' who murdered nine people

AFP, Tokyo

Japan yesterday executed a man dubbed the "Twitter killer" who murdered and dismembered nine people he met online, in the nation's first enactment of the death penalty since 2022.

Takahiro Shiraishi, 34, was hanged for killing his young victims, all but one of whom were women, after contacting them on the social media platform now called X. He had targeted users who posted about taking their own life, telling them he could help them in their plans, or even die alongside them.

Justice Minister Keisuke Suzuki said Shiraishi's crimes, carried out in 2017, included "robbery, rape, murder... destruction of a corpse and abandonment of a corpse".

Japan and the United States are the only two G7 countries to still use capital punishment.

INTERNATIONAL

US top court curtails power of lone judges to block Trump

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he can now push through a raft of controversial policies after the Supreme Court handed him a "giant win" by curbing the ability of lone judges to block his powers nationwide.

In a 6-3 ruling stemming from Trump's bid to end birthright citizenship, the court said nationwide injunctions issued by individual district court judges likely exceed their authority.

"This was a tremendous win," Trump told reporters in a hastily arranged press conference at the White House. "I want to just thank again the Supreme Court for this ruling."

Trump said he would now proceed with "so many policies" that had been "wrongly" blocked, including his bid to end birthright citizenship, and stopping funding for transgender people and "sanctuary cities" for migrants.

US Attorney General Pam Bondi, standing alongside Trump at the podium, said the ruling would stop "rogue judges striking down President Trump's policies across the entire nation."

Democrats swiftly blasted the decision, saying it would embolden Trump as he pushes the boundaries of presidential power in his second term.

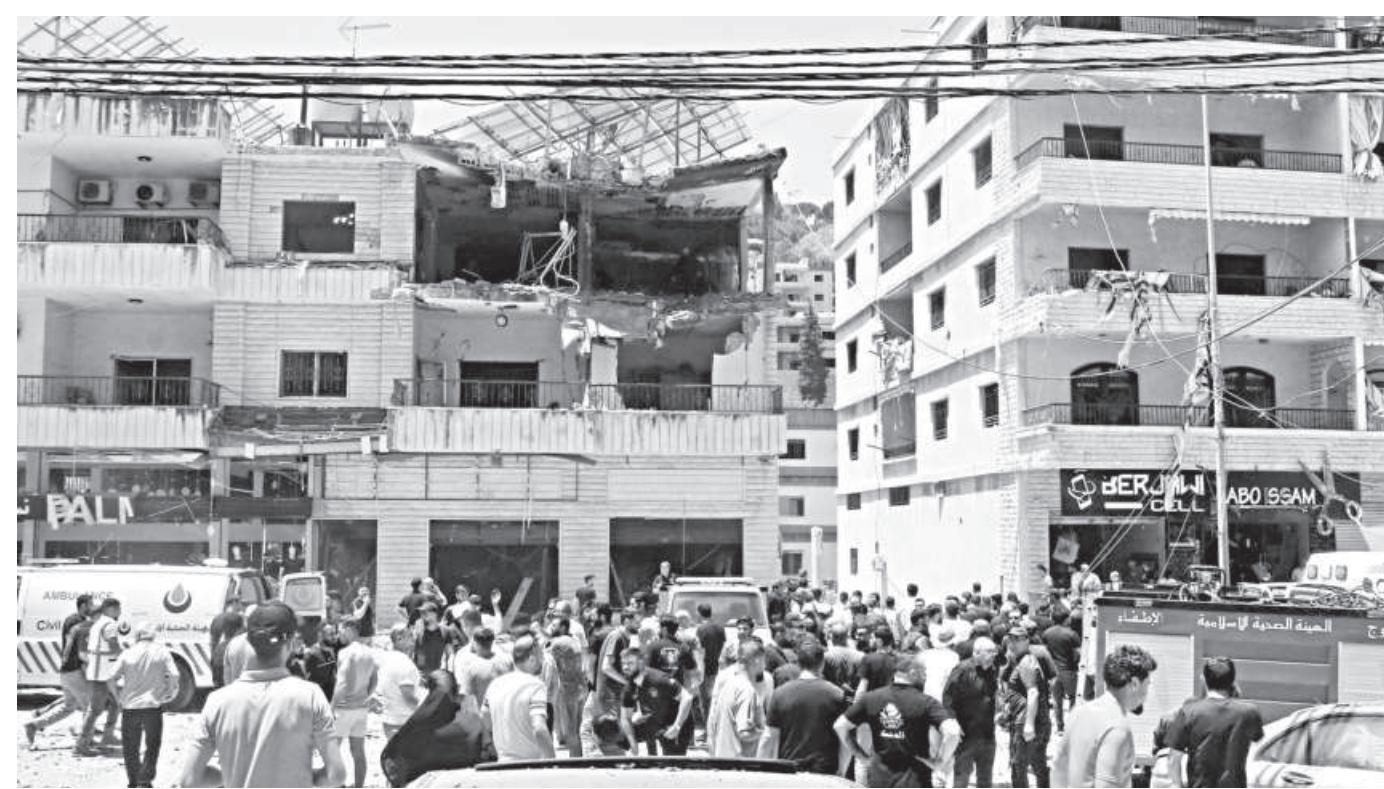
Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer called it a "terrifying step toward authoritarianism."

Trump, however, rejected concerns about the concentration of power in the White House.

"This is really the opposite of that," Trump said. "This really brings back the Constitution."

Trump separately hailed a "great ruling" by the Supreme Court to let parents opt their children out of LGBTQ-themed lessons at public schools.

The Supreme Court did not rule on the constitutionality of Trump's executive order seeking to end automatic citizenship for children born on US soil.



People inspect the damage after an Israeli strike on Nabatieh in southern Lebanon yesterday. According to Lebanon's health ministry, a woman was killed and 11 others were wounded in the strike in the country's south, despite a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

PHOTO: AFP

'\$30bn civil nuke deal, unfreeze funds'

Trump admin offers Iran to resume nuclear talks

CNN ONLINE

The Trump administration has discussed possibly helping Iran access as much as \$30 billion to build a civilian-energy-producing nuclear programme, easing sanctions, and freeing up billions of dollars in restricted Iranian funds – all part of an intensifying attempt to bring Tehran back to the negotiating table, four sources familiar with the matter said.

Key players from the US and the Middle East have talked with the Iranians behind the scenes even amid the flurry of military strikes in Iran and Israel over the past two weeks, the sources said. Those discussions have continued this week after a ceasefire deal was struck, the sources said.

Trump administration officials emphasized that several proposals

have been floated. They are preliminary and evolving with one consistent non-negotiable: zero Iranian enrichment of uranium, which Iran has consistently said it needs. But at least one preliminary draft proposal, described to CNN by two sources, includes several incentives for Iran.

Some details were hashed out in a secret, hours-long meeting between US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Gulf partners at the White House last Friday, the day before US military strikes against Iran, two sources familiar with the meeting told CNN.

Among the terms being discussed, which have not been previously reported, is an estimated \$20-30 billion investment in a new Iranian non-enrichment nuclear program that would be used for civilian energy purposes, Trump administration

officials and sources familiar with the proposal told CNN. One official insisted that money would not come directly from the US, which prefers its Arab partners foot the bill. Investment in Iran's nuclear energy facilities has been discussed in previous rounds of nuclear talks in recent months.

"The US is willing to lead these talks" with Iran, the Trump administration official told CNN. "And someone is going to need to pay for the nuclear program to be built, but we will not make that commitment."

Other incentives include potentially removing some sanctions on Iran and allowing Tehran to access the \$6 billion currently sitting in foreign bank accounts that it is restricted from freely using, according to the draft described to CNN.

Ukraine calls for EU sanctions

FROM PAGE 14

diplomatic communication, Ukraine's ambassador to India, Oleksandr Polishchuk, said Dhaka had not responded to the communication and Kyiv will now escalate the matter as its intelligence showed entities in Russia mix grain procured from occupied Ukrainian territories with Russian wheat before shipping.

"It's a crime," Polishchuk said in an interview at Ukraine's embassy in New Delhi. "We will share our investigation with our European Union colleagues, and we will kindly ask them to take the appropriate measures."

Ukraine's diplomatic tussle with Bangladeshi authorities has not been previously reported. The Bangladeshi and Russian foreign ministries did not respond to requests for comment.

A Ukraine official told Reuters Ukrainian law prohibits any voluntary trade between Ukrainian producers, including grain farmers in the occupied territories, and Russian entities.

The Ukraine Embassy has sent four letters to Bangladeshi's government, reviewed by Reuters, in which it shared vessel names and their registration numbers involved in the alleged trade of moving the grain from the Crimean ports of Sevastopol and Kerch, occupied by Russia since 2014, and Berdiansk, which is under Moscow's control since 2022, to Kavkaz in Russia.

The letters stated the departure and tentative arrival dates of the ships that left from Kavkaz for Bangladesh between November 2024 and June 2025.

The June 11 letter said Bangladesh can face "serious consequences" of sanctions for taking deliveries of "stolen grain", and that such purchases fuel

"humanitarian suffering."

The sanctions "may extend beyond importing companies and could also target government officials and the leadership of ministries and agencies who knowingly facilitate or tolerate such violations," the letter added.

In a statement to Reuters, Anita Hippler, EU Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said the vessels in question were not currently subject to any restrictive measures.

The sanctions regime was designed to act against activities that undermine the food security of Ukraine including transportation of "stolen Ukrainian grain" and "any proven involvement of vessels in shipping stolen Ukrainian grain could provide the basis for future restrictive measures," she added.

Amid the war with Russia, the agricultural sector remains one of the main sources of export earnings for Ukraine, supplying grain, vegetable oil and oilsseeds to foreign markets.

In April, Ukraine detained a foreign vessel in its territorial waters, alleging it was involved in the illegal trade of stolen grain, and last year seized a foreign cargo ship and detained its captain on similar suspicions.

The EU has so far sanctioned 342 ships that are part of Russia's so-called shadow fleet, which the bloc says enable Moscow to circumvent Western restrictions to move oil, arms and grain.

Russia says Western sanctions are illegal.

Contacted, a foreign ministry official in Dhaka said he was not sure whether any letter from Ukraine had been received.

"I will have to check. I can update you on Sunday," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Beijing confirms

FROM PAGE 14

implement the Geneva agreement".

That clarification came after the US president told an event that Washington had "just signed" a deal relating to trade with China, without providing further details.

Beijing confirmed yesterday that an agreement had been reached. "It is hoped that the United States and China will meet each other halfway," a spokesperson for the commerce ministry said in a statement. It said both sides had "further confirmed the details of the framework".

Under the deal, China "will review and approve applications for the export control items that meet the requirements in accordance with the law".

China visit

FROM PAGE 14

delegation had an excellent meeting with CPC leaders.

He added that the CPC invited BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman and expressed satisfaction with his leadership.

Fakhrul said the BNP too invited the CPC to visit Bangladesh, and it accepted the invitation.

The BNP leader further said that both parties discussed signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a two-year political dialogue.

The other delegates are BNP Standing Committee members Mirza Abbas, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, and Selima Rahman, BNP chairperson's advisers Zahir Uddin Swapan, Ismail Zabiullah, and Prof Sukomal Barua, media cell convener Moudud Hossain Alamgir Pavel, and BNP chairperson's personal secretary ABM Abdus Sattar.

India bans

FROM PAGE 14

said the notification signed by Ajay Bhaduri, director general of foreign trade.

"Import from Bangladesh shall not be allowed from any land port on India-Bangladesh border. However, it is allowed only through Nhava Sheva seaport... Import of certain goods from Bangladesh to India are regulated with immediate effect," the notification read.

The decision came a little more than a month after India had imposed port restrictions on the import of certain goods like readymade garments and processed food items from Bangladesh via land routes.

"It takes more than six months to conduct the local government elections before the general polls, he said.

"It needs massive preparations."

On April 9, India withdrew transhipment facilities previously extended to Bangladesh for garments exports to the Middle East and Europe, with exceptions made only for Nepal and Bhutan.

Is Bangladesh going to squander its fresh start?

FROM PAGE 14

rate has dipped from nearly 12% in July last year to 9% in May. The government has sought to clear bad loans from the banks and started hunting for billions of dollars that the previous government is believed to have siphoned abroad."

In recent weeks, both the International Monetary Fund and the ADB have approved multi-billion-dollar loans, but so far, the government's reforms have focused only on "low-hanging fruit", says the article quoting Chandan Sapkota of the ADB.

"Bangladesh still depends heavily on exports of textiles, has woeful infrastructure and is not creating enough jobs for its youngsters. These issues have grown urgent now that America is waging tariff wars."

While the interim government's action on the economy has been appreciated abroad, its foreign policy raises eyebrows, it says.

Yunus says Bangladesh is "reaching out to everybody", but in March he was in China for his first big bilateral trip.

"Reports suggest Bangladesh may buy Chinese J-10C and J-17 fighter jets—the same aircraft used by Pakistan in its conflict with India in May."

All these have strained Bangladesh's ties with India, which used to be Bangladesh's strongest ally and is providing shelter to Sheikh Hasina, adds the article.

"In April India cancelled a transhipment facility that allowed Bangladeshi goods to be sent abroad from Indian airports; that will increase costs for firms."

"Aligning with China could also hurt relations with America. Before that country cut foreign aid, Bangladesh was one of its biggest beneficiaries; much of the money helped Bangladesh host the 1.1m Rohingya refugees who live near the border with Myanmar. America is also the biggest market for Bangladeshi exports."

Yunus calls for

FROM PAGE 14

"The whole world—and young people can do this just the same. Enough is enough. Get out of the way. You made enough problems for us. Let the world grow in its own way; we create a new world for us, and that's our promise."

A video message from Thomas Bach, the honorary president of the International Olympic Committee, was broadcast at the event, in which he praised the profound impact of Prof Yunus's social business movement.

The inaugural ceremony was also addressed by Gwyn Lewis, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, Mitsu Izumo, founder of Japan's Euglena GG Ltd, Ismail Serageldin, former vice president of the World Bank, and Ashrafuzz Hassan, chairman of Grameen Group, among others.

DHAKA SATURDAY JUNE 28, 2025

ASHAR 14, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

9

Russian strike kills 5, wounds 14 in Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

A Russian strike yesterday killed five people and wounded more than a dozen in Ukraine's industrial Dniproptetrovsk region, where Moscow has stepped up fatal bombardments.

Russian forces, which invaded Ukraine early in 2022, are vying to gain a foothold in Dniproptetrovsk for the first time in the war.

"Three people have been killed in an enemy attack. Fourteen people have been wounded," regional governor Sergiy Lysak said of the attack on the town of Samar, outside the region's main city Dniproptetrovsk.

Russian forces earlier this week struck both Dniproptetrovsk and Samar with missiles, leaving at least 23 dead. Ukrainian military officials have said that previous Russian strikes near Samar hit Ukrainian military training facilities.

Moscow earlier this week claimed to have captured two more villages near the border of the Dniproptetrovsk region.

Separately, authorities in the northern region of Kharkiv said Russian attacks killed one person and wounded three others, without specifying where the attack had taken place.

India arrests 3 after student gang-rape in Kolkata

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police have arrested three men accused of gang raping a law student in Kolkata, officials said yesterday, a case that has reignited anger in a city still scarred by the rape and murder of a doctor last year.

The survivor said she was assaulted on Wednesday evening inside a room on the college premises, Indian media reported, with the three accused including two current and one former student.

The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), the ruling party in West Bengal state, said the "full weight of the law will be brought to bear".

The case again highlights the chronic issue of sexual violence in the world's most populous country, where an average of nearly 90 rapes a day were reported in 2022.

It has also sparked fresh political clashes between the AITC and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

36 Bangladeshis detained

FROM PAGE 14

recruitment cells within their own community.

"These cells were set up to indoctrinate radical beliefs, raise funds for terrorist activities, and to ultimately overthrow the legitimate government in their home country."

Contacted by The Daily Star, Bangladeshi High Commissioner to Malaysia Shamsheen Ahsan said he had noticed the statement issued by the Home Ministry of Malaysia.

"We are in touch with the authorities concerned for more specific information on the charges," he added.

Willing to discuss issues

FROM PAGE 14

research issues and to frame our approach.

An Indian newspaper recently reported — citing a senior official at the Ministry of External Affairs who attended a bilateral meeting with Bangladeshi counterparts in May — that the dialogue offered a chance to raise concerns over India's growing domestic water demands, which are expected to shape the terms of the proposed treaty.

The risk is that a large chunk of Bangladesh's voters decide that this decision has denied them a proper choice at the ballot box. The Awami League remains surprisingly popular: it is first choice for 14% of decided voters, and that is almost certainly an undercount.

The article quotes Human Rights Watch as saying that the interim government "arbitrarily" targeted Awami League supporters in a way similar to that of the previous government's abusive clampdown on opponents.

Mid-May, India imposed port restrictions on the import of key goods from Bangladesh, significantly curtailing overland trade in items such as readymade garments, processed foods, plastic products, and wooden furniture.

The Indian commerce ministry barred the import of all types of readymade garments from Bangladesh through land ports. These imports will now be permitted only through two designated sea route — Nhava Sheva, and Kolkata.

Asked to comment on the recent trilateral meeting between Bangladesh, China and Pakistan in Kunming on June 19, Jaiswal said, "We maintain a constant watch on the developments in our neighbourhood that have a bearing on our interests and our security."

"Our relations with individual countries, while they stand on their own, take into account the evolving context as well," he remarked.

BNP urges CA, CEC

FROM PAGE 1

to the nation, we will be reassured."

Salahuddin said the election timing was discussed earlier in a meeting between Yunus and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman in London, where it was decided that the polls should be held in the first half of February 2026.

The chief adviser will officially convey that message to the chief election commissioner or the Election Commission. We are waiting for that. Yesterday [Thursday], the chief adviser met the chief election commissioner. We expected that either the Chief Adviser's Office or the Election Commission would inform the press on what was discussed during the meeting."

CEC AMM Nasir Uddin paid a courtesy call on Yunus at



RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

However, the road to success wasn't all that easy. Before the lights and the lens came rejection slips and pandemic-induced pauses. Yet, quitting was never an option. "Giving up" simply didn't exist in his vocabulary.

"When I first got a call to audition for an Airtel commercial back in 2017, I gave it my all, but I was rejected. Then they called me again for another ad, and I thought maybe I messed up the first time. So, I went all in again. Still, nothing."

He laughs, "I actually started thinking maybe I wasn't meant for this. But then, the third time became the charm! I bagged a Bashundhara Tissue commercial, and I haven't looked back since."

And that's no exaggeration. From 2017 to now, Saad has featured in an estimated 70 to 80 commercials. Ironic twist? "Airtel—the brand that rejected me a few times—ended up being the one I worked with the most. I've done 18 TVCs and OVCs for them," he adds with a smile.

It wasn't until the pandemic that Saad's career truly shifted. With time to reflect and binge, he turned to OTT content and rediscovered his passion for storytelling. His father, a lifelong cinephile, only fuelled the fire.

In 2020, Saad got his first acting break in *BnG*, and audiences immediately connected with his smooth-talking, cool portrayal of Sameer. "The love I got from fiction work was on a whole different level," he recalls. "People were recognising me, reaching out online, it felt amazing."

Soon after came a role in the hit series *Karagar*, where he played young Alfred. "I thought, 'This is it, my acting career is finally happening.' But then... things just stalled. The calls stopped coming in. I kept auditioning, trying to stay visible, but it was tough."

After playing his share of 'sweet guy' roles, *Taandob* changed everything. The project gave Saad the chance to dive into something deeper, darker, and show a whole new side of his acting.

"When I posted behind-the-scenes photos with Jaya Ahsan, they went viral," Saad says. "People who hadn't even seen the movie were like, 'Wait, why are they together?'"

You might know him as Sameer from Bongo's *BnG*, or perhaps you recognise him as Jaya Ahsan's younger brother in *Taandob*—either way, Saad Salmi Naovi is fast becoming a name to remember. With his tall frame, dashing looks, and effortless charm, he's already a familiar face in commercials and is steadily making his mark in television dramas and OTT platforms.

Meeting Jaya Ahsan was, in his words, a moment. "I was honestly star-struck when I first saw her. To break the ice, I said, 'Hello apu, ami apnar photo bhai' (Hi apu, I'm your younger brother). Later, we had this scene where I am playing FIFA and she walks in to bug me. I was super nervous, just sitting on the sofa. But she was so relaxed and warm—I felt as though she was my real sister. She made the scene feel natural."

One of *Taandob*'s most powerful sequences was filmed at Bogambara Prison in Sri Lanka—a real jail.

Although he didn't share screen time with Shakib Khan, he made it a point to observe the superstar closely. "Once Shakib Khan steps into acting mode, he fully immerses himself in the role. Watching him perform made me realise—I need to feel what my character feels. Not just act it."

The day of his big prison scene, Saad committed fully. "From the moment I arrived on set, I stayed in character. During makeup, I had this somber expression. I walked to the set barefoot, imagining I'd been locked up for six to seven months. I even improvised a limp to show that my character had been physically worn down. From 2pm till 11pm, I stayed in character, barely breaking even between takes."

Outside of acting, Saad has earned a reputation for his sharp sense of humour, especially on social media.

"During Covid, I started posting funny content. My friends know me as the 'meme king,'" he says. "I used to post 20 to 25 memes a day—my whole algorithm was built around it. My humour really helped boost my popularity."

Whether he's bringing laughs with his viral wit or by losing himself in the emotional weight of a prison scene, there's a sincerity to Saad's journey that makes him stand out in a crowded industry. As he continues to evolve, one thing's certain: this is only the beginning.

Only the beginning for NAOVI



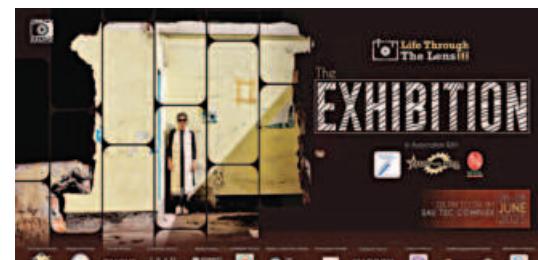
PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

STYLE STATEMENT

SCARLETT JOHANSSON

Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson recently brought classic elegance to the fore in a strapless Schiaparelli gown that shimmered with soft pink brilliance, for the *Jurassic World Rebirth* photo call in London. The look, intricately embellished throughout, featured a scooped neckline with sculptural structure, while corsetry elements—complete with boning and a cinched waist—offered a statuesque silhouette.

Draped detailing at the hips melted into a graceful column skirt, exuding quiet drama. Hairstylist Renato Campora swept her hair into glossy, cascading waves with a deep side part, while makeup artist Hung Vanngo balanced bold brows and petal-pink eyes with a softly muted lip—timeless beauty, perfectly reimagined.

OUT AND ABOUT
IN DHAKA

Exhibition: Life Through the Lens II

June 26-30 | 6 am-11:45 pm
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University



Play: Agni Shraban

June 27-28 | 7 pm-8:20 pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Pothey Holo Dekha

June 29 | 2 pm-7 pm
Pan Pacific Sonargaon

TV TALKIES

'Mercy for None'
Blood, grief, and gangland grit

Mercy for None on Netflix may echo themes of *John Wick*, but it carves out its own brutal identity through raw South Korean thriller sensibilities. Actor So Ji-seob is magnetic as Nam Ki-jun, a grief-stricken ex-gangster dragged back into a blood-soaked vendetta.

The story isn't complex—revenge and retribution—but it's executed with visceral energy and cinematic flair. Hand-to-hand fights replace gunplay, lending the action a gritty, up-close intensity reminiscent of the hit Korean film *Oldboy*.

Gong Myoung adds unpredictable menace as an unhinged mob heir, while other gang leaders add flavour to an otherwise spare cast. Though the characters lack deep introspection and the plot occasionally defies logic, the relentless pacing and impactful performances elevate the experience.



This is a series where bones break, walls bleed, and justice is served through sheer force. While not perfect, *Mercy for None* delivers a satisfying, stylish ride through the underworld, anchored by So Ji-seob's emotionally grounded and physically fierce performance.

WHAT'S
PLAYING'OWA OWA'
by Lil Tecca

Lil Tecca channels vintage charm and modern swagger on *Owa Owa*, a nostalgic-yet-fresh track that samples The Buggles' iconic song *Video Killed the Radio Star*. The melodic single sees Tecca blending smooth vocals with confident bars, offering a glimpse into his rise from humble beginnings to hip-hop's main stage.

Backed by the retro-pop bounce of the 80s, Tecca spins a tale of passion, persistence, and self-belief—seducing both his muse and his listeners with raw authenticity. The music video, peppered with throwback visuals, mirrors this balance of past and present.

Touted by fans as the 'Song of the Summer,' *Owa Owa* leads the charge for Tecca's upcoming album *DOPAMINE*, which promises to be his most defining work yet.

With over 32 million Spotify streams and a debut at No 52 on the Spotify Global Chart, the single has quickly become a fan favourite.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Dept QPrime Video
PanchayatHBO Max
Back to the FrontierApple TV+
The Wild onesHulu
The Amateur

Internet by the people, for the people NAVEED HAQ ON DIGITAL INCLUSION

MOHAMMAD KAWSAR UDDIN

Naveed Haq, Senior Director of infrastructure and connectivity at the Internet Society (ISOC), has dedicated his career to bridging the digital divide—especially in Asia-Pacific. From the mountainous trails of Nepal to the remote villages of Papua New Guinea, Haq's work exemplifies how inclusive and community-led innovation can transform lives. In an exclusive interview, he discusses ISOC's vision, the role of grassroots networks, and the future of digital inclusion.

Q: You've worked extensively across Asia-Pacific to improve infrastructure and connectivity. What have been some of the most rewarding or challenging experiences?

Haq: Establishing internet connectivity in remote or marginalised regions always demands passion, creativity, and community engagement. The most challenging projects are often the most fulfilling.

Three projects stand out. First, the Everest Community Network in Nepal. In partnership with the Nepal Internet Foundation and the Sherpa community, we built the world's highest community network in Khunde and Khumjung—villages just over 10km from Everest Base Camp. More than 1,500 Sherpas now have access to fibre internet, transforming opportunities in education, health and communication.

Second, the Maldives Internet Exchange Point (MIX). This began as a casual discussion between local ISPs and organisations like ISOC and APNIC. We supported training, planning and deployment to launch the country's first IXP, helping improve internet resilience and performance across this small island state.

Third, the Gabaspot Community Wi-Fi in Papua New Guinea. Gabagaba village previously had little to no access. With regulatory support and local leadership, we helped launch a community-run network that now connects around 5,000 people. Digital literacy, remote education, and job access have all improved. The project shows what's possible when policy and community align.

Q: As senior director of infrastructure and connectivity, what are your current focus areas?

Haq: Our 2030 Strategy is grounded in the belief that the internet should enrich people's lives and be a force for good. My priorities focus on expanding affordable, reliable and resilient access.

We're concentrating our IXP efforts on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). On the community connectivity front, we are focusing on indigenous peoples, displaced populations, and women-led social enterprises.

Q: How do you measure the real-world impact of infrastructure projects aimed at connecting the unconnected?

Haq: We use both qualitative and quantitative measures. But often, the most powerful indicators are the stories from the communities themselves. These stories show how local connectivity solutions can close digital gaps and transform lives—what we call "internet by



the people, for the people."

Q: What emerging technologies do you see as key to bridging the digital divide over the next decade?

Haq: Advances in spectrum management—like TV white spaces and Wi-Fi 6—can greatly benefit underserved areas. Additionally, low-Earth orbit satellite networks are showing promise in offering affordable, resilient access to remote communities.

Q: How do policy and regulation support or hinder connectivity efforts in developing regions?

Haq: Many unconnected communities remain offline due to policy and market failures. Policymakers have a crucial role in fostering inclusivity, enabling environments.

Traditional networks won't reach everyone. We need frameworks that allow diverse models to flourish—especially community-led ones. Imagine small villages receiving seed funding, training and support to launch their own networks. These communities can build sustainable businesses, keep costs low, and serve their neighbours—something large telecoms won't do.

We work with policymakers to help shape such inclusive strategies. It's not a technical issue—it's about vision and will.

Q: You've collaborated with many different communities and cultures. What strategies help foster inclusive partnerships?

Haq: Listening is key. Understanding each community's needs, culture, and context helps build trust and create solutions that stick. Success comes from community ownership, not external control.

There is no universal model. What works in Papua New Guinea may not work in Nepal. Our role is to facilitate, not dictate.

Q: What does a truly open internet mean to you in practice?

Haq: A truly open internet allows people to

connect, create, and communicate freely. But that openness is under threat—from both state and corporate actions that risk fragmenting the internet.

We advocate for an internet that remains global, secure and interoperable. Otherwise, we risk a future where the internet is no longer the shared, empowering space it is today.

Q: What role do local communities and grassroots organisations play in shaping digital inclusion efforts?

Haq: They are absolutely central. In many of our projects, grassroots organisations take the lead. For example, in Africa, some community network initiatives—like Aheri—have evolved into respected brands.

With the right policy environment, these organisations can build and manage networks that are locally relevant, sustainable, and impactful.

Q: What inspired your journey into internet infrastructure and policy?

Haq: I grew up in a rural Pakistani village without any internet access. In the late 1990s, during university, my father bought me a computer. We used a \$4 prepaid internet card that connected at 40 kilobits per second. It took minutes to load a Yahoo page—but that experience changed my life.

I started my career at the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, working on policy and regulation. In 2013, I joined the Internet Society. It has allowed me to merge community work with infrastructure and policy—something I'm deeply passionate about.

Q: How does ISOC support its members in building technological and policy capacity?

Haq: Our members and chapters are the driving force of ISOC. They take courses, host events, advocate for change, and connect with a global network of peers. We equip them with the tools and knowledge to lead efforts in their own communities.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT)



Lecturer, various departments

Deadline: July 14

Eligibility:

Master's and 4-year Bachelor's degree with excellent results in all examinations.

Minimum experience: N/A

Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd.



Executive, Quality Control

Deadline: June 28

Eligibility:

Post graduation/graduation with very good academic records in Pharmacy/Chemistry/Biochemistry from a top-tier institution.

Minimum experience: Fresher/1-2 years

Child Health Research Foundation (CHRF)



Senior IT Officer

Deadline: July 16

Eligibility:

BSc in Computer Science Engineering from any reputed university, with prior practical experience in the related field.

Minimum experience: 4-5 years

MetLife Bangladesh



Digital Support Associate

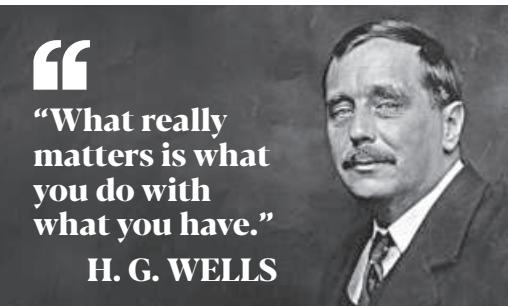
Deadline: June 29

Eligibility:

Bachelor/Master's degree preferably in Business Administration/ IT or any other related discipline.

Minimum experience: N/A

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



Shareholders sue Apple for allegedly overhyping AI: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Apple is facing a proposed securities fraud class action lawsuit from shareholders who allege the company misled investors about the progress of its artificial intelligence (AI) integration, particularly within its Siri voice assistant, according to a recent report by Reuters. The complaint, filed on June 20 in San Francisco federal court, claims that the company's statements about AI development resulted in significant financial losses for shareholders.

The lawsuit asserts that Apple downplayed the time required to implement advanced AI features, especially those unveiled at its 2024 Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC). According to the report,

shareholders claim the company led them to believe that AI would be a central component of its upcoming iPhone 16 lineup, following the announcement of 'Apple Intelligence'—a suite of features aimed at making Siri more powerful and user-friendly.

According to the complaint, Apple lacked a functioning prototype of the enhanced AI-powered Siri and had no reasonable basis to suggest the features would be ready in time for the iPhone 16 launch. The suit alleges that the reality began to surface on March 7, 2025, when Apple delayed key Siri updates until 2026. Shareholders argue that further concerns were confirmed during this year's WWDC on June 9, when Apple's AI developments failed to meet analyst expectations.

Former OpenAI CTO's new startup now valued at \$10 billion: report

NEXT STEP DESK

OpenAI's former chief technology officer Mira Murati has secured \$2 billion in seed funding for her new AI startup, Thinking Machines Lab, valuing the six-month-old company at \$10 billion, according to a recent report by Financial Times. The massive funding round marks one of Silicon Valley's largest-ever seed investments.

As per the report, San Francisco-based Thinking Machines has not disclosed its specific product plans, instead leveraging Murati's reputation as a key architect behind OpenAI's ChatGPT and Dall-E to attract major backers. Andreessen

Horowitz led the investment, with participation from Sarah Guo's Conviction Partners, sources familiar with the deal told Financial Times.

The 36-year-old Murati, who briefly served as OpenAI's interim CEO during Sam Altman's November 2023 ouster incident, has assembled a team of former OpenAI talent including co-founder John Schulman and several other executives. The funding comes with an unusual governance structure—Murati will retain board voting rights that outweigh all other directors combined, ensuring her final say on critical decisions, according to the report.



AI cheating tool startup raises \$15 million in funding

NEXT STEP DESK

AI startup Cluely has secured \$15 million in seed funding led by Andreessen Horowitz (a16z), about two months after closing a \$5.3 million seed round. Founded by suspended Columbia University students Chungin "Roy" Lee and Neel Shammugam, the startup's core product is a "cheat on everything" AI assistant that operates discreetly in the background, analysing live audio and on-screen content to provide real-time support during meetings and customer calls.

In its official announcement, lead investor a16z praised the startup's approach, noting Cluely's rapid traction in enterprise sales



FICTION

Dhaka in slow motion

MD MUJIB ULLAH

The city still wants to breathe.

The morning light—thin and sifted through Dhaka's smog like old turmeric—barely reached the cracked tiles of Asif's fifth-floor apartment in Uttara, sector 3. Outside, Dhaka North unfurled like a giant too heavy to stand, its breath short, its veins—roads, alleys, highways—clogged with impatience. A familiar knot twisted in his chest. Not panic. Something worse. A tired, bone-deep dread.

"Jami," he muttered. One word. Heavy as a curse. Soft as surrender. Not just traffic but a verdict. A national condition.

It wasn't the number of vehicles—the endless metallic tide of battered buses, rickshaws, and swerving motorbikes—it was the futility. Every honk is a scream into the void. Every movement forward, a pyrrhic victory. The air itself felt solid, as if you could chew the soot. Dust, diesel, frustration—this was Dhaka's aftertaste.

But Asif saw more than traffic.

With an M.S. in development studies from North South University, he saw the slow violence others ignored. Carbon monoxide laced the air. Particulate matter buried itself in children's lungs. The rivers—Buriganga, Turag—once lifelines of Bengal, now flowed black and thick, dragging chemical sludge and

broken memory.

His grandmother used to say, "Ei nodi'r jol die shuru hoito shob kichu. (Everything began with the water of these rivers)." Now, they were dying in plain sight.

"We're drowning in our waste," he would tell Maliha, voice rough with helplessness. "Everything's ending. There's not even air left to breathe."

She would meet his gaze, her fire-lit eyes unflinching—not in agreement, but in resistance.

His daily commute to Shahbagh was a ritual of endurance. The local bus was a sweltering tin box—its air conditioning, a forgotten promise. Inside, bodies collided in silence. The conductor shouted half-formed words, and coins clinked like clockwork. Elbows, bags, someone's sweat slick arm pressed against his.

Outside, rickshaws weaved through impossible spaces like startled insects.

"Let's go!" came the cries—urgent, insistent, exhausted.

The heat clung like a second skin. The drains overflowed with yesterday's refuse. Spoiled fruit, open meat, and sweat from the kacha bazaar fermented into a smell only Dhaka knew—half hunger, half decay.

He often recalled a line from a development theorist: "A city's infrastructure reflects its soul."

And Dhaka's soul? It was gridlocked. Honking, coughing, choking on its breath.

His salvation came in the form of steel and silence: the metro.

At Uttara North station, the air changed—filtered, still. Order emerged from chaos. People queued. Screens blinked soft certainties: "Next Station: Agargaon."

Not a plea. Not a dream. A fact. And facts, in Dhaka, were rare and beautiful things.

Inside the train, the noise dissolved. There was only the low hum of motion and the gentle sway of hope. Asif leaned against the glass, watching the city blur past.

"Eita toh amader o dorkar chhilo," he whispered. We needed this too.

"This," he thought, "is what we could be—if only the will existed. If only the will matches the need."

At Shahbagh, the chaos returned, but so did life. The DU campus buzzed with possibility. Ideas. Slogans. Arguments. Dreams. And near the TSC steps, always waiting, stood Maliha.

She was what Dhaka could be—bright, deliberate, unyielding. A BBA student at IBA with a strategist's mind and a poet's conviction. Together, they weren't just partners. They were co-conspirators in something bigger than themselves.

They were called "posh" by cousins and classmates—more as a jest than an insult. But their choices were intentional. Clean phuchka over gutter oil. Artisan coffee over a grimy cha-dhaba. Not to show off, but to make space for quiet rebellion. A kind of dignity.

Their evenings were sacred. Wandering Batighar at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, breathing in the smell of ink and ideas. Fingers tracing spines like sacred objects.

"This one's on circular economies," Asif would say, holding up a book.

"It flips everything we've been taught."

Maliha would smile, pragmatic as ever.

"Only if someone in Gabtoli can understand it between power cuts. Sustainability needs storytelling, Asif. Make it feel like something people want to belong to."

Later, they'd walk through Ramna Park—under banyan trees older than the republic. Children chased kites. Aunties power-walked in bright cotton saris. Old men played chess on stone benches. They'd sing Rabindranath, Lalon, and Nazrul, slightly off key, completely sincere.

And always, always, they talked of change.

"It's not enough to complain," Maliha would say, voice steady.

"We need to become the bhumika. The prototype. Let people see what's

possible."

Asif would nod, heat in his chest.

"If we don't act, who will? Silence is its kind of corruption." They weren't dreaming abstract dreams. They had a plan: rooftop composting in their apartment complex; water conservation campaigns run by student collectives; a mobile app that mapped air quality and empowered citizen action; and pocket parks in abandoned lots—green lungs for a choking city.

The two of them weren't just in love. They were designing a different Dhaka—one recycled idea, one poetic defiance at a time. Their love was a form of activism. A way of insisting that even in the loudest, dirtiest city, grace was possible. That hope wasn't naïve—it was necessary.

And in the quiet, shared spaces between them—in the train's stillness, in the scent of new books, in the last light of day sinking over Ramna—they believed something radical: The city still wants to breathe. And they would be there when it finally does. To guide that first clean breath—with steady hands, fearless hearts, and one small, deliberate revolution at a time.

Md Mujib Ullah reads, thinks, and writes. His work has appeared in Artful Dodge, Text, and elsewhere.



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

FLASH FICTION

Under the olive tree



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

FARIA RAHMAN

"See? I told you you'd break it! You broke it!"

"I didn't break it. It's too fragile! Why is it so fragile?"

"You always do this, Amma. You take my heart, you try to reshape it like yours, and then you shatter it. Every time. Every time!"

"I just want the best for you."

Amma is dead. But absence is only one of her many ways to stay.

Three notebooks, a handful of gold jewelry, a faded shawl, and a single day to grieve her departure—that is all she has left behind. If I cleared them away like dust from a windowsill, the world would forget she was ever here.

But the kitchen remembers. The tea leaves wait to be boiled, the orphaned cloves mourn for her, the cinnamon

sticks sigh, and the powdered spices long to be stirred into a new curry that would earn Amma praise and soothe her pride. Each scent and each silence is like a shard. They echo an imperfect image of her.

Far away, an olive tree beside a river remembers her too.

I sit beneath it, staring at her spidery handwriting in a green notebook. The words crawl out of the page and try to choke me. The faded ink can no longer silence her. She sits beside me—quietly. It has been so long since we have said anything to each other. Gentle as a memory, a little girl with wild curls appears. She rests her head on my lap, as if she always belonged there. Amma sighs. Or perhaps weeps. It has been so long since we have wept together.

The little girl is exhausted. She looks like Amma but doesn't smell like

her. Amma always smelled of onions, turmeric, sweat, and tears. The little girl smells like new grass. Or Jasmine. Should I still call her Amma?

The olive tree sways in the southern breeze. The girl never wanted to be Amma, a wife, or an aunty. She only wanted to be an olive tree—rooted yet free, basking in sunlight, laughing beneath stars—untouched and untamed.

"Why do you always try to reshape it?"

"To make it less like mine. To make it stronger."

"What is wrong with it being so fragile?"

"Then you will vanish—becoming Amma, Chachi, Mami. No one will remember your name. Your name—Oporajita. I named you on a bright morning, the moment I felt you inside

my womb. I knew you'd be a girl. I knew you would be undefeated."

"What was your name?"

"I don't remember anymore."

"Noorjahan. Your name is Noorjahan. Noorjahan means light of the world. You are the light of this world."

The olive tree sways with joy. The golden hour lingers. The girl on my lap stirs, breathing softly, eyes closed. In this moment, she becomes both my mother and my daughter.

Tonight I will mother her, and before she disappears again as Amma, she will reclaim her name. She will be the light of this world.

Faria Rahman is a writer currently living in Tokyo and exploring the many layers of diasporic life. Writing from afar allows her to piece together fragments of home, one story at a time.

POETRY

The poetry of rain

IMTIAZ MAHMUD

What would happen or not, if I weren't born, The earth would move round the Sun The sky would become cloudy It would rain in the rains But seeing that rain my little son aged one year and a half Wouldn't excitedly utter, poison, poison Baba!

As If I weren't born, he wouldn't see this earth. But that we weren't born Would remain unknown to the world!

The pains of our birth And the pride of not being born, No one could have imagined at all. Thus the world would move around the Sun The sky would become Cloudy It would rain in the rains

And the rest of this poem would be written by someone else.

Translated from Bangla by Alamgir Mohammad.

Alamgir Mohammad teaches Literature at the tertiary level.

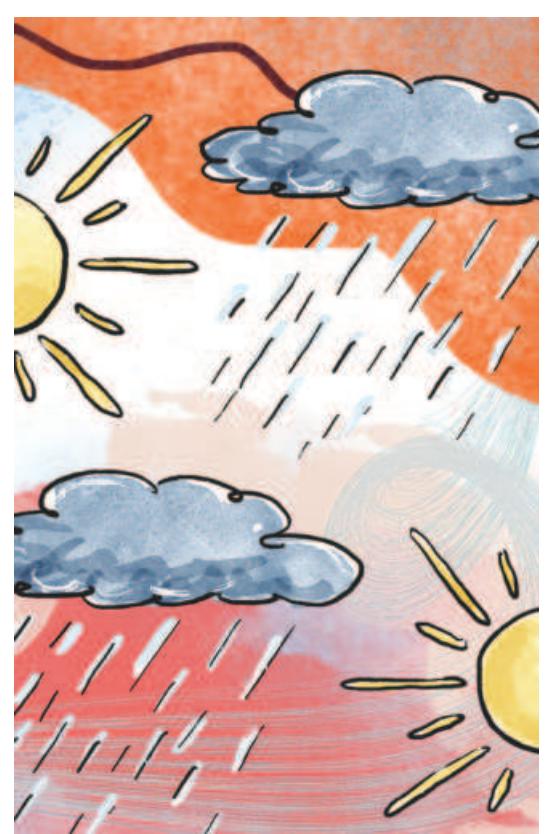


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

● Bangladesh are staring at their 47th innings defeat in their 154th Test, as they trail hosts Sri Lanka by 96 runs in their second innings with just four wickets in hand in the Colombo Test.

● Of the 46 innings defeats till date for Bangladesh, a record nine such losses came against South Africa and eight each against India and Sri Lanka.

● Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam completed his 17th five-wicket haul in Tests yesterday. Taijul remains just two fifers behind Shakib Al Hasan, who holds the record for most in this regard for Bangladesh.

● It was, however, Taijul's fifth fifer in an overseas Test, equalling Shakib's tally. No other Bangladeshi bowler boasts more five-wicket hauls outside home.

BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh first innings: 247 all out in 79.3 overs

Second innings: 115 for six in 38.4 overs (Mushfiqur 26, Litton 13 not out; Dhananjaya 2-13, Jayasuriya 2-47)

Sri Lanka first innings: 458 all out in 116.5 overs (Nissanka 158, Chandimal 93, Mendis 84, Taijul 5-131, Nayeem 3-87)

Bangladesh trail by 96 runs.



T Sports
Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh
2nd Test, Day 4
Live from 10:30 am
West Indies vs
Club World Cup

Round of 16
Palmeiras vs Botafogo
Live from 10:00 pm
Chelsea vs Benfica
Live from 2:00 am
(Sunday)

SL name squad for Bangladesh ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka announced a 16-member squad on Friday for the upcoming three-match ODI series against Bangladesh, set to begin in Colombo on July 2.

Fast bowler Dilshan Madushanka returned to the squad post-injury while wicketkeeper batter Sadeera Samarawickrama got recalled to the ODI side after around eight months.

All-rounder Milan Rathnayake, who is yet to debut in the format, has also been called up to the ODI side for the first time.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh players who were selected for the 50-over portion of the Sri Lanka tour left for the island nation yesterday.

The first two ODIs will be played in Colombo and the third and final one will be played in Pallekele on July 8.

The ODIs will be followed by a three-match T20I series which will begin in Pallekele on July 10.

SRI LANKA ODI SQUAD:
Charith Asalanka (c), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Nishan Madushka, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kamindu Mendis, Janith Liyanage, Dunith Wellalage, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay, Milan Rathnayake, Dilshan Madushanka, Asitha Fernando, Eshan Malina

SPORTS REPORTER

After the second day of the Colombo Test, Bangladesh coach Phil Simmons had hoped that his batters would "take notes" of how Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka struck a brilliant a century and score big in the second innings.

But his hopes were shattered on Friday, as Bangladesh's struggles with the bat worsened in their second innings, leaving them staring at defeat after the conclusion of the third day's play against Sri Lanka in Colombo.

Bangladesh are trailing by 96 runs and have lost six top-order batters for just 115 runs before stumps, having batted for a little over a session.

Earlier on the day, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam was rewarded for his perseverance with a five-wicket haul but the same resolution was missing in Bangladesh's batting effort.

In the first innings, majority of the batters got starts but could not capitalise and in the second innings, the application of the batters failed to match the merit of the Lankan bowlers.

Bangladesh's highest partnership in the match came during the first innings, when Mushfiqur Rahim and Litton Das both received reprieves from fielders and strung together 67. But on Day 3, having conceded a 211-run lead, the visiting batters could only muster 30 odd partnerships – the highest being a 32-run stand between captain Najmul Hossain



Shanto and Mominkul Haque.

Arguably, Bangladesh did not get the best conditions for batting in either of their innings but the wicket still had enough for batters to persevere.

Anamul Haque Bijoy's tenure as opener appears to be coming to an end after another unspectacular show. Having failed to get off the mark twice this series, he proceeded to try and negotiate Lankan pacers by moving further during his trigger movement.

Even though he managed to hit a

couple of fours and a six in his run-a-ball 19, his unease was clear. He eventually succumbed to a short delivery and the manner of his dismissal showing that his domestic form is not quite meeting international red-ball standards.

Mominul was one of the players alongside Mushfiqur to have prepared well for the tour but having managed starts, he threw his wicket away in his previous three innings in the series. And on Friday, loss of focus saw him get dismissed cheaply to a pretty regular delivery.

Mominul has one fifty in his last 10 innings and questions will be asked about his place in the side.

"Every batter got out after getting set and scoring 25-30 runs. But if there were two hundreds or even two fifties from these players, we would have been in a better position," Taijul remarked at the press conference yesterday.

Application of the batters have remained somewhat ambiguous throughout the series. When they needed to be on the front foot to negotiate the turn, many of the batters went onto the back foot, so, whenever the Lankan spinners produced arm deliveries, they suffered.

While arguably the bowlers let Bangladesh down in the Test, the batting department's failure was the bigger concern as another innings defeat looms.

Messi's PSG reunion, Real Madrid face Juventus

AFP, Philadelphia

From Inter Miami's Lionel Messi facing former side PSG to Real Madrid meeting Juventus and Chelsea taking on Benfica, here we look how the last 16 of the Club World Cup shaped up.

Palmeiras v Botafogo

All four Brazilian representatives reached the last 16, and at least one will be in the quarterfinals, as Palmeiras and Botafogo face each other. Botafogo are the reigning Brazilian and South American champions and beat European champions PSG on the way to qualifying from their group at Atletico Madrid's expense.

Benfica v Chelsea

Enzo Maresca's Chelsea finished second in their group but avoided a strong Bayern Munich side by doing so, pitting them against Benfica. The Portuguese powerhouses edged the German giants in their final group game.

PSG v Inter Miami

Messi's Inter Miami were a

FIXTURES	
Palmeiras v Botafogo	Saturday, June 28 (10:00 PM)
Benfica v Chelsea	Sunday, June 29 (2:00 AM)
PSG v Inter Miami	Sunday, June 29 (10:00 PM)
Flamengo v Bayern	Monday, June 30 (2:00 AM)
Inter Milan v Fluminense	Tuesday, July 1 (1:00 AM)
Manchester City v Al Hilal	Tuesday, July 1 (7:00 AM)
Real Madrid v Juventus	Wednesday, July 2 (1:00 AM)
Dortmund v Monterrey	Wednesday, July 2 (7:00 AM)

surprise package in the group stage, beating Porto on their way to last 16, but a late collapse against Palmeiras meant they finished second and must face the Argentine playmaker's former side, PSG. Champions League winners PSG are expected to vanquish their MLS opponents, but Botafogo beat Luis Enrique's side in the group stage to prove they are not untouchable.

Flamengo v Bayern Munich

Brazilian side Flamengo stunned Chelsea in the group phase to claim top spot, but must overcome the might of Vincent Kompany's Bayern to progress.

Inter Milan v Fluminense

Recent runners-up in the Champions League, Inter ground out wins over Urawa Red Diamonds and River Plate to finish top of their group and will now hope to avoid becoming the latest European team to stumble

against Brazilian opposition.

Manchester City v Al Hilal

City come into the knockout phase in ominous form after being the only team to win all three group games. They have scored 11 times in their last two matches, with a 5-2 destruction of Juventus coming after they put six past Al Ain.

Real Madrid v Juventus

This is a clash between two traditional European titans who have met 21 times before. Real are adapting to life under a new coach in Xabi Alonso, who will hope to have Kylian Mbappe back after the Frenchman missed the group stage with illness.

Borussia Dortmund v Monterrey

Dortmund coach Niko Kovac has not held back on expressing his feelings about having to play in extreme heat at the tournament so he will be happy the game against Mexican side Monterrey is at the covered and air-conditioned Mercedes Benz Stadium.

What to WATCH

Australia
1st Test, Day 4
Live from 8:00 pm
DAZN website and app
Club World Cup

Round of 16
Palmeiras vs Botafogo
Live from 10:00 pm
Chelsea vs Benfica
Live from 2:00 am
(Sunday)

Goalkeepers keeping focus in rainy Yangon

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team braces for AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers amid rain in Myanmar.

Bangladesh are set to play their first match against Bahrain on Sunday. Despite persistent rain in Yangon, Myanmar, the squad has been training with unwavering determination.

The Bangladesh team reached Yangon on June 25 and has been facing continuous rainfall since. Even on Friday, the team trained under wet conditions.

Bangladesh's No. 1 goalkeeper Rupna Chakma shared her thoughts in a message released by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), saying, "We seek prayers from everyone so that we can play well in all three matches. As goalkeepers, our responsibility is to make the saves. We are working hard in training under the guidance of our coach."

Having already won back-to-back SAFF titles and established dominance in South Asia, Bangladesh know that progressing to the elite level of Asian football demands relentless effort and preparation.

Goalkeeping coach Masud Ahmed Uzzal emphasised this point: "I am training Rupna and the other goalkeepers to meet the standards required for the Asian level. I hope we will achieve something good and return home with pride."

Bangladesh have set sights not only on a strong start against Bahrain but also on keeping clean sheets in all three group matches.

'No reason right now to delay BCB election'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh youth and sports advisor Asif Mahmud said on Friday that they are working on the process of amending the constitution of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) but affirmed that for the time being there is no reason to delay the BCB elections scheduled for October.

"We are working on the process of amending the constitution," Asif told reporters on Friday.

"The decentralisation should be done in a way that it causes stakeholders no harm. There should be no harm to those who are contributing to cricket in this process. We want to change the constitution through a constitutional process and after consultation with stakeholders," he added.

The advisor suggested that the timing of the election would depend on the process by which the constitution would be amended.

"It [BCB election] depends on the process, whether it will be earlier or later," he said.

"So far, there is no reason to delay the election. We can't say at this moment what the situation will be in October. But we may talk to ICC if needed... We want to conduct the election on time," he added.

The National Sports Council (NSC) had formed a committee on June 24 to prepare recommendations for updating the constitutions and affiliation policies of federations under the NSC.

Earlier, BCB had formed a constitution reform committee led by director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim during the tenure of the previous BCB president Faruque Ahmed. However, that committee was suspended in January in the face of protest from Dhaka clubs.

Alcaraz faces tough test in Wimbledon treble bid

AGENCIES

Carlos Alcaraz will begin his quest for a third successive Wimbledon title against dangerous Italian Fabio Fognini, as this year's draw, conducted at the All England Club on Friday, promises star-studded showdowns, featuring big names like Jannik Sinner, Alcaraz, and Novak Djokovic.

Men's top seed Sinner, beaten by Alcaraz in the French Open final this month, meets fellow Italian Luca Nardi.

Djokovic, meanwhile, chases an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title, and opens against Alexandre Muller. But unlike previous years, the road appears steeper.

Djokovic, having last won a grand slam all the way back in 2023 at the US Open, hasn't played a single warm-up match on grass this season and has been hampered by recurring injury concerns. While his legacy on these courts is extraordinary, with Djokovic seeking to tie Roger Federer's record of eight Wimbledon singles titles, question marks linger over his physical readiness.

Spaniard Alcaraz, who warmed up for Wimbledon by winning the Queen's Club title, will be wary of the threat posed by the



enigmatic Fognini, although the 38-year-old Italian is not the force he was when he reached ninth in the rankings in 2019. Alcaraz's path also seems tricky as his potential semifinal opponent could be Germany's third seed Alexander Zverev, who plays France's Arthur Rinderknech in his opening match.

As defending men's champion, Alcaraz will open play on Centre Court on Monday, which will feature the bottom half of the men's draw and the top half of the women's draw.

Meanwhile, Sinner's pursuit of a maiden Wimbledon crown could hinge on a heavyweight semifinal clash with seven-time champion Djokovic.

Women's top seed Aryna Sabalenka will open her campaign versus Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine, while defending champion Barbora Krejcikova, the 17th seed who pulled out of the Eastbourne tournament on Thursday with a thigh strain, faces Alexandra Eala of the Philippines.

Women's second seed Coco Gauff's first-round opponent is Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska, while third seed Jessica Pegula, Gauff's likely semifinal opponent, plays Italian qualifier Elisabetta Cocciaretto.

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India bans land import of jute, yarn from Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday banned the imports of certain jute products and woven fabrics from Bangladesh through land ports.

However, the products will be allowed to be imported only through Nhava Sheva seaport in Maharashtra, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said in a notification.

As per the notification, the port restrictions will not apply to Bangladesh exports to Nepal and Bhutan transiting through India. However, re-export of these goods to India from Nepal and Bhutan will not be allowed, it added.

The goods under the fresh port curbs are flax tow and waste (including yarn waste and garnetted stock); jute and other textile bast fibres, raw or retted; jute (excluding flax, true hemp and ramie); single flax yarn; single yarn of jute or of other textile bast fibres; woven fabrics or flax; and unbleached woven fabrics of jute or of other textile bast fibres,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

IMPORT OF 'STOLEN GRAIN' Ukraine calls for EU sanctions on Bangladeshi entities

REUTERS, New Delhi/Dhaka

Ukraine plans to ask the European Union (EU) to sanction Bangladeshi entities it says are importing wheat taken from Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia, after its warnings to Dhaka failed to stop the trade, a top Ukrainian diplomat in South Asia said.

Russian forces have occupied large parts of Ukraine's southern agricultural regions since 2014 and Kyiv has accused Russia of stealing its grain even before the 2022 invasion. Russian officials say there is no theft of grain involved as the territories previously considered part of Ukraine are now part of Russia and will remain so forever.

According to documents provided to Reuters by people familiar with the matter, the Ukraine Embassy in New Delhi sent several letters to Bangladesh's foreign affairs ministry this year, asking them to reject more than 150,000 tonnes of grain allegedly stolen and shipped from Russian port of Kavkaz.

A Bangladeshi food ministry official said Dhaka bars imports from Russia if the origin of the grain is from occupied Ukrainian territory, adding that the country imports no stolen wheat.

Asked about the confidential

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Beijing confirms US trade deal Says Washington to cancel 'series of restrictive measures'

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday confirmed details on the framework of a trade deal with the United States, saying Washington would lift "series of restrictive measures" while Beijing would "review and approve" items under export controls.

A top priority for Washington in talks with Beijing had been ensuring the supply of the rare earths essential for products including electric vehicles, hard drives and national defence equipment.

China, which dominates global production of the elements, began requiring export licences in early April, a move widely viewed as a response to blistering tariffs imposed by Trump.

The two sides agreed after talks in Geneva in May to temporarily lower steep tit-for-tat tariffs on each other's products.

China also committed to easing some non-tariff countermeasures but US officials later accused Beijing of violating the pact and slow-walking export licence approvals for rare earths.

They eventually agreed on a framework to move forward with their Geneva consensus following talks in London this month.

A White House official also told AFP on Thursday that Donald Trump's administration and China had "agreed to an additional understanding for a framework to



Palestinians line up to receive hot meals at a food distribution point in Gaza City yesterday. After more than 20 months of devastating conflict, rights groups warn that Gaza's population of over two million faces famine-like conditions.

PHOTO: AFP

17,000 kids suffer from malnutrition in Gaza

Says aid agency; Israeli strikes kill 72 Palestinians across the enclave in 24 hours

AGENCIES

A director from the aid agency Medical Relief in Gaza said yesterday that the situation in the enclave is deteriorating, with 17,000 children suffering from malnutrition.

"We expect a large number of children to die from malnutrition unless a serious intervention occurs," he said.

"Pressure must be put on the occupation to allow the entry of baby milk and medicine," the official said, adding that "many surgeries have been postponed due to a shortage of staff, medical supplies, and medicine."

At least 72 people have been killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza in the past 24 hours, Al Jazeera reported yesterday, citing hospital sources.

According to Gaza's Government Media Office, at least 549 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces over the past four weeks

while attempting to access humanitarian aid.

An additional 4,066 have been injured at or near aid distribution sites operated by the US and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

This came as Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Thursday became the most prominent European leader to describe the

situation in Gaza as a "genocide", reports AFP.

Meanwhile, the United States said Thursday it has approved its first direct funding for a controversial Israeli-supported relief effort in the Gaza Strip and urged other countries to follow suit.

"We have approved funding for \$30 million to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. And we call on other countries to also support the GHF, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, and its critical work," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott told reporters.

Israel starting in March blocked deliveries of food and other crucial supplies into Gaza for more than two months, leading to warnings of famine in the territory widely flattened by Israeli bombing since the October 7, 2023.

Major aid groups and the United Nations have refused to work with the GHF, saying it violates basic humanitarian principles by coordinating delivery with troops.

Asked about the criticism of the operation, Pigott said the group has distributed 46 million meals so far, which is "absolutely incredible" and "should be applauded."

"From day one, we said we are open to creative solutions that securely provide aid to those in Gaza and protects Israel," Pigott said.

- Surgeries postponed due to shortage of medical supplies
- 549 killed by Israeli forces near aid distribution sites in a month
- US approves \$30m in funding for Israeli-backed aid group

Willing to discuss issues with Dhaka in 'conducive environment'
Says Jaiswal

STAR REPORT

India stands ready to engage with Bangladesh on all issues, provided the environment supports constructive and mutually beneficial dialogue.

Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said this at a press briefing on Thursday.

"India is prepared to engage with Bangladesh in an environment that is conducive to mutually beneficial relations," he said.

Asked if India is trying to renegotiate the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty that expires next year, he pointed to bilateral mechanisms such as Joint River Commission and other committees.

"The two countries have a bilateral mechanism in place which is the Joint Rivers Commission. We also have consultations of concerned state governments and representatives in our internal consultation

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

36 Bangladeshis detained in Malaysia over militancy links

New Straits Times reports citing home ministry statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian police have detained 36 Bangladeshi nationals who were found to be directly "involved in a radical militant movement", reports Malaysian outlet New Straits Times.

Citing a statement issued by Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, the outlet yesterday reported that the planned security operation, which began on April 24, was carried out in three phases in Selangor and Johor.

"Of those detained, five people have been charged under the Offences Relating to Terrorism (Chapter VIA) of the Penal Code in the Shah Alam and Johor Baru Sessions Courts.

"Another 15 people have been issued deportation orders, while 16 others are still under investigation for their involvement in the militant movement," he said in a statement.

New Straits Times quoted Saifuddin as saying that intelligence gathered by the Special Branch revealed that the group had introduced IS-inspired ideology into the country and had formed

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Is Bangladesh going to squander its fresh start?

Asks The Economist article, points to challenges facing interim government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

London-based magazine The Economist in an article has said that in the 11 months since Bangladesh's interim government came to power, political demonstrations have continued, US aid cuts and tariffs are threatening economic growth, and relations with India are in crisis.

"Many politicians seem keener to lash out at enemies than build bridges: Sheikh Hasina's party, the Awami League, has been banned," reads the article published online on Thursday.

Shortly after the fall of the Awami League regime last year, the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus took office, promising to "restore order and rejuvenate democratic institutions" ruined by years of misgovernment, it adds.

"Eleven months on, the going is tough indeed," it observes, posing the question: "Is this country of 174m going to squander its fresh start?"

However, there is good news for the interim government when it comes to the economy, it says. "Bangladesh's growth will slow from 4.2% to 3.9% in the year ending in June, reckons the Asian Development Bank (ADB); not stellar, but miles better than expected last year.

"Remittances are arriving, foreign-exchange reserves have surged, and the annual inflation

The Economist



Hindu devotees across the country celebrated Ratha Yatra (Chariot Festival) yesterday. The idols of Lord Jagannath, along with his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra, were paraded through the streets in colourful chariots. The festival marks the deities' annual journey from the Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple, symbolising a divine visit to their aunt's home. The photo was taken in the Kazir Dewri area of Chattogram city.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

China visit 'successful' Says Fakhru, lauds Xi for its progress

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir has said China's progress under the leadership of President Xi Jinping will not only benefit Bangladesh but also play an important role in maintaining global balance.

He was speaking with reporters at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last night upon his return from China after a five-day visit.

"We are amazed that China, just within a few years, has reached an extremely high level with all its economic, social, and political strength," Fakhru said.

The nine-member BNP delegation landed in Dhaka around 10:40pm. The trip was made at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Calling the visit "extremely successful", Fakhru said the BNP

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3





PHOTOS: TITU DAS

KIRTIPASHA ZAMINDAR PALACE

Fading away in SILENCE

Through foliage, a colossal relic of Bengal's feudal history rises like a spectre, the Kirtipasha Zamindar Bari, its arches cracked, its spires crumbling, and its memory almost lost.

SUSHANTA GHOSH AND MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, from Jhalakathi

Around five kilometres away from Jhalakathi district town, past the buzzing Kirtipasha bazaar and post office to the outskirts where the urban cacophony begins to fade, a colossal relic of Bengal's feudal history rises like a spectre through the foliage - the Kirtipasha Zamindar Palace.

Holding its ground for around the past two centuries, the palace now finds itself on verge of oblivion, with its ornate arches and spires cracked and decayed, wilderness gradually engulfing the estate, and its past memories of grandeur fading away silently.

Yet, to those who opt to wander inside what was once seat of power, culture, and community life in the southern region, its broken walls and forgotten shrines whisper stories of tragedy and unfinished dreams.

Tracing Back The History
Towards the late 18th century, when

Boro Hishya, gave rise to the sprawling mansion that now stands in ruins at the heart of the estate. It still houses an ancient Durga temple, shrines, and a Sati Daha Mandir that was built in memory of a tragic tale.

Meanwhile, Kashiram's six percent share, the Chhoto Hishya, vanished long ago.

Murder, Mourning, Memory
In a story that still stirs villagers to this day, Rajkumar Ray Chowdhury, a scion of the zamindar family, was allegedly poisoned to death. It remains an unsolved mystery - some say the murder was over political rivalry, while others suspect a family feud behind it.

In a final act of devotion, or perhaps despair, Rajkumar's wife chose to die alongside him. The Sati Daha temple built in their honour today stands cloaked in vines and silence.

"It gives me goosebumps every time I stand there. This place is sacred, but it is crumbling due to neglect," says Prof Partha Sharma, a local resident and

earliest formal institutions. Today, the estate also includes the Kalmi Kanda Nabin Chandra Girls' School, a primary school, the Jhalakathi Nursing College, and a nursing training institute, all housed in the former Zamindar quarters.

A union parishad office, post office, and parts of the local marketplace also stand on land once part of the estate.

Among the family's most famous scions were Rohini Ray Chowdhury, a noted historian, and Tapan Raychaudhuri, an Oxford academic and author of *Bangalnama* - which remains

Bangladesh's prime tourist zones.

Each year, particularly during the monsoon, thousands of visitors are drawn to the surrounding floating guava markets. Boats and dinghies carrying guavas drift through canals along the orchards, selling the fruits while offering a uniquely serene experience.

Only a few hundred yards away lies this historical landmark, forlorn and uncared for.

"If the zamindar palace was restored and promoted alongside guava tourism, this area would become a major

need repairs now and then, and we don't have the necessary funds," he added.

In 2017, a team from the Department of Archaeology visited the site, raising hopes among locals. However, no progress has been made since then.

"We had submitted a proposal for conservation, but no final approval came from Dhaka," said Arif Ahmed, assistant curator at the Barishal Divisional Museum.

Such delays are nothing new.

Across Bangladesh, heritage sites often fall prey to jurisdictional



one of the most detailed accounts of Bengal's feudal system, much of it rooted in his own heritage.

In 2011, upon his return to his ancestral home, Tapan was conferred a reception from the villagers.

The Remnants Of A Fading Legacy
Today, even lying in ruins, every brick echoes history of the Zamindar family's fading legacy.

During a recent visit, these correspondents found the palace in a shambles. There are no signboards identifying the site. The rear wings of the house resemble haunted ruins - broken roofs let monsoon water pour into the rooms, while doors and windows have been looted long ago. Massive trees have taken root inside the bedrooms and prayer halls. Vines creep over the outer walls as if the nature is trying to erase the site's memories.

Tapas Karmakar, a local artist, said, "We used to do workshops here, but now it's too overgrown, too dangerous. Tourists get scared. It's heartbreaking."

A Land Of Floating Guava Markets
Kirtipasha is nestled in one of southern

destination," said Joyonto Acharya, a local ward member.

"We've been long been requesting for a tourism centre be established here. Nothing happened yet," he added.

The estate also holds potential to generate revenue through heritage tourism, boat rentals and souvenir sales, which could in turn empower local families while preserving its identity, said locals.

Of Grabbed Land And Legal Limbo

While the estate originally spanned across 25 acres of land, only 12 acres remain under the school authority. Significant chunks of the estate have been illegally occupied by vested groups over the years, while parts of the land were officially handed to the health department and union parishad.

"We've filed complaints, written letters, raised our voices. Still, no one takes action. Meanwhile, the school is trying to operate in half-collapsed buildings," said Sunil Baran Halder, headteacher of Kalmi Kanda Girls' School.

The school serves 350 students amid much struggle. The old structures

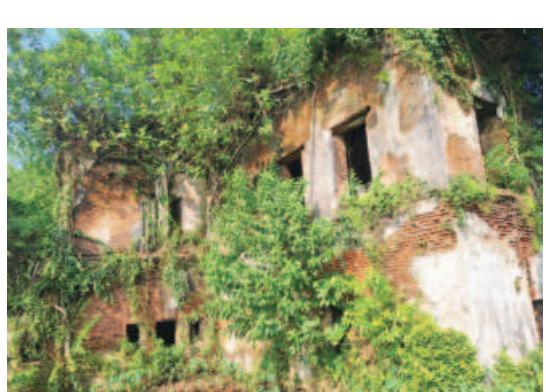
loopholes, especially without a powerful patron or immediate financial incentive, and their history fades through passage of time, said historians.

"Neglecting these estates is like erasing chapters from our national history," said Sirajuddin Ahmed, a veteran historian. "We can't understand the evolution of rural governance or colonial economics without them."

"The Kirtipasha Zamindar Palace isn't just bricks and memories, it's a key to understanding the culture, class, and conflict of southern Bengal," said historian and writer Saiful Ahsan Bulbul.

"This is national heritage. If nothing is done, the entire structure may collapse within years. Are we ready to lose it?" said Gazi Zahid Hossain, convener of the local civic committee.

The guava orchards still bloom along the shimmering canals. Schoolchildren still play in the shadow of pillars built two centuries ago. However, Kirtipasha estate's legacy is on verge of oblivion, unless swift and serious steps are taken to conserve it.



Krishnakumar Sen of Bikrampur was rewarded with a land granted by the Raikathi Raja in this fertile region of Barishal.

Krishnakumar eventually divided the estate among his two sons -- Rajaram Sen and Kashiram Sen -- into what locals still call the "Boro Hishya" and "Chhoto Hishya" -- the greater and lesser shares respectively.

Rajaram's 10 percent share, the

history enthusiast.

A Lasting Influence That Breathed Life To Community

The Zamindar family left behind a lasting influence through its contribution to uplift the local community through generations.

In 1903, the family established the Kirtipasha Prashanna Kumar Secondary School, one of the region's



When buyers tasted the mangoes and asked about the variety, Nofol would chuckle and say, "These are from the tree whose pots the boys kept breaking." Thus, the name Haribhanga—literally meaning "pot-breaking"—took root, spreading by word of mouth until it became legend.

S DILIP ROY

Tucked away beside a mosque in the quiet village of Tekani in Rangpur's Mithapukur upazila stands a tree that once changed the course of an entire region's agricultural history.

This is no ordinary tree—it's the mother tree of the famed Haribhanga mango, a variety known across Bangladesh and abroad for its distinct aroma, rich sweetness, and now, a certified Geographical Indication (GI) status. Planted 76 years ago, this historic mango tree still bears fruit today, continuing to nurture a legacy that began with a humble story.

Locals said, as summer heat ripens the mangoes, the tree stands quietly beside the mosque—its branches weathered, its trunk gnarled, its roots deep. It is a tree, yes—but it is also history. A story still living, still fruiting.

In 1949, local farmer Nofol Uddin Paikar brought home two saplings from a nearby forest. One was stolen, but the other thrived. As the tree began to bloom, he would hang earthen pots filled with water from its branches to protect the buds—an old practice rooted in folk wisdom. But mischievous boys from the village would often break the pots.

When buyers tasted the mangoes and asked about the variety, Nofol would chuckle and say, "These are from the tree whose pots the boys kept breaking." Thus, the name Haribhanga—literally meaning "pot-

The Tree from Which Haribhanga Mango Originated

76-year-old mother tree still bears fruit—and carries history

breaking"—took root, spreading by word of mouth until it became legend.

Nofol Uddin passed away in 1969, but his son Amzad Uddin Paikar, 68, carried on the care of the tree. In the 1980s, grafting began in earnest, and by the 1990s, Haribhanga mangoes had spread across Rangpur and far beyond.

Today, nearly every family in Tekani village owns Haribhanga mango trees—ranging from 200 to 2,000 per household. The mango has transformed the local economy; farmers now cultivate the fruit commercially and

Eighty-five-year old muazzin Momdel Hossain has served the Tekani Jamie Mosque next to the mother tree for over 40 years.

"Every day people come from faraway places to see the tree," he says. "Not just for its fruit—but to hear its story."

Farmer Ansar Ali, 77, reflects on how the mango was born out of a simple joke:

"No one knew about this mango before. Now, it's a national pride. People won't find any other mango variety in our village anymore."

from the original tree, often paying premium prices.

Despite financial hardship, Amzad refuses to cut the tree or sell the land.

"I could clear the land for other crops, but I won't. I've told my son Firoz—this tree must be protected, even after I'm gone." He has officially appealed to the government to preserve the tree.

Data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rangpur shows that Haribhanga mangoes are being cultivated on 2,567 hectares of land across Rangpur,

markets have emerged across Mithapukur and Badarganj upazilas—with Padaganj standing out as the largest and most vibrant among them.

From early morning till evening, the marketplaces are abuzz with activity. Mango growers are bringing their harvests directly to buyers, while traders and customers from across the region, and even other districts, are flocking to secure their share of the beloved fruit.

From permanent fruit shops to makeshift roadside stalls, Haribhanga now dominates every corner of the local fruit scene. Its popularity is not limited to Rangpur alone—boxes are being couriered nationwide and even shipped abroad.

According to farmers, traders, and buyers, both supply and prices of Haribhanga mangoes are satisfactory this season.

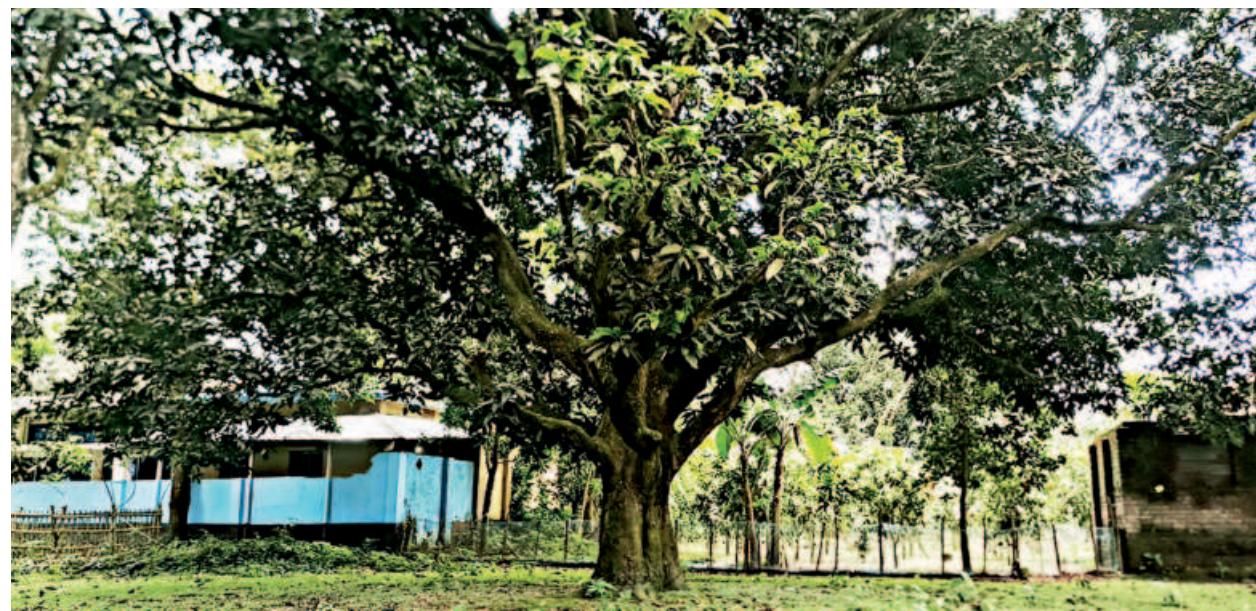
With its round-to-elongated shape, fibreless flesh, firm texture, and excellent shelf life, Haribhanga mango stands apart from other varieties. Thanks to its unique genetic traits, even wrinkled skins don't indicate spoilage. Its appeal is visual, nutritional, and gastronomic.

Last year, Haribhanga was granted Geographical Indication (GI) status, and local orchard owners have already begun receiving export orders from Middle Eastern buyers this season.

Deputy Director (DD) of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rangpur, Sirajul Islam, confirmed that officials have inspected the site. "This tree is the origin of a GI-certified product. We're actively discussing plans for its preservation," he said, adding, "From one forgotten sapling came a name, a fruit, and a legacy that continues to grow."

He added, "Haribhanga originated from Tekani village; today, the mango is cultivated in over 80 villages across Mithapukur and Badarganj, transforming the lives of many farming families."

S Dilip Roy is a journalist at The Daily Star.



The 76-year-old mother tree of Haribhanga mango still stands tall in Tekani village, Rangpur—where the iconic variety first took root.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

have even started nurseries to sell grafted saplings across the country.

The saplings have made their way to India, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia, establishing the Haribhanga name well beyond Bangladesh.

"This tree isn't just a tree—it's part of our identity," says 80-year-old Lutfar Rahman, a local farmer. "I've planted over two thousand trees grafted from this one. We're proud that our village gave birth to something the whole country now cherishes."

Amzad Uddin Paikar, now 68 and in poor health, continues to guard the tree planted by his father. His family land has shrunk to just 50 decimals, of which the mother tree occupies 14.

"This tree once gave us 30-35 maunds of fruit every season," he recalls. "Now it's only 7-8 maunds. It's getting shorter, ageing. But I use no chemicals, and that's why its taste and aroma are still unmatched."

Buyers from Rangpur city still come directly to his home to buy mangoes

at Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, and Nilphamari—an 11-hectare increase from last year. Of this, 1,915 hectares are in Rangpur district alone, with 80 percent of production concentrated in Mithapukur and Badarganj upazilas.

The projected output for the current season stands at 39,006 tonnes, with an estimated market value exceeding Tk 140 crore.

The seasonal mango trade officially kicked off on June 15 this year, and already more than a dozen bustling

SATTAR PAGLA'S LEGACY

The Voice of Haor and Heart

NURUNNABI SHANTO

When the traditional haor song Lechur Baganey ("In the litchi orchard...") was repurposed as an "item song" in a recent Bengali film, it sparked an outpouring of debate among music lovers and across social media platforms. At the heart of these conversations emerged the name of Sattar Pagla—a mystic folk singer from Mohanganj whose life and music embody the essence of the region. To grasp his true importance, one must step into the world he inhabited: his lived philosophy, his raw musical expression, and his conscious choice to remain rooted within the deeper soil of Bangladesh's folk heritage.

Born in the village of Hironpur in Purbadhalia upazila, Netrokona, Sattar Pagla spent his childhood in Lalchapur before settling in Nalbari Char, Mohanganj. Since his passing in 2014, an annual Uras has been held in his honour—a reflection of how deeply his songs, lifestyle, and spiritual aura continue to resonate with his community. By the 1980s and '90s, his songs had already travelled far beyond haor lands—he wasn't 'discovered' by a filmmaker yesterday.

Sattar Pagla's music was an extension of the lives around him. He sang of families and dreams, of poverty and protest, of laughter and longing. His songs echoed through railway stations, train compartments, village gatherings, and festive evenings—not concert halls. His raw, unamplified voice was often accompanied by handmade instruments crafted from leaves, bamboo, or broken toys—a birdlike realism that favoured truth over polish.

Adorned with garlands, bangles, caps, and turbans, he looked every bit the earthy, vibrant spirit of the folk singer. His performances blurred the line between artist and audience, heavy with improvisation and emotional immediacy. Songs like Harveja Re/Ball Khelada tauba kore char... ("Give up playing ball...")

warned the youth against recklessness, layered with philosophical undertones—just as a ball needs air to keep its shape, so too does the body depend on breath.

Music was a family affair. His daughters often joined him in song, while he composed originals and reinterpreted traditional pieces. One such example is Lechur Baganey—a song not just performed but transformed by Sattar

Pagla. Through his lyrical and melodic touch, it became his own. In the haor, his version is the version.

Folk music is not frozen in time—it flows through generations, reshaped by memory and community. It survives not through scripts, but through voices like Sattar Pagla's, who become living bridges between the past and the present. He was not just a singer, but a cultural archetype

reality—milk without a calf, a village's miracle.

Traditional folk music is inherently adaptable. Its lyrics and delivery shift with audience and time. In Dinga Pota Bondh..., Sattar would change names and places mid-performance,

commercialised, was part of a living tradition. His voice, memory, and artistry helped preserve and transform it for the present generation.

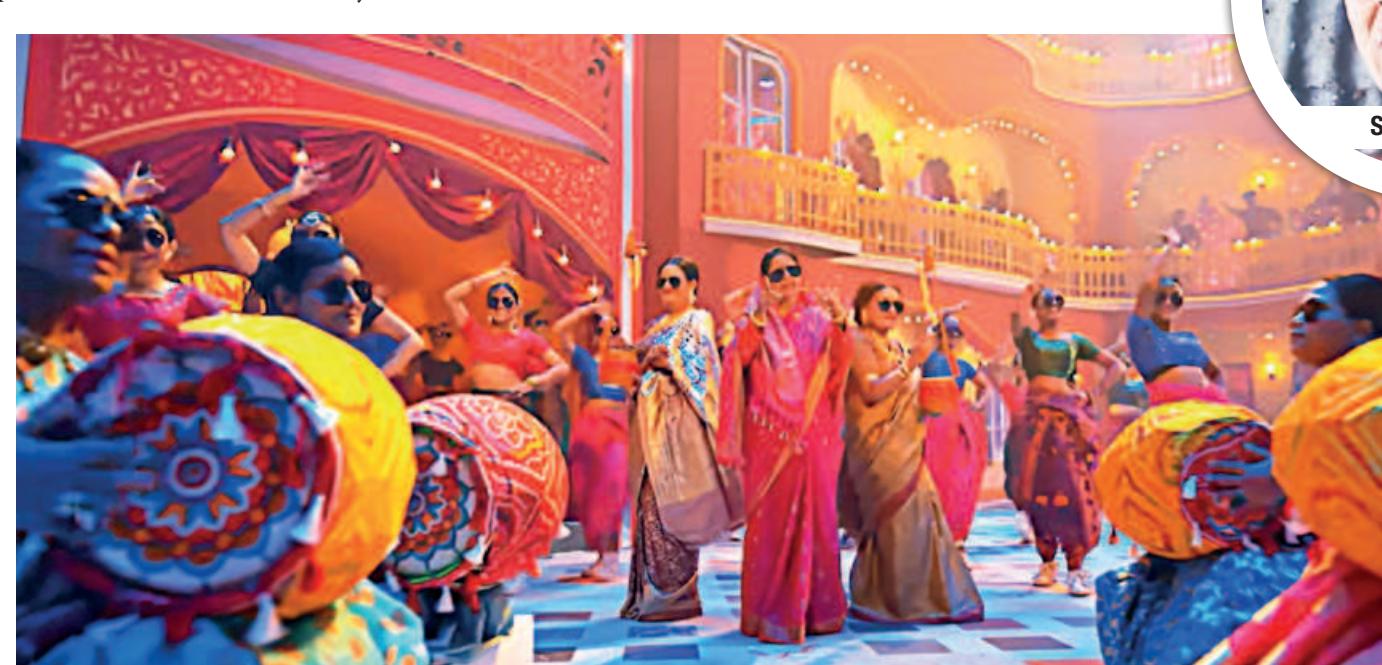
In his later years, with the help of admirers, Sattar attempted to document his songs—including Lechur Baganey—highlighting how central it was to his musical identity. Its recent cinematic adaptation has rekindled interest in his legacy. Like the renewed appreciation for Shah Abdul Karim or Ukil Munshi, this could become a bridge to deeper cultural engagement—if done with respect.

But caution is key. Stripping folk songs of their context and dressing them solely for mass appeal risks reducing them to caricatures. Films like Bitter Bairey illustrate this danger—where an artist loses his spirit when uprooted from his cultural soil.

Handled with care, however, folk traditions can enrich popular culture. The first step is recognising the value of artists like Sattar Pagla—not just as performers, but as guardians of heritage. His music captures the depth of Bangladeshi folk—spiritual, local, lyrical, and layered.

If his philosophy and songs are portrayed with authenticity, they can offer more than entertainment. They can shape a richer, more rooted national identity. In today's age of globalisation and digital saturation, preserving the legacy of Sattar Pagla is not only necessary—it is vital. His music reminds us who we are, and where we come from. Celebrating him is an act of collective self-respect.

Nurunnabi Shanto is a writer of short fiction and a researcher of intangible cultural heritage.



Sattar Pagla's folk song Lechur Baganey ("In the Litchi Orchard...") was recently reimagined as an "item song" in the Bengali film Taandob.

His songs often seemed to drift from the skies over the wetlands—natural, unforced, and filled with feeling. In Kangal Mere Jangal Dile Guna Hoiba Tor ("Killing the poor to plant trellised greens will add to your sin..."), he gave voice to the pain of the powerless.

of the haor region, carrying forward the legacy of Rashid Uddin, Jalal Khan, and Ukil Munshi.

His songs often seemed to drift from the skies over the wetlands—natural, unforced, and filled with feeling. In Kangal Mere Jangal Dile Guna Hoiba Tor ("Killing the poor to plant trellised greens will add to your sin..."), he gave voice to the pain of the powerless. In Shapla Banu, he spun a pastoral dream rooted in myth and

making every rendition feel personal and alive. This participatory spirit turned his songs into communal property, shared by singer and listener alike.

Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice reminds us that traditional music is not merely an art form—it is a social and cultural process, a vessel of memory and identity. Sattar Pagla embodied this philosophy. His creative reinterpretation of Lechur Baganey, though now



Sattar Pagla.

BANGLADESH'S CONSTITUTIONAL JOURNEY REVISITED

A Battleground of People's Power and Political Control

ARAFAT HOSEN KHAN

The Constitution of Bangladesh, meant to reflect the people's will, has frequently been exploited by those in power, eroding democratic ideals. Its flexibility, designed for adaptation, became a tool for successive regimes to consolidate authority.

The Constitution of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972 following the nation's struggle for independence, stands as a testament to the collective aspirations of a people determined to shape their destiny through democratic self-rule and participatory governance. Drafted in the spirit of post-liberation optimism, the Constitution was envisioned as a living document, rooted in the principles of nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism—values that were seen as a response to the oppression and marginalization endured under Pakistani rule. Yet, Bangladesh's constitutional journey has been far from straightforward. As explored in my book *The Constitution of Bangladesh: People, Politics, and Judicial Intervention*, the evolution of this foundational text reveals a dynamic and often contentious interplay between the forces of public participation and the persistent threat of authoritarianism.

This article critically examines the Constitution's evolving history, placing its creation and transformation within the broader socio-political context of Bangladesh. While the initial drafting process emphasised public



that shapes the nation's legal and political path.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FROM LIBERATION TO LEGAL FRAMING

The Constitution of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972, stands as a powerful reflection of the nation's aspirations following a brutal liberation war. Rooted in the ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism, it sought to capture the determination of a people breaking free from years of oppression under colonial rule and Pakistani domination. The framers envisioned a document that not only embodied the hopes of an emancipated nation but also established safeguards to protect and promote those ideals. A parliamentary system was chosen as the governing framework, built on the guarantee of fundamental rights and an independent judiciary—key pillars meant to ensure public participation and prevent authoritarian overreach.

Yet, the ideals of the constitution quickly ran up against the harsh realities of political power struggles. The Fourth Amendment of 1975 became a clear example of this shift, replacing multi-party democracy with a one-party system and concentrating power within an executive presidency. This move not only restricted democratic participation but also silenced dissent, leading to an environment of political repression.

The subsequent Eighth

Amendment in 1988 marked another shift from the constitution's foundational ethos. By declaring a state religion, the amendment weakened the secular character of the state—an act that significantly undermined the inclusive spirit of the Liberation War. This shift, driven more by political expediency than genuine public will, reflected the growing tendency of regimes to manipulate constitutional ideals for short-term political gain. These amendments illustrate the dynamic tension within Bangladesh's constitutional journey: a persistent struggle between the ideals of popular engagement and the encroachment of authoritarian impulses, shaping a legal framework that has fluctuated between democratic promise and autocratic erosion.

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES AND THE PROMISE OF PARTICIPATION

The original Constitution of Bangladesh was crafted with a profound commitment to democracy and the safeguarding of fundamental rights, aiming to foster meaningful civic engagement at its core. It envisioned a participatory polity where the people would not

merely be subjects of governance but proactive participants in shaping it. The inclusion of universal suffrage highlighted this vision, granting every citizen the right to vote and participate in the democratic process regardless of class, gender, or social standing. The protection of freedom of speech and assembly further strengthened the foundation for a vibrant civil society, enabling citizens to express dissent, advocate for their rights, and organize collectively for social and political change.

The judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, was established as a central pillar in upholding these democratic ideals. Empowered to safeguard constitutional guarantees, the Court was designed to act as a vigilant protector of citizens' rights, ensuring that the state remained answerable to the people. This institutional framework was not static; it evolved over time, particularly with the advent of Public Interest Litigation (PIL), which emerged as a revolutionary tool for promoting social justice. PIL broadened the avenues through which marginalized and disenfranchised groups could assert their rights, narrowing the gap between formal legal structures and the lived realities of vulnerable populations. In this context, the judiciary went beyond its conventional role, becoming a potential ally of the people in their quest for justice, a perspective I elaborated in my analysis of the Constitution's changing dynamics.

AMENDMENTS AND THE EROSION OF DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

The Constitution of Bangladesh, meant to reflect the people's will, has frequently been exploited by those in power, eroding democratic ideals. Its flexibility, designed for adaptation, became a tool for successive regimes to consolidate authority. Military rulers, in particular, used amendment to legitimize their rule, bypassing

public participation. The Fifth Amendment (1979) under Ziaur Rahman retroactively legalized martial law. Similarly, Hussain Muhammad Ershad's Eighth Amendment institutionalized religious identity, further polarizing society and straining secular foundations.

These amendments, often passed by parliaments acting as extensions of executive power, lacked public engagement, deepening the disconnect between governance and citizens. This trend culminated in the Fifteenth Amendment (2011), which abolished the caretaker government system. Ostensibly a response to judicial rulings, it was widely

criticized for politicizing elections by allowing the incumbent government to oversee them. This move weakened public trust and raised fears of authoritarian consolidation, highlighting how constitutional amendments have often served power entrenchment rather than democratic progress.

JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS: GUARDIAN OR GADFLY?

The judiciary in Bangladesh has played a paradoxical role in shaping the nation's constitutional landscape, oscillating between defending democracy and unsettling the balance of power. Landmark rulings have reinforced its role in countering authoritarian encroachments. The Supreme Court's verdict in *Anwar Hossain Chowdhury v. Bangladesh* (1989) reaffirmed parliamentary democracy, checking legislative and executive overreach. Similarly, the 2010 ruling striking down the Fifth Amendment sought to undo military rule's constitutional impact, restoring Bangladesh's democratic ethos.

However, judicial assertiveness has sparked controversy. The 2017 nullification of the Sixteenth Amendment, which removed Parliament's power over judicial appointments, was seen as protecting judicial independence but also raised concerns about overreach and politicization. This tension between activism and judicial restraint underscores the risks of undermining separation of powers in the pursuit of constitutional correction.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in Bangladesh has driven social progress, from environmental protection to minority rights, bringing vital issues to judicial attention. However, its benefits remain uneven, largely accessible to urban, educated litigants while rural communities remain excluded.

The judiciary, caught between safeguarding democracy and enabling authoritarian tendencies, plays a pivotal yet conflicted role in Bangladesh's constitutional evolution. This ongoing struggle underscores its influence in shaping democratic engagement while navigating pressures that threaten institutional integrity.

Bangladesh grapples with a stark contrast between its constitutional promises and the realities of democratic decline. Despite guarantees of fundamental rights, restrictive laws stifle free speech, enforced disappearances silence dissent, and institutions serve political interests. While weakening the constitution remains intact, selective enforcement has hollowed its spirit, democratic participation.

CONCLUSION
The Constitution of Bangladesh reflects an ongoing struggle between democratic and power dynamics. Born from the liberation war, it was meant as more than a legal framework—it was a covenant between the state and its people. However, political manipulation, authoritarian tendencies, and institutional decline have repeatedly tested this vision.

Amendments have both strengthened and weakened democracy, while judicial rulings have alternated between safeguarding sovereignty and reinforcing executive control. This tension has created a fragile constitutional order, wavering between inclusion and authoritarianism.

For the Constitution to remain a force for civic empowerment, it must be upheld through active public engagement, transparent governance, and judicial oversight. While the judiciary plays a key role, citizens must also defend democratic principles rooted in the liberation war's ideals. Only through this shared commitment can Bangladesh's constitution resist authoritarianism and foster a truly participatory democracy.

Arafat Hosen Khan, legal scholar and Visiting Senior Fellow at LSE Law School, is the author of *The Constitution of Bangladesh: People, Politics, and Judicial Intervention*.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



PHOTO: IBRAHIM KHALIL IBU

Muslin's revival weaves past into present

A centuries-old fabric once lost to history is being revived -- and with it, a new generation of artisans, mostly women, are weaving their way into the economy

For nearly 200 years, the threads of muslin lay broken. Once draped across Mughal emperors and traded across Europe and the Middle East, Dhakai muslin collapsed under the combined weight of colonial violence, industrial competition, and economic neglect.

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

On a golden summer morning in Rupganj, Narayanganj, the sound of handlooms echoes from tin-roofed sheds nestled amid winding village paths and open fields. Inside, women and men sit in quiet focus, spinning delicate threads. Here, in the heart of what was once Bengal's muslin belt, a fabric that disappeared nearly two centuries ago is being reborn -- and with it, the livelihoods of hundreds of rural artisans.

The Dhakai muslin revival project, formally titled Bangladesh's Golden Heritage: Muslin Yarn Making Technology and Revival of Muslin Fabrics, was launched in 2018 with a budget of Tk 12.1 crore. Its goals were ambitious: to rediscover the lost phutti karpas cotton, retrain weavers in long-forgotten techniques, and re-establish muslin as a symbol of national pride -- and rural prosperity.

What began as a heritage restoration initiative has evolved into a grassroots economic movement, creating employment, empowering women, and anchoring a new kind of rural artisan economy in the legacy of an ancient craft.

For nearly 200 years, the threads of muslin lay broken. Once draped across Mughal emperors and traded across Europe and the Middle East, Dhakai muslin collapsed under the combined

bring back muslin. Four years later, the project was formally launched under the Bangladesh Handloom Board. A research committee was formed, including experts from Bangladesh Textile University, Rajshahi University, BTMC, and the Cotton Development Board.

"We launched this project to revive our heritage and golden past," said Md Ayub Ali, the project's director. "And we worked with that goal in mind."

The first challenge was scientific: to locate and cultivate phutti karpas again. But equally vital was the rediscovery of ultra-fine hand-spinning techniques -- the kind once capable of producing yarn counts above 500, so fine it could pass through a signet ring.

In Chandina and Debidwar in Cumilla, researchers found ageing artisans still producing low-count yarns on foot-powered spindles. Through rigorous training and patient mentoring, many have now reached counts as high as 731, approaching the legendary fineness of historical muslin.

Beyond historical restoration, the project has offered a lifeline to hundreds of rural women who had little or no access to income. Among them is Marjia Begum, 18, from a small village near Narayanganj.

"I had to stop school during the coronavirus lockdown. We just couldn't afford anything anymore," she said. Having studied up to class 9, she faced a

Like Marjia, most of the 327 women trained so far had previously been engaged in unpaid domestic work. "Out of 327 women weavers, 300 were in domestic work, which we do not value economically," said Ayub Ali. "They've come out, taken training, and are now contributing. This is a major achievement in women's empowerment."

The structure of the workday, typically from 7 am to 2 pm, allows women to balance paid work with household responsibilities. Many bring their children to the muslin centres, where they play nearby.

Jayeda Akter Joba, 24, lives near

for hours."

Despite the difficulties, Aasia has completed three full muslin pieces. "It's something our ancestors were famous for. I'm proud to be part of this history."

Yet even pride has its limits. "If this

project continues and our income increases, we'll be more empowered

and the muslin industry will rise again," she said.

That tension -- between cultural legacy and economic viability -- is

exhibition material.

A second phase began in March 2025 and will run until mid-2027. It aims to refine cotton varieties, improve pre-weaving processes, and train private entrepreneurs for future scale-up. "We plan to transfer the project to private hands for long-term commercial production, both nationally and globally," said Ali.

Still, concerns linger over job security. Many workers remain under project-based contracts, with uncertain continuity. During funding gaps or administrative lulls, some artisans have left for garment factories, lured by more stable income. For muslin to flourish, workers say, it needs not just pride but protection.

A FABRIC OF THE FUTURE
Today, muslin is more than a cloth. It is a return on cultural investment, a rediscovery of skill, dignity, and economic value rooted in tradition. The revival of Dhakai muslin illustrates what heritage restoration can achieve when paired with inclusive employment, targeted training, and sustained institutional support.

And in the fingers of women like Marjia, the legacy of Bengal's most exquisite fabric is being re-woven -- not just into cloth, but into lives, livelihoods, and a future stitched with purpose.

While the term "muslin" continues to be used commercially by fashion brands, much of it is in name only, Md Monzur Hossain, professor of Botany at Rajshahi University and a member of the muslin research team, said. "Muslin is still being marketed by various fashion companies, but mostly as a trade name because the word 'muslin' has commercial appeal," he said. "If you use the name, it sells."

The project has achieved symbolic milestones. In March 2021, muslin received geographical indication (GI) certification. In July the same year, it won the national Public Administration Medal (institutional category), recognising its role in reviving a critical piece of Bangladesh's cultural identity.

The Dhaka Muslin House, established in Tarabo along the Shitalakshya River, once a thriving zone of muslin trade, now functions as both a production hub and a living museum.

In the first phase, artisans produced 58 pieces of muslin cloth, including 27 sarees -- some complete, others still in progress, as well as scarves and veils. These pieces are not being sold commercially, but serve as research and

weight of colonial violence, industrial competition, and economic neglect. British policies in the 18th and 19th centuries, including punitive taxation, import substitution, and, according to some historical accounts, deliberate sabotage, brought the muslin industry to its knees. The decline of the Mughal Empire and the disappearance of phutti karpas, the rare cotton plant used in muslin, sealed its fate.

Not until 2014 did serious efforts begin to revive it. That year, the Ministry of Textiles and Jute issued a directive:

future filled with economic uncertainty. "I was not in any job, and I had no skills. I used to just sit at home, worried all the time," she recalled.

Her life changed when she was selected for muslin training under the revival initiative. "At first, I didn't even understand what muslin really was," she said, laughing. "But the trainers were patient. Slowly, I began to love it."

Marjia now earns Tk 550 a day -- enough to support her family and save for the future. "It's not just a job," she said. "This is dignity. I can help my parents. I feel important."

Asia Begum, 31, worked for years as a Jamdani weaver before transitioning to muslin. "Jamdani is easier," she explained. "Muslin is much more delicate. Everything is done by hand -- spinning, weaving -- and it takes a long time. I often get back pain from sitting



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Dhaka Muslin House in Rupganj. "I finished higher secondary school, but after that, I couldn't study further. We often struggled to eat even once a day," she said. Curious about the training, she joined. "I'd read that kings and queens once wore muslin. I never thought I'd help make it."

After six months of training, Joba now earns a stable income. "I support my family with my husband, pay for my children's expenses, and I no longer feel like a burden."

WEAVING SKILL, HISTORY AND DIGNITY

Mohsina Akhter, 33, began her career as a domestic help in Chandina, Cumilla. Today, she is a supervisor and trainer at the Dhaka Muslin House. "It took me two to three years of practice to master the technique," she said. Now earning Tk 16,800 per month, she trains other women and supports her family. "I feel proud, not just for what I make, but for what I pass on."

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echoed by other artisans. Sabuj Mia, a senior weaver, said: "We're proud to bring muslin back, but for us artisans to stay committed, we need fair wages that match the time and effort this work demands. If income grows steadily, muslin won't just survive, it will thrive."

He added that many artisans are the sole breadwinners in their families. "We can't keep going just on pride. We need consistent support and better pay. Then this heritage won't be a burden -- it'll be a future."

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Whether the yarn is 300 count and produced locally or imported -- these are critical considerations," Hossain added. "If these criteria aren't met, it can't be called genuine Dhakai muslin."