



"I think it's close... We think within the next week we're going to get a ceasefire [in Gaza]."

Donald Trump
US president

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NBR STRIKE

Trade thru ports halts on Day 1

Protesters demand removal of chairman, withdrawal of transfer orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Import and export across the country ground to a halt yesterday as National Board of Revenue officials enforced a complete shutdown, defying the government's call to withdraw the strike and threats of disciplinary action.

With export documentation and shipments coming to a halt, exporters are in serious trouble. Failure to ship goods on time could result in significant financial losses.

SYED M TANVIR,
managing director of Pacific Jeans



The strike severely disrupted operations at customs, VAT, and income tax offices, further slowing revenue collection, which is already lagging well behind targets. This shortfall has increased the government's reliance on domestic borrowing.

As trade and business activities suffered, top chambers and major business leaders voiced concern and called for urgent government intervention. At a joint press briefing in Dhaka, representatives from key sectors, including garments, pharmaceuticals, leather, and textiles, urged the Chief Adviser's Office to intervene immediately.

MORE ON B1

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Defying the government's call to withdraw their protest, NBR officials yesterday launched an indefinite work stoppage and staged a "March to NBR" in front of the headquarters in Agargaon, demanding the chairman's removal and an end to what they call "vengeful transfers".

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Govt looks to navy to run New Mooring depot for now

Talks with port authorities on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Ctg

The government is considering appointing the Bangladesh Navy to operate the port's New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) with assistance from the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) for the next six months.

The matter was discussed during a meeting between senior CPA officials and Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (retd) M Shakawat Hossain at the CPA administrative building yesterday.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of several ongoing projects at the port, which was visited by Shakawat earlier in the day.

A senior CPA official, seeking anonymity, confirmed the development and said the CPA had earlier proposed operating the NCT through its own management by floating a direct tender.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Shutdown is another economic peril

Finance ministry should start dialogue with NBR protesters now

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Bangladesh navigates a precarious economic recovery, a total shutdown of the country's customs and tax operations is another disruption the nation cannot afford. Yet that is precisely the reality the economy is now confronting.

Vowing to continue an indefinite work stoppage and stage a protest march on tax offices, the NBR Reform Unity Council has intensified its demands, including the removal of the NBR chairman. As the shutdown enters its second day, port clearances and tax functions remain paralysed, straining already fragile trade flows.

While the grievances voiced by protesting revenue officials stem from frustrations with top down reform efforts, the tactics of crippling the tax machinery threaten to damage the economy.

The current standoff has its roots in a sweeping overhaul of the National Board of Revenue, proposed under an ordinance backed by the International Monetary Fund. The ordinance would split the NBR into two distinct divisions -- one responsible for tax policy and the other for revenue collection -- in a move the government said was aimed at eliminating conflicts of interest between policymaking and implementation.

After weeks of tension within the revenue administration, the government on May 25 announced a clear timeline to finalise amendments to the Revenue Policy and Revenue Administration Ordinance by July 31. The plan, issued through an official press release, pledged consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including those aligned with the protest. The finance ministry announced that the NBR would instead be transformed into a specialised, autonomous agency.

Against this backdrop, the decision by the protesters to go for a full-

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CONSENSUS TALKS

Appointment of caretaker chief to take centre stage

Discussions resume today on upper house

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The National Consensus Commission is likely to propose two options for appointing the chief adviser to caretaker governments: one involving parliament, and the other selecting an individual from among retired chief justices.

It will also invite political parties to propose how chief advisers should be appointed.

This will be part of broader discussions on the framework for an interim or caretaker government. The matter will be discussed as the consensus commission resumes talks with political parties today after a three-day break. This marks the seventh day of the second round of discussions.

Professor Ali Riaz, vice president of the consensus commission, told The Daily Star that the discussions would focus on the formation of an Appointment Committee for Constitutional and Statutory Bodies and the process of electing members to the upper house.

In the coming days, the commission and parties will discuss a wide range of issues, including the framework for interim or caretaker governments, he added.

Asked what the commission recommends as the method for appointing the chief adviser, Prof Riaz said that the Constitution Reform Commission had earlier

proposed that the National Constitutional Council would appoint the chief adviser. The Electoral Reform Commission also made a similar recommendation.

"But we are no longer in that position. We will have to develop a new proposal. We are currently reviewing and evaluating the options we have," he said.

At discussions with the Constitution Reform Commission, citizens expressed support for formation of an All-Party Parliamentary Committee, the members of which will be members from both the treasury and opposition benches. This committee will be involved in the appointment of the chief adviser.

"We will put this on the table during the discussions," he said.

Prof Riaz also mentioned that some political parties, during the first round of talks, favoured following the process outlined in the 13th amendment for appointing the chief adviser. That option will also be part of the discussions.

There are opinions against involving the judiciary in the process, he said. "We will take that into consideration as well."

Almost all political parties have supported the revival of the caretaker government system in the first round of discussions.

The system of a caretaker government was introduced after the fall of the Ershad regime in 1990.

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Nearly 1 lakh Palestinians killed in Gaza

Reports Israeli daily Haaretz

ANADOLU AJANSI, Jerusalem/Istanbul

Nearly 100,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, representing about 4 percent of the territory's population, said the Israeli daily Haaretz.

The death toll contradicts the number of fatalities given by Gaza's Health Ministry, which stood at over 56,300 since October 2023.

Haaretz on Friday said in addition to the high Palestinian deaths from Israeli attacks, many people also died from the indirect effects of the war such as hunger, cold and diseases amid a collapse of the health system in Gaza.

The daily said while Israeli spokespersons, journalists and influencers reject with knee-jerk disgust the death toll announced by Gaza's Health Ministry as exaggerated, more and more international experts "are stating that not only is this list, with all the horror it embodies, reliable – but that it may even be very conservative in relation to reality."

It cited a study conducted by Professor Michael Spagat, an economist at Holloway College at the University of London, a world-class expert on mortality in violent conflicts, about deaths in Gaza.

The study surveyed 2,000 households in the Palestinian enclave, comprising almost 10,000 people.

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Illegal shops and parked vehicles clog the entrance to the capital's Dhaka Medical College Hospital, causing severe public inconvenience. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Umama Fatema quits SAD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Umama Fatema, former spokesperson of the Students Against Discrimination, has officially stepped down from the platform, citing internal betrayal, political interference, and smear campaigns.

In a Facebook post yesterday, she wrote that her formal journey with the movement ended with its central council held on Wednesday.

"After the formation of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Congratulations!

Aziz Al Kaiser

Chairman of Partex Star Group,
Chairman of City Bank PLC

on being elected as the
Chairman of the Board of Trustees of North South University
and
The North South Foundation for Education and Research



We, the Partex Group
wish him and North South University great success together

PARTEX GROUP

Iran extends access to airspace for overflights after ceasefire

AFP, Tehran

Iran has expanded access to its airspace for international overflights following a ceasefire with Israel, though flight restrictions remain in place across much of the country, an official said yesterday.

"In addition to the eastern half of the country's airspace being available for domestic, international and overflight operations, the airspace over the central and western parts of the country has now also been opened only for international overflights," Majid Akhavan, spokesman for the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, said in a statement carried by the IRNA state news agency.

Flights to and from airports in the north, south and west of the country, including Tehran's Mehrabad and Imam Khomeini international airports, remained suspended, according to Akhavan.

"All fellow citizens are requested not to go to airports located in the northern, southern and western regions of the country," he said, urging travellers to follow updates through official sources only.



Palestinians look at the sand covering their tents and vehicles after the Israeli army targeted the tents of displaced people in the northern Al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City yesterday. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: AFP

Nearly 1 lakh

FROM PAGE 1

"They concluded that, as of January 2025, some 75,200 people died a violent death in Gaza during the war, the vast majority caused by Israeli munitions," it said.

According to the survey's data, 56% of those killed have been either children up to the age of 18 or women.

"That's an exceptional figure when compared with almost every other conflict since World War II," Haaretz said.

Spagat said the survey's data positions the Gaza war "as one of the bloodiest conflicts of the 21st century."

"Even if the overall number of war victims in Syria, Ukraine, and Sudan is higher in each case, Gaza is apparently in first place in terms of the ratio of combatants to noncombatants killed, as well as in terms of rate of death relative to population size."

Data also show that the proportion of women and children killed via a violent death in Gaza is more than double the proportion in almost every other recent conflict, including Kosovo (20 percent), northern Ethiopia (9 percent), Syria (20 percent), and Sudan (23 percent).

"I think we're probably at something like 4 percent of the population killed," Spagat said. "I'm not sure that there's another case in the 21st century that's reached that high."

The Israeli army has pursued a brutal offensive against Gaza since October 2023, despite international calls for a ceasefire.

Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

Govt looks

FROM PAGE 1

During the meeting, the adviser conveyed the government's decision to appoint the Bangladesh Navy through direct tender to operate the terminal. The official added that the Navy will form a workforce to run the NCT.

The government's decision comes amid widespread protests and criticism over the government's earlier plan to lease out the NCT to UAE-based DP World.

On June 18, the shipping ministry decided in principle that the terminal would be operated by the CPA's own management, as the current contract with private operator Saif Powertec Ltd expires on July 6.

CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk, however, said they have yet to receive any written instruction from the ministry in this regard.

The final decision about NCT's operation will be made soon, after which the media will be informed," he said.

Following the June 18 meeting, the CPA on June 25 floated an open tender to procure tractor-trailers with prime movers as part of preparations to operate the terminal.

Debate over leasing out the terminal to a foreign operator intensified after talks progressed between the interim government and DP World regarding a potential agreement. These discussions initially began under the previous Awami League government.

A coalition of left-leaning parties and organisations had a two-day road march from Dhaka to Chattogram, pressing home four demands, including the withdrawal of the government's decision to hand over NCT operations to DP World. The march concluded yesterday.

Trade thru ports halts on Day 1

FROM PAGE 1

They warned that the garment sector alone had incurred over \$230 million in losses due to the disruption. Delays in customs clearance at seaports, airports, and land ports have stalled both the import of raw materials and the export of finished goods.

Exporters are now under pressure from international buyers. Many said the delay would result in them being forced to ship by air.

Rising air shipment costs and the exposure of export goods to damage from inclement weather at ports are compounding the crisis, they said.

Despite the turmoil, the government did not issue any new messages to protesters yesterday.

Multiple attempts by this correspondent to contact Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed for comments were unsuccessful.

Along with the shutdown, the NBR Reform Unity Council, a platform of protesting officials, held their "March to NBR" programme. The council also urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to step in, saying the crisis over NBR reforms must be resolved "in the greater interest of the state".

Their demands include the removal of NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan and the withdrawal of transfer orders of five officials involved in earlier protests over an ordinance to abolish the NBR and to separate the tax policy from revenue collection.

After weeks of tension within the revenue administration, the government on May 25 said amendments to the ordinance would be finalised by July 31. The plan, issued through an official press release, pledged consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including the protesters. The finance ministry announced that the NBR would instead be transformed into a specialised, autonomous agency.

But alleged non-cooperation of the NBR chairman and the transfers of officials triggered a fresh wave of protest after Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

Due to the work stoppage, customs valuation of goods has been suspended at ports, bringing trade to a standstill.

At Chattogram Custom House, the epicentre of the country's trade processing, operations remained suspended amid the indefinite

shutdown. According to our Chattogram correspondent, service seekers faced immense suffering, and apparel exporters feared severe losses from missed shipment deadlines.

During a visit to the custom house, most offices were found deserted. Procedures for both import clearance and export shipments were suspended. Container handling at Chattogram Port came to a near standstill, with all customs activities, including assessment, physical examination, and sample verification, halted.

The port typically handles around 5,000 consignments daily. However, not a single consignment was cleared yesterday. Only export shipments that had completed assessment before the strike were allowed to be loaded onto vessels. Cleared import consignments, however, remained stuck as port gate customs officials refused to carry out mandatory scanning and inspection procedures.

Jewel Ahmed, operations manager at Nira Fashion, told The Daily Star, "A shipment of 12 containers carrying T-shirts was scheduled to depart for Singapore today [Saturday]. But now, we don't know how long this shutdown will last."

Syed M Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans, said that while import clearance had been suspended in recent days, export activities were continuing before the shutdown.

"With export documentation and shipments coming to a halt, exporters are in serious trouble. Failure to ship goods on time could result in significant financial losses," he said.

Several importers and exporters, speaking anonymously, expressed frustration with the government and customs officials. They said the dispute over NBR reforms should be resolved through dialogue, not disruption.

"This kind of shutdown won't solve anything. Eventually, a resolution will come, but in the meantime, businesses are suffering the most," said one exporter.

"Importers can't clear their goods, and exporters are missing deadlines. These delays are causing significant financial losses. And no one will be exempt from paying port

demurrage," another trader added.

Mohammed Abul Hossain, proprietor of vegetable exporter Lee Enterprise, said 50-60 tonnes of fresh produce meant for Europe were ruined at Dhaka airport due to customs officers' strike.

"We couldn't get clearance. The entire shipment is now spoilt. We won't be able to export," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Aminul Haque, vice president of the Benapole Import-Export Association, said the strike "practically brought the entire port to a halt" and warned of a looming crisis for the national economy unless swift action is taken, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Importer Al Mamun said, "With the customs cargo section closed, Indian port users couldn't complete manifest entries or issue Car Passes."

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent reported a similar situation at Akhaura Land Port.

Trader Hasibul Hasan said no new consignments could be cleared for India due to the strike. Only pre-cleared shipments were dispatched.

Yesterday morning, 26 trucks crossed into India's Tripura state. Of these, 23 carried 92 tonnes of frozen fish, while three carried 66 tonnes of flour, all cleared on Friday.

Trade at Burimari Land Port in Lalmonirhat and Sonahat Land Port in Kurigram also stopped. Humayun Sawdagar, a trader at Burimari, said eight of his trucks were stranded at India's Changrabandha port.

"If I can't bring in the goods in time, I'll suffer huge losses," he said, adding that several export trucks were also stuck on the Bangladesh side.

At a press briefing yesterday, Hasan Muhammad Tarek Rikabd, president of the protesters' council, said the "March to NBR" would continue nationwide today. He described the movement as non-political and driven by the spontaneous participation of revenue officials, aiming to serve "the people and the country".

"We're ready to meet the finance adviser any time to resolve the crisis," he said, reiterating demands for structural reform of the revenue system and removal of the NBR chairman.

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Umama Fatema quits SAD

FROM PAGE 1

the political party named NCP, I chose to work under this banner out of a sense of responsibility to complete the unfinished work of the July uprising. But if this banner operated independently beyond party lines and prescriptions, it would threaten the political future of many," she added.

She alleged that attempts were made to sideline her for not aligning with party directives and that smear campaigns were launched by former allies.

"So I was subjected to immense pressure, both online and offline, to stop working under this banner. I took it as a challenge and tried to keep the banner active out of goodwill. I have nothing more to say about what followed.

"These so-called comrades treat people like tissue paper -- discarding them as soon as they are no longer needed," she wrote.

"After witnessing a major event like the July uprising, seeing everything collapse in front of my eyes was heartbreaking.

"After that, I discussed the matter with my friends and well-wishers. Then I decided to step away from

Tarique greets Yunus on his 85th birthday

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday extended his birthday greetings to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on the occasion of his 85th birthday.

On behalf of Tarique, BNP chairperson's personal secretary ABM Abdus Sattar handed over a birthday cake and a bouquet to the CA's official residence Jamuna at 6:15pm, said a BNP press release.



The CA's Military Secretary Major General Ferdous Hasan Salim received the gifts on behalf of Yunus.

"Today marks the 85th birthday of Dr Muhammad Yunus. On this occasion, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman extended his greetings, wishing the chief adviser good health and a long life," the release added.

The party also said the chief adviser expressed his sincere gratitude to Tarique for the warm birthday wishes.

this banner. Though I didn't resign formally, I effectively cut ties with the platform around April-May and focused on the 'Empowering Our Fighters' initiative," she added.

Umama further said she voted in the recent council, hoping for positive change but was disheartened by irregularities.

"The voter list was extremely limited, comprising mostly members of one political group ... I truly wanted to see the platform succeed. But it became clear that with the way snakes have coiled themselves around it, any positive outcome is impossible," she said.

"Some candidates did have genuine intentions, and I tried to support them. But later that night, I saw that someone who hadn't even contested had been made a council member. The same old authoritarianism, posturing, and inner circle politics continue," she added.

In the council, a new committee was formed with Rashidul Islam Rifat elected as president, Md Enamul Hasan as general secretary, Muinul Islam as organisational secretary, and Cynthia Jaheen Ayesha as spokesperson.

Shutdown is another economic peril

FROM PAGE 1

scale shutdown well before the expiry of that deadline appears, at best, premature. Concerns over exclusion from dialogue are logical, but the shutdown of the revenue system is not.

This raises questions in government and business circles about the timing and intent of the protest. With formal discussions now scheduled to begin on July 1, this disruption is unnecessary.

That said, the government also bears responsibility for letting the crisis fester. Despite repeated calls for dialogue, the finance ministry has so far chosen to engage only with senior NBR leadership, sidelining protest leaders. This one-sided approach has deepened mistrust and reinforced perceptions that the reform process is being driven by control rather than consensus.

What began as a policy dispute is now increasingly viewed as a clash of egos between a defiant bloc of protesters and the NBR's top leadership and the finance ministry. Personal mistrust and institutional battles are now influencing outcomes.

To restore normalcy and protect the broader economy, it would be prudent for the finance ministry to initiate direct engagement with the Reform Unity Council immediately. That means sitting down with those on the front lines of the protest, hearing their concerns in good faith, and working toward a negotiated settlement. Dialogue is not a concession -- it is the foundation of any durable reform.

The protesters argue that they were excluded from the government's June 19 committee tasked with drafting revisions to the ordinance, despite being the officials expected

to implement those changes. They also cite public remarks by the NBR chairman questioning the Council's legitimacy and point to the abrupt transfers of five senior officials on June 21 and 22 as retaliatory.

As the shutdown continues, businesses are feeling the pressure. Export shipments are stalled, goods remain stranded at ports, and previously cleared consignments cannot move due to suspended customs scans.

Protesters say they are ready to meet with the finance adviser "at any time". The upcoming July 1 meeting offers a pathway to resolution. But it is also a reminder that governance disputes, no matter how deep, require patience and respect for institutional process. The Reform Unity Council's inclusion in that discussion is a positive development.

Still, the cost of reaching this point -- a nationwide shutdown of customs and tax operations, disrupted trade, and shaken investor confidence -- could have been avoided had both sides shown a greater willingness to engage earlier and more constructively.

Both sides must now step back from the brink.

Protesters need to recognise that halting core state functions indefinitely undermines the economy and the very public institution they work for.

For its part, the government should move swiftly to de-escalate. The path forward lies not in punitive transfers or continued exclusion of dissenting voices, but in principled dialogue and institutional inclusion.

There is no reason for that conversation to wait until July 1. With political will, it can -- and should -- begin now.

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CA-CEC MEET
BNP wants
an election
date: Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka



BNP expects a specific date for the national election following the meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin, said party Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday.

"We believe that the expectations and aspirations of the people will be reflected by setting the election date and the announcement of the schedule," said the BNP leader.

He was talking to reporters after visiting the China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre, the venue for BNP's inaugural programme of a 36-day series of events to mark the first anniversary of the July-August mass

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Two Covid deaths, one dengue fatality in 24 hours
STAR REPORT

At least two people have died from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours till 9:00am yesterday, while seven new infections were reported during the same period, according to the DGHS.

A total of 181 samples were tested for the virus in that period, bringing the number of confirmed Covid-related deaths to 22 since January.

After months of low activity, a Covid-related death was first reported on June 5, prompting the health authorities to reissue precautionary guidelines, including the use of face masks in public spaces.

Meanwhile, one person died of dengue in the last 24 hours till 9:00am yesterday, with 262 admitted to hospitals, according to DGHS data.



Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority workers measure the depth of the Buriganga to determine if any measures have to be taken to maintain the ideal level of water in the river. The structure has been in place for decades to check the water level at this point. The photo was taken from near the Kamrangirchar area of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Govt to regulate
battery-run rickshawsBuet-designed vehicles to roll out in
Paltan, Dhanmondi, Uttara from Aug

PHOTO: COLLECTED

AT A GLANCE

- Maximum speed 30 kmh
- Drivers' license mandatory
- Five-year lifespan set
- Pilot run begins in Aug in Paltan, Dhanmondi, Uttara

As part of the initial implementation, the government has approved a prototype

e-rickshaw developed by Buet. Training for 300 drivers began this week, and a pilot launch of the new rickshaws is planned for August in Paltan, Dhanmondi, and Uttara.

The draft rules stipulate that e-rickshaw drivers must be at least 18 years old, literate in Bangla, and undergo health screening at designated government hospitals. Training on traffic laws, road safety, and battery maintenance will be compulsory. Licences will require renewal every five years, subject to a driving test.

Each rickshaw's speed will be capped at 30 kmh in school zones with mandatory installation of speed regulators. Vehicle dimensions must not exceed 250cm in length and 110cm in width, and passenger

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China keen to set up industries at Mongla
Says press secretary

UNB, Khulna

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday said the government has taken comprehensive plans for the development of Mongla Port as China has shown interest in setting up industries in the area.

"China has expressed interest in setting up industries at Mongla Port... the current interim government is working for the development of Khulna and the entire region," he said while exchanging views with journalists at the Khulna Deputy Commissioner's office.

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JU allocates only 2.85% for research

Okays Tk 323cr budget for 2025-26

SAKIB AHMED

The Senate of Jahangirnagar University has approved an annual budget of Tk 323.35 crore for the 2025-26 fiscal year, with minimal allocations for research and healthcare services.

JU Treasurer Prof Dr M Abdur Rab presented the budget during the 42nd annual Senate meeting held yesterday afternoon.

An analysis shows that student welfare, research, and healthcare received relatively low priority in the budget.

The overall size of this fiscal's budget has been Tk 14.58 crore less compared to Tk 337.93 crore in the last fiscal.

The highest allocation of Tk 221 crore (68.23 percent) has been earmarked for salaries, allowances, and pensions for university teachers, officials, and employees.

The second-highest allocation of Tk 78.08 crore (24.15 percent) has been made for goods and services, which include general ancillary costs, maintenance and repairs.

Other allocations include miscellaneous expenditures Tk 14.59 crore (4.63 percent),

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OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH
Govt to expand skills training in all 64 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday announced plans to expand the Skill-Focused Literacy for Out-of-School Adolescents (SKILFO) project nationwide, following the successful completion of its pilot phase in Cox's Bazar.

"The pilot has shown that a skills-based, non-formal education can change lives. We want to take this model to all 64 districts in future," said Prof Bidhan Ranjan Roy Podder, adviser to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, at an event jointly organised by his ministry and Unicef at a hotel in the capital.

Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) Assistant Director SM Shamim Ahsan presented the project's key findings, saying that it has already reached 7,000 adolescents in Cox's Bazar. The next phase will see SKILFO rolled out in 16 districts, with a target of bringing over one lakh out-of-school and NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) adolescents under its coverage.

According to official data, around 2.2 million people enter the labour market annually, but only

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Demonstrators as part of the 'Dhaka-Chittagong Road March', organised by a coalition of left-leaning parties, gather at the port city's Customs intersection yesterday afternoon, demanding an end to foreign control over the country's seaports and other strategic sectors. The coalition resumed its protest programme in the morning for a second consecutive day, staging rallies and processions.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

JULY UPRISING
Jamaat announces 39-day event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will hold various programmes from July 1 to August 8, marking the first anniversary of July 1 uprising.

The announcement came from Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar at a press conference at the party's Moghbazar office in Dhaka yesterday.

On July 1, prayers will be offered at all party branches for the martyred and injured; from July 2 to 4, food will be distributed among the destitute; from July 8 to 15, Jamaat leaders will meet the families of victims.

On July 16, Jamaat will hold a discussion and prayer session in Rangpur in memory of Shaheed Abu Sayed.

On July 19, the party

ameer will attend a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

From July 20 to 24, seminars and symposiums will be held; from July 25 to 28, documentary

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Abul Hussain's
death anniv

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The 11th
death
anniversary
of renowned
poet Abul
Hussain is being observed
today, said a press release.

Hussain's works reflect his lifelong search to find a philosophical and religious position that allows him to analyse and try to understand individual lives in relation to society.

He also spoke about the political instability and economic uncertainty. Hussain authored 25 books.

Naba Basanta was his first book of poetry. Birash Sanglap (1969), Duswpana Te Duswpane (1985), Ekhono Shomoy Achhey (1997), Aar Kirshen Opekkha (2000), Kaler Khatae (2008), and Selected Poems by Abul Hussain (1986) are some of his other notable works.

Born in Khulna on August 15, 1922, he was educated at Kolkata Presidency College and Kolkata University in Economics.

For more than 30 years, he was a civil servant in national and international organisations, at home and abroad.

Hussain was honoured with many awards -- including Ekushey Padak, Bangla Academy Award and Padabali Award.

Khulna bypass road unprepared for over 15yrs



DIPANKAR ROY

The 2.37-kilometre Sheikh Abu Naser Bypass Road in Khulna city, stretching from Sheikh Abu Naser Specialised Hospital to the City Bypass intersection, has been in a state of utter disrepair for over 15 years.

Thousands of people from Beel Pabla, Aronggata, Dumuria, Khalishpur, Daulatpur, and Boyra areas use the road daily. It is also a gateway for more than 400 oil tankers transporting fuel from the state-owned Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna depots in Khalishpur.

Despite this, no maintenance work has been carried out since the road was constructed in the 2008-09 fiscal year under a Tk 14 crore project of the Khulna Development Authority.

Over the years, the road's bitumen surface has eroded

entirely, leaving loose bricks exposed. Countless small and large potholes have developed along the stretch, making vehicular movement highly risky. During the dry season, dust blankets the area, while in the monsoon, the road becomes muddy with puddles forming in the potholes.

"Every year we expect that the road will be repaired, but it never happens," said Mahamuda Khatun, a local.

Locals voluntarily repaired the road two years ago using donated bricks and sand, but the initiative provided only short-term relief.

"We've repeatedly appealed to the authorities concerned to repair the road, but no one responded," said Hemayet Hossain, former president of Madinabagh Janakalyan Samity.

Several important establishments, including Khulna

Specialised Hospital, BNS School and College, Naval Admission Centre, Sector Office of Border Guard Bangladesh, KMP Police Lines, and the Tax Office, are located on the eastern side of the road.

Contacted, KDA Executive Engineer Montasir Mamun said, "KDA had built the road, but later received no budget for its maintenance. We requested both the Khulna City Corporation and the Local Government Engineering Department in 2010 and again in 2014 to take over its responsibility, but nothing happened."

KCC Chief Engineer Md Moshiuzzaman said they were working to repair 1.5 kilometres of the total 2.37-kilometre road since April 13 this year at a cost of Tk 19.58 crore.

"The work is expected to be completed by October 31," he added.

JU allocates only 2.85% for research

FROM PAGE 3

research and innovation Tk 9.23 crore (2.85 percent), and primary medical services Tk 45 lakh (0.14 percent). A special grant of Tk 4.40 lakh has been allocated for purchasing medicines and pathology kits.

"The research budget is definitely inadequate... we needed at least 5 percent of the total budget to ensure quality research and innovation," said Prof Md Monwar Hossain, director of the Wazed Miah Science Research Centre.

"We require at least 80 lakh takas annually for medicine and dressing equipment alone, and 75 lakh takas more to sustain pathology services," said Dr Shamshur Rahman, JU's chief medical officer.

Contacted, JU Pro Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof Dr Sohel Ahmed acknowledged the inadequate allocations.

"Yes, the research budget is inadequate for the growing number of faculty and researchers, but the allocation is set by the relevant ministry and the University Grants Commission. Due to our heavy engagements, we couldn't communicate effectively with the authorities this time. Still, we tried our best and hope to secure better funding in the next fiscal year," he said.

"The medical centre has not been able to utilise its existing resources effectively," he added.

The projected income

for the FY2025-26 budget includes Tk 279.35 crore in grants from the UGC, while Tk 44 crore from internal revenue sources such as student fees, admission form sales, and other service charges.

Meanwhile, JU's accumulated deficit is expected to reach Tk 100.37 crore by the end of FY 2025-26.

Jamaat

FROM PAGE 3

screenings and cultural programmes will take place; and on July 29 and 30, discussion meetings will be held by women and female students.

Besides, a seminar will be held on August 1, a photo exhibition from August 1 to 3, nationwide processions on August 5, and discussions from August 6 to 8.

PRAYER TIMING JUNE 29

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-17
JAMAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-57 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

BNP wants an election

FROM PAGE 3

uprising, scheduled to begin on July 1.

When asked by a journalist whether the BNP expects a specific election date to be announced after the meeting between the chief adviser and the CEC, Rizvi replied, "We certainly hope so."

Earlier on Thursday, CEC Nasir paid a courtesy call on Yunus at the latter's residence, Jamuna.

On Friday, BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed urged both the CA and the CEC to disclose what they discussed.

He said the party assumed that Yunus asked the Election Commission to prepare for the parliamentary polls in the week before the start of Ramadan in February 2026, as discussed in the meeting between the chief adviser and BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman during their meeting in London earlier in June.

"They [government] will have to hold the election after the necessary reforms, and it must be held within a logical time," he said.

Rizvi voiced concerns that the nation is facing economic and social crises, with various forms of mob violence emerging.

"People will be able to cast their votes according to their own choice," he added.

Regarding closed jute mills in Khulna, Shafiqul said, "The government will nationalise those closed jute mills where schools are situated."

He expressed hope that Khulna will turn around and see significant progress within the next decade.

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He expressed hope that Khulna will turn around and see significant progress within the next decade.

China keen to set up

FROM PAGE 3
Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder and Senior Assistant Press Secretary Foyez Ahmed were also present.

Speaking about the upcoming national election, the press secretary said it will be the most free, fair, peaceful, neutral and participatory election in Bangladesh's history.

"They [government] will have to hold the election after the necessary reforms, and it must be held within a logical time," he said.

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Govt to regulate

FROM PAGE 3

capacity is limited to two, excluding the driver.

Registration with city corporations will be compulsory, with each vehicle assigned a unique number and plate. Fitness certificates must be renewed every two years.

While insurance will not be mandatory for vehicle registration, personal accident insurance for drivers will be compulsory. City corporations will be responsible for monitoring insurance validity.

The operational lifespan of each rickshaw has been fixed at five years. The government also plans to install GPS-based vehicle tracking systems in the future.

Rickshaws will be restricted to city corporation and traffic police-approved routes. Operation on highways, expressways, bus lanes, footpaths, diplomatic enclaves, and other sensitive areas will be strictly prohibited. Use of mobile phones while driving will be a punishable offence. In the event of a hit-and-run, the driver's licence will be permanently revoked.

City corporations and traffic police will jointly determine the maximum number of rickshaws allowed in each zone.

Designated parking and charging stations will be set up in each ward, with an emphasis on solar-powered charging. A colour-coding system will be introduced to help monitor operations by area. Financial institutions will offer low-interest loans to support drivers and

owners.

To oversee implementation, a technical committee has been formed, headed by an additional secretary from the Urban Development Division. Members include representatives from BRTA, Buet, BSTI, MIST, and the city corporations.

The final draft of the regulation was approved in a recent meeting chaired by the local government adviser.

"This move will bring dignity to rickshaw drivers," said LGRD Adviser Md Mahmud.

"Once they are registered and trained, no one can call them illegal. We will ensure that they are protected from extortion and harassment."

Speaking at an event at the DNCC headquarters in Gulshan yesterday, he said Buet-designed battery-run rickshaws will begin operating in Dhaka's Paltan, Dhanmondi, and Uttara areas from August.

DNCC Administrator Mohammad Azaz said, "We aim to train and license one lakh auto rickshaw drivers under this initiative."

He said the old battery rickshaws would be replaced by the new ones gradually.

Transport expert Prof Md Shamsul Hoque, however, expressed doubt about the plan's efficacy.

"Regulating small vehicles is an absurd idea," he said. "No policy or guideline can truly control them. I would have more faith in this initiative if the government had shown at least one successful example before."

Govt to expand

FROM PAGE 3

1.9 percent receive formal skills training.

Unicef Representative in Bangladesh Rana Flowers said, "The SKILFO pilot proves that when out-of-school youth get the right training and support, they can thrive and contribute to society."

Rubaiya Mursheed, assistant professor of Dhaka University's Economics department, said SKILFO's flexible delivery, market alignment, and strong engagement with employers and communities were key to its success.

According to BNFE, 83.1

percent of participating girls and 81.3 percent of boys have already secured placements or income opportunities.

KM Kabirul Islam,

secretary of Technical and Madrasah Education Division, recommended including homeless children and exploring integration of Qawmi Madrasa students, alongside supporting graduates financially and enriching their entrepreneurship capabilities.

Md Shakhawat Hossain, secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education presided over the programme.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Chittagong Eye Infirmary and Training Complex a renowned tertiary eye care institution in Chattogram, is seeking a competent "Financial Consultant / Advisor" to provide strategic guidance to the Board of Trustees on its subsidiaries and ongoing initiatives.

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Aziz Al Kaiser new NSU chairman

CITY DESK

Aziz Al Kaiser, a business leader and long-serving member of North South University's Board of Trustees, has been elected its new chairman, succeeding Azim Uddin Ahmed.

The decision was made at the annual general meeting yesterday, said a press release.

Kaiser, son of late MA Hashem, founding member and former trustee board chairman, and founder of Partex Group, also chairs City Bank and Partex Star Group.

"I am deeply honoured to follow in the footsteps of our founders and predecessors. As chairman, my mission is to elevate NSU's global standing as a centre of academic excellence, innovation, and inclusiveness," Kaiser said.

NSU Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Hannan Chowdhury congratulated him.

Two killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed and two others injured in road accidents yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Manikganj, schoolboy Syed Md Addin, 6, son of Rafiqul Islam, was killed and his mother injured as a truck hit a rickshaw they were aboard in Khalpar area, said Manikganj Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge SM Aman Ullah.

The OC said the truck was seized but the driver and assistant fled.

In Jamalpur, Ataur Rahman, 50, an assistant teacher at Pollakandi High School, was killed and another person injured after a car hit them on Dewanganj Sanandbari road in Pollakandi Bridge area of Dewanganj upazila.

They were in morning walk, said police and locals.

Samuel Islam was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said Dewanganj Police Station OC Nazmul Hasan.

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INTERNATIONAL

9 children among 37 killed in Gaza

Trump says Gaza truce is possible within a week

AFP, Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli forces killed 37 people in the devastated territory yesterday, including at least nine children who died in strikes.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP 35 people were killed in seven Israeli drone and air strikes in various locations, and two others by Israeli fire while waiting for food aid in the Netzarim zone in central Gaza.

He said the dead included three children who were killed in an air strike on a home in Jabalia, in northern Gaza.

Bassal said at least six more children died in a neighbourhood in the northeast of Gaza City, including some in an air strike near a school where displaced people were sheltering.

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment by yesterday evening.

Restrictions on media in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by rescuers.

AFP images showed mourners weeping over the bodies of seven people, including at least two children, wrapped in white shrouds and blankets at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City.

Suicide blast kills 16 soldiers in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

A suicide attack claimed by the Pakistani Taliban killed 16 soldiers and wounded more than two dozen people, including civilians, local government officials and police officers told AFP yesterday.

"A suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a military convoy," said a local government official in the North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

He said 16 soldiers were killed, raising a previous death toll of 13.

The explosion also caused the roofs of two houses to collapse, injuring six children, a police officer posted in the district told AFP.

The attack was claimed by the suicide bomber wing of the Hafiz Gul Bahadur armed group, a faction of the Pakistan Taliban.

Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in violence in its regions bordering Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power in Kabul in 2021, with Islamabad accusing its western neighbour of allowing its soil to be used for attacks against Pakistan -- a claim the Taliban denies.

Around 290 people, mostly security officials, have been killed in attacks since the start of the year by armed groups fighting the government in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Protests for removal of KMP chief continue

FROM PAGE 10
alleging Sukanta was freed at the order of the KMP commissioner and several other senior officers.

They issued an ultimatum on Thursday night, demanding the commissioner's removal by midday yesterday.

Rumi Rahman, a spokesperson for the Khulna chapter of SAD, said, "The law and order situation in Khulna has deteriorated drastically since Zulfikar Ali Haider took over as commissioner. He takes no action against influential individuals. We demand his immediate removal."

KMP sources confirmed that SI Sukanta was arrested in Chuadanga on Thursday and has been sent to jail following a court order.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam was confined to the Khulna Press



Video footage filmed from southern Israel showed smoke rising over northern Gaza after blasts.

Other AFP footage filmed in Gaza City showed a cloud of smoke rising from buildings after a strike.

After claiming victory in a 12-day war against Iran that ended with a ceasefire on June 24, the Israeli military said it would refocus on its offensive in Gaza, where Palestinian militants still hold Israeli hostages.

The killings came a day after President Donald Trump said he believes a ceasefire in the Gaza conflict between Israel and Iran-backed Hamas militants may be reached within a week.

"I think it's close. I just spoke to some of the people involved," Trump said. "We think within the next week we're going to get a ceasefire."

Qatar yesterday said that it and fellow mediators the United States and Egypt were engaging with Israel and Hamas to build on momentum from the ceasefire with Iran and work towards a Gaza truce.

"If we don't utilise this window of opportunity and this momentum, it's an opportunity lost amongst many in the near past. We don't want to see that again," said Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari.



Anti-government protesters rally to demand the removal of Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra from office at Victory Monument in Bangkok yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Step down Shinawatra!

Thousands take to the streets demanding Thai PM's resignation after leaked phone call with Cambodian leader

AFP, Bangkok

Thousands of anti-government protesters rallied in the Thai capital of Bangkok yesterday, demanding Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra resign after a leaked diplomatic phone call stirred public anger.

A Cambodian elder statesman leaked a call meant to soothe a border spat between the two nations in which Paetongtarn called him "uncle" and referred to a Thai military commander as her "opponent".

A key party abandoned Paetongtarn's coalition, accusing the 38-year-old dynastic premier of kowtowing to Cambodia and undermining Thailand's military, leaving her teetering with a slim parliamentary majority.

About 10,000 demonstrators jammed roads ringing the capital's Victory Monument, waving Thai flags and placards reading "Evil PM, get out".

One speaker took to the stage and shouted, "PM, you committed treason!"

The crowd was mostly senior-aged and led by veteran activists of the "Yellow Shirt" movement, which helped oust Paetongtarn's father, Thaksin, in the 2000s.

One of Thaksin's former allies, now among his harshest critics, was also a key organiser.

"I'm here to protect Thailand's sovereignty and to say the PM is unfit," said 70-year-old protester Seri Sawangmu, who travelled overnight by bus from the country's north to attend.

"After I heard the leaked call, I knew I couldn't trust her," he told AFP. "I've lived through many political crises, and I know where this is going. She's willing to give up our sovereignty."

Thailand has seen decades of clashes between the bitterly opposed "Yellow Shirts", who defend the monarchy and military, and the Thaksin-backing "Red Shirts", considered by their opponents a threat to the traditional social order.

Jampong Kalana, 64, said she was once a "Red Shirt" but had changed her colours and was demanding the resignation of Paetongtarn, leader of the Pheu Thai party.

"I feel full of pain when I see a fellow Thai who doesn't love the country like I do," she said.

MAKE-OR BREAK COURT CASES



Mass protests have been uncommon in Thailand since 2021, when youth-driven demonstrations calling for monarchy reform ended with many leaders convicted under the country's strict lese-majeste laws.

Authorities said more than 1,000 police and 100 city officials had been deployed to the protest, which remained peaceful on Saturday afternoon.

The 62-year-old protester Santhiphum Lamjat was overcome with emotion.

"Our ancestors shed blood, sweat and tears for this land, but now politicians are ready to give it away for personal gain," the former bureaucrat tearfully told AFP.

Paetongtarn was visiting Thailand's flood-hit north, but before departing Bangkok, she told reporters, "It's their right to protest, as long as it's peaceful."

The prime minister has been battered by controversy and abandoned by her largest backer, the Bhumjaithai Party, after her phone call with Cambodia's ex-leader Hun Sen was leaked earlier this month.

Tensions between the countries have soared after a border dispute boiled over into violence last month, which killed one Cambodian soldier.

Thailand's military has staged a dozen coups since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, and politicians are usually careful not to antagonise the generals.

After calling a border region military commander her "opponent", Paetongtarn gave a contrite press conference where she issued a public apology flanked by military officials in a show of unity.

Her remaining coalition partners have not yet backed out of their pact.

But next week both Paetongtarn and her father face legal battles that could reshape Thailand's political landscape.

On Tuesday, the Constitutional Court will decide whether to take up a petition by senators seeking her removal over alleged unprofessionalism.

That same day, her father is set to stand trial on royal defamation charges linked to decade-old remarks to South Korean media.

Paetongtarn took office less than a year ago after her predecessor was disqualified by a court order, and her father returned from exile after 15 years.

Pakistan flash floods kill 32

AFP, Peshawar

Heavy rain and flash flooding across Pakistan have killed 32 people including 16 children since the start of the monsoon season this week, disaster management officials said.

Flash floods and roof collapses over the past 36 hours have claimed the lives of 19 people, eight of them children, a statement Saturday by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial disaster management authority said.

Of the total fatalities, 13 were reported from northwestern Swat Valley.

At least 13 people have also been killed in the eastern province of Punjab since Wednesday, the area's disaster management authority said.

Eight of the fatalities were children, who died when walls and roofs collapsed during heavy rain. Flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also damaged 56 houses, the disaster authority said.

Meanwhile in Mymensingh, two men were sent to jail yesterday for raping a sixth grader.

The accused, Md Humayun, 30, and Md Kawsar Miah, 24, dragged the 13-year-old girl away on her way to school on Wednesday morning. They took her to a shop approximately 30 kilometres from her home, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she spoke about the incident, according to law enforcers.

The girl informed her family after returning home. When the news spread, local influential initially attempted to settle the matter through social arbitration.

The child's father later

Rwanda, DR Congo sign peace deal

AFP, Washington

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo have signed a peace agreement in Washington to end fighting that has killed thousands, with the two countries pledging to pull back support for guerrillas -- and President Donald Trump boasting of securing mineral wealth.

"Today, the violence and destruction comes to an end, and the entire region begins a new chapter of hope and opportunity," Trump said as he welcomed the two nations' foreign ministers to the White House on Friday. "This is a wonderful day."

The agreement comes after the M23, an ethnic Tutsi rebel force linked to Rwanda, sprinted across the mineral-rich east of the DRC this year, seizing vast territory including the key city of Goma.

21-yr-old raped

FROM PAGE 10

said efforts were underway to arrest the accused.

A video of the survivor was also recorded and later circulated online.

A relative corroborated the details to The Daily Star.

The woman underwent medical tests at Cumilla Medical College Hospital yesterday, the OC said. Hospital Director Dr Masud Parvez confirmed that tests were done but declined to share the results.

In Noakhali, madrasa director Shakhatullah, 38, was arrested for the attempted rape of a sixth grader in the female dormitory of the institution.

According to the case statement, he attempted to rape the girl early Friday while she was sleeping. His wife, who was in another room, woke up and began screaming, forcing him to halt the assault. In the morning, locals caught Shakhatullah, beat him, and handed him over to police.

The child's mother filed a case yesterday, after which he was shown arrested, said Mohammad Firoz Uddin, OC of Chatkhil Police Station.

Our correspondents from Cumilla, Mymensingh, and Noakhali contributed to this report.

ওয়েস্ট জেন পাওয়ার ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানি লিমিটেড (ওজেপাডিকো)

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Ref No. 27.22.2947.803.17.001.2025.616

Date: 25-6-25

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) by Executive Engineer, Sales & Distribution-1, WZPDCL, Kushtia for the execution of following works, which will be available at the National e-GP System Portal website (www.eprocure.gov.bd) from 30-06-25, 9.00am.

Sl.	Tender ID	Invitation reference	Name of tender
1.	1128410	27.22.5079.301.55.001.2025.617; Date: 25/06/25	11/0.4 KV Power Distribution Line Shifting Work for the purpose of road expansion along Berharamura-Daulatpur Highway

This is online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tenders, registration required in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd). The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank.

S. M. Fazle Rabbi

Executive Engineer
S & D-1, WZPDCL
Kushtia

GD-1476

A troubling trend in relations emerging

India's latest trade restriction shows the need for dialogue

It is difficult to imagine how the strained India-Bangladesh relations can improve with India continuing to hint at its desire to do otherwise. India's recent decision to ban the import of certain jute products and woven fabrics from Bangladesh via land ports follows a series of measures that appear to be further distancing the two countries in terms of trade engagement—developments that will undoubtedly affect overall bilateral relations.

According to a new notification from the Indian Directorate General of Foreign Trade, several Bangladeshi products will now be subject to new port restrictions. These include jute products, flax tow and waste, jute and other bast fibres, single flax yarn, single yarn of jute, multiple folded, woven fabrics or flex, and unbleached woven fabrics of jute. The import of these items from Bangladesh will no longer be permitted through any land port along the India-Bangladesh border; instead, they will only be allowed entry via the Nhava Sheva seaport. These port restrictions, however, will not apply to Bangladeshi exports to Nepal and Bhutan transiting through India.

In May, India had already imposed restrictions on the import of garments, agro-processed foods, furniture, and other goods from Bangladesh through land ports. The export of garments—the single largest category of Bangladeshi exports to India—was limited to entry through two seaports: Kolkata and Nhava Sheva. Reportedly, this change was introduced without any formal prior communication from Delhi. It followed India's earlier decision in April—again, without advance notice—to suspend transhipment facilities for Bangladeshi cargo bound for third countries via Indian land borders, raising concerns about a tightening trade regime.

Bangladesh, for its part, blocked Indian yarn imports on April 13 through the Benapole, Bhomra, Bangabandha, Burimari, and Sonamajid land ports. The justification provided was the need to protect the domestic textile and spinning industries from Indian raw material imports.

For decisions that impact millions of dollars in trade and the livelihoods of exporters and importers on both sides, such a lack of engagement and transparency is unbefitting of neighbours with closely interlinked economies. Even if such restrictions are genuinely necessary, they should be introduced through proper dialogue, with clear intent and phased implementation, to minimise harm to either—or both—parties.

The absence of communication, and the pattern that is emerging, suggest that these decisions are being driven more by political messaging than by economic rationale. This, inevitably, will affect bilateral relations. With the global economic order undergoing significant disruption, both countries must ask themselves whether damaging trade and mutual relations is truly in their best interest—or whether, in doing so, they are simply shooting themselves in the foot.

Ensure justice for the disappeared

Hold those responsible for enforced disappearances to account

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has expressed deep concerns over the widespread impunity surrounding enforced disappearances in the country and has called on Bangladesh to ensure genuine accountability from its security, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies. Following a four-day visit to the country, it published a report highlighting these concerns. We echo the UN's concerns, as we still await a full account of the state-sponsored human rights violations that occurred during the 15-year rule of the Awami League. After the July uprising that led to the fall of the AL government, the public expected that those responsible for such grave human rights abuses would be held accountable. Unfortunately, we have yet to see significant progress in the investigation of these enforced disappearance cases.

Soon after taking office, the interim government established a commission to investigate all cases of enforced disappearances. It also ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, making Bangladesh accountable to international human rights bodies. The commission has verified 1,350 cases of disappearance and identified 16 secret detention centres, known as Aynaghar, which were used for torture. Evidence suggests that these were not isolated incidents, but part of a coordinated system operated under centralised authority. Investigations revealed that state security forces, including the RAB, DGFI, and the Detective Branch, were directly involved in these grave human rights violations. As highlighted in a fact-finding report by the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR), the AL government systematically abused the justice system and security apparatus to suppress civil society, targeting journalists, activists, and dissenting voices through intimidation and enforced disappearances. Such practices must stop once and for all. The next elected government must make a firm commitment that such grave human rights violations will never be repeated in future.

To deliver justice in these cases and to prevent future human rights violations, the state must ensure full accountability and uphold fair trial standards in all judicial proceedings, as emphasised by the UN Working Group. Preserving the evidence properly is of utmost importance. Survivors of enforced disappearances have recently called on the government to establish independent oversight mechanisms for all security and intelligence agencies, while also urging the state to formally acknowledge the role of these agencies in past rights violations, which is critical in ensuring justice for the victims. Furthermore, the repressive laws such as the Special Powers Act, 1974, and the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2013, which have reportedly been used to justify extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances—and are also incompatible with international human rights standards—must be repealed. Last but not least, the security institutions must regain public trust and legitimacy "through genuine accountability processes within these institutions," as the UN Working Group has suggested.

Dr Sibbir Ahmad
is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Virginia and president of Socchar: Torture Watchdog Bangladesh. He can be reached at sibbirahmad520@gmail.com.

SIBBIR AHMAD

In Bangladesh, authoritarianism began with a knock on a dorm room door. For over 15 years, in Bangladesh's public universities, thousands of students were summoned late at night—not by professors, but by enforcers of the ruling regime. They were called to "guest rooms" in student dormitories, spaces informally repurposed by the ruling party's student wing, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), and interrogated.

There, the violence began.

The accused were questioned about their activity, network, and political loyalty. Did they post or like anything critical of the government? Were they connected to any opposition group, or even suspected of sympathising with one? Did they share a video of a speech? Miss a rally? Fail to pay tribute to the prime minister's father?

Once labelled disloyal, they were beaten with cricket stumps and iron rods, burned with cigarettes, slapped, kicked, and in some cases, thrown from balconies. Some were left permanently disabled. Others never came back.

This was not random violence; it was regime policy.

Under Sheikh Hasina's increasingly authoritarian rule, Bangladesh was governed not by popular mandate but through the manufacturing of fear. Elections were rigged. Courts were manipulated. Dissent was criminalised. But the most enduring frontline of repression was found not in the courtroom or the ballot box, but in the dormitory corridors of the nation's public universities.

Why the dorms? Because historically, students have been at the frontline of resistance to authoritarianism in Bangladesh.

From the 1952 language movement to the anti-autocracy uprisings of the 1990s, it has always been students—not generals, not elites—who sparked Bangladesh's most powerful political transformations. The Hasina regime understood this better than anyone. As long as campuses remained free, so did the possibility of resistance. And so, her administration didn't merely surveil universities, it occupied them.

BCL, later banned as a terrorist organisation, acted as a de facto paramilitary force. They controlled room allocations, ran dormitory surveillance, and summoned one

or more students at a time for questioning—interrogations that blurred into beatings. According to a 2024 report by Socchar: Torture Watchdog Bangladesh, 78 percent of the victims were non-political students, targeted for things as trivial as skipping a rally, liking a Facebook post, or wearing a religious cap.

One student was beaten with a hammer and left with shattered bones. Another was thrown from a fourth-storey balcony. A female student was stripped, filmed, and blackmailed. Students were offered urine to drink when they begged for water. Soft drinks were given between beatings to rehydrate them so the torture could continue.

And no one intervened.

Not friends. Not university officials. Not the police. The institutions that should have protected

the streets, they did something far more dangerous: they took back the dormitories.

Roommates heard the screams but dared not intervene. Friends distanced themselves from the victims to avoid becoming targets. Parents checked their phones every night, fearing the worst. An entire generation lived under the doctrine of survival through silence.

Socchar's interviews with victims capture this with chilling clarity. Survivors speak of nightmares, isolation, dropped studies, and years of anxiety. One student, tortured over a decade ago, has still not returned to Dhaka—too afraid to set foot in the capital.

This model of repression reflects what scholars of authoritarian regimes describe as "the politics of

the streets, they did something far more dangerous: they took back the dormitories.

The first act of revolution was the liberation of the halls. Students expelled the BCL from university campuses across the country, reclaiming the very spaces that had long been outposts of terror. The same dorm rooms that once echoed with screams now echoed with resistance.

This seismic shift triggered a chain reaction. When the dormitories fell, so did the fear—and then the regime itself. Sheikh Hasina, who had remained in power through administrative muscle, manipulated courts, elections devoid of legitimacy, and a culture of fear, was forced to flee. Her downfall began not in parliament or on the streets, but in the dorm rooms her regime once used



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

students became their betrayers. Administrators loyal to the regime looked the other way or helped compile target lists. Law enforcers arrested victims under fabricated charges. Perpetrators were rewarded with government jobs, academic posts, and scholarships abroad. In Hasina's Bangladesh, brutality wasn't punished, it was promoted.

Between 2009 and 2024, BCL perpetrated hundreds of violent incidents across university campuses, resulting in thousands of injuries, sexual assaults, and deaths. While survivors may have healed from their physical wounds, the psychological scars—the long-term trauma they

fear." In autocratic systems where elections are manipulated and opposition is silenced, violence serves not just to punish dissent, but to prevent even its imagination. Fear is engineered to fragment solidarity and extinguish embryonic resistance, especially in universities, the historic cradle of social movements.

But authoritarian control is never total.

In July 2024, that fear finally cracked. Students ignited a mass uprising against a rigged job quota system that disproportionately benefited ruling party loyalists. What began as a protest soon became a revolution. But before taking to

to control a nation.

Let that be remembered.

Because the regime that ruled with terror did not fall to international sanctions or elite negotiations. It fell to the courage of students who, after years of silence, finally said: enough.

To move forward, Bangladesh must institutionalise justice. Independent commissions must investigate campus torture. Perpetrators must be prosecuted. Student politics should be banned from dormitories. Universities must offer trauma support for survivors. Most importantly, the country must declare, clearly and permanently, that no student shall ever again be tortured for an opinion.

How to quiet Dhaka's horn habit



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MD KARIMUL ISLAM

If you are a pedestrian or a regular commuter in a city like Dhaka, the constant blare of vehicle horns is an unavoidable part of your everyday life.

A few months ago, I visited an ENT specialist for a temporary ear issue. I shared my concerns about the relentless noise pollution on the roads, especially from motorbikes, buses, and private cars. To my surprise, the doctor revealed that he, like many others, had replaced his car horn because the original one made too low a sound to reach commuters' ears. What does this signify? Are we unknowingly adapting to an increasingly aggressive acoustic environment, risking our mental well-being and gradually damaging our natural hearing?

In Dhaka, traffic noise far exceeds tolerable levels. According to the UNEP Frontiers 2022 report, the city's traffic generates up to 119 decibels (dB)—the highest among the reported countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that long-term exposure to noise from road traffic should not exceed 53 dB during the day-evening-night period and 45 dB during the night to avoid adverse consequences on health. UNEP data shows that a motorbike

horn alone typically produces around 90 dB, often louder in congested Bangladeshi streets. I consider this a form of torture for every commuter—though less so for those in air-conditioned vehicles.

WHO warns that regular exposure to such noise can rupture the ear's tympanic membrane and cause sleep disruption, cardiovascular disease, cognitive impairment, and hearing loss. The UNEP report states that in Europe, long-term exposure to environmental noise contributes to 48,000 new cases of ischaemic heart disease and 12,000 premature deaths annually. Can we imagine the numbers for Bangladesh? Sadly, we lack the data.

Bangladesh has laws for controlling noise pollution, but enforcement remains feeble. The Noise Pollution (Control) Rules 2006 prohibit sound levels above 50 dB in silent areas, 55 dB in residential zones, and 70 dB in commercial zones during the day. Violators may face jail, fines, or both. However, penalties are rare.

One reason for this weak enforcement is the lax approach to holding violators accountable. The 2006 rules set a maximum noise limit of 85 dB for motor vehicles,

measured 7.5 metres from the silencer pipe. But continuous monitoring and enforcement are difficult. If someone lodges a complaint verbally or in writing, the authorities may act after an investigation. A lack of manpower further hampers intervention. Though the rules offer comprehensive sound management guidelines, a dedicated policy for road traffic noise, with ongoing monitoring and accountability mechanisms, could be more effective.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change announced stricter measures against unregulated horns in November last year. This is a bold step, but doubts remain. For any new policy to succeed, it must address the limitations of past efforts, especially how violators will be held accountable. Without meaningful reform, the status quo will continue.

The ministry also launched a nationwide awareness campaign to discourage noise pollution. While potentially impactful, I observed some early pilots in Dhaka and found vehicles honking even louder in front of campaigners. Honking is deeply ingrained among drivers; awareness alone will not change that. Campaigns must be paired with effective penalties.

But enforcement raises practical questions: How do we track if a vehicle exceeds horn limits at every junction or road? Will the government install decibel meters everywhere? Can noise be traced to individual vehicles? And who will enforce these rules—the traffic police or a new unit?

Declaring certain areas as silent

zones seems a simpler option. Yet this too fails without proper enforcement. A report by *The Business Standard* found that sound pollution rose by nearly 1 percent in a designated silent zone near Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in October 2024.

So, what can the authorities consider? First, clear communication. Residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed-use areas should be properly demarcated, and sound limits communicated. Public awareness of health risks should extend beyond symbolic demonstrations and be amplified through media and street campaigns.

Second, target the problem at the source. Vehicle fitness tests should prioritise horn type and volume. High-decibel horns, including hydraulic types, must be banned. Imported vehicles should retain their original, environmentally friendly horn systems, with no post-import modifications allowed. Incentives for quieter horns and classification of alterations as offences under updated rules could help ensure compliance.

Another innovative solution is a mobile app that allows citizens to measure and report vehicle noise levels instantly. Real-time data would empower authorities to monitor and fine offenders more effectively.

Sound pollution is a complex, long-term challenge. Yet cultural change—supported by improved road infrastructure, noise barriers, clear regulations, health education, and research-based soundscape planning—can lead to meaningful noise reduction over time.



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FARIDUL ALAM

The 12-day Iran-Israel conflict from June 13 to 24, 2025, will be remembered not for its duration or casualties alone, but for how Artificial Intelligence (AI) moved from supportive background tool to the centrepiece of an AI-enhanced command-and-control architecture. These systems—employed in real-time intelligence processing, target prioritisation, and digital influence campaigns—reshaped the tempo and character of warfare.

Among them, Palantir Technologies, a US-based analytics firm, was publicly acknowledged to have strategic partnerships with Israel's Ministry of Defence and was reported to provide battlefield software used in operational planning and intelligence fusion (*The Jerusalem Post*, June 17, 2025).

The US, both covertly through intelligence collaboration and overtly via Operation Midnight Hammer airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, played a central role in orchestrating key operations and reinforcing this AI-driven battlefield (*Politico*, June 20, 2025). What emerged was a transnational, algorithmically coordinated military campaign—situated in Tel Aviv and driven through Palantir dashboards in forward centres, underlaid by strategic coordination from Washington, and contested by Iran from Tehran.

This was not simply a regional skirmish. It sent a global signal. The conflict confirmed that AI is now a full-spectrum actor in geopolitics, fundamentally redefining command and control, upsetting traditional deterrence, and challenging the boundaries of human judgement in decisions of war and peace.

From Gaza to Isfahan: The AI playbook expands

Israel, long considered a pioneer in military AI, adapted lessons from its operations in Gaza to a broader and more complex battlefield. While the now-infamous "Lavender" database—which reportedly profiled some 37,000 individuals for targeting in Gaza using AI-driven heuristics—was not directly deployed in the Iran campaign, Israeli forces relied on similar AI-driven systems for target identification and prioritisation (+972 Magazine, April 2024).

These systems integrated satellite imagery, signals intelligence, and prior surveillance data to help guide strikes on missile sites in Isfahan, air defence installations near Natanz, and suspected drone command centres. In short, while the database itself may not have crossed the border, the methodology and algorithmic logic it embodied certainly did—marking a continuity in Israel's evolving AI-led military doctrine.

AI assisted satellite imagery analysis and communications intercepts helped identify and prioritise high-value Iranian targets. Israel's elite Unit 8200, known for cyber-espionage and signal intelligence, reportedly worked closely with US intelligence agencies—a collaboration widely acknowledged but never officially confirmed

(*The Times of Israel*, June 18, 2025)—to coordinate targeting algorithms and assess Iranian response patterns.

These were not mere technical assistance arrangements. The US's involvement was both covert and overt. Intelligence sharing with Israel had accelerated in the lead-up to the strikes (*New York Times*, June 21, 2025). Pentagon cyberwarfare units reportedly helped run simulations and predictive modelling on potential Iranian retaliation

and Persian social media spaces (*Brookings Institution*, June 2025). While Israel ran its own digital counter-narratives, this battle for perception was conducted algorithm to algorithm, not just government to government.

Iran also tapped into open-source intelligence (OSINT), using publicly available data—especially from Israeli reservists' social media posts—to monitor troop mobilisations and infer targeting priorities (*Reuters Special Report*, June 2025). These tactics underscored how AI now weaponises even the most banal digital footprints.

AI at the core of defence and attack

Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defence systems, already world-class, were pushed to new levels of responsiveness. While there is no public confirmation of major new AI upgrades to these systems, reports suggest that machine learning was used to optimise interception prioritisation during

experienced disruptions, some attributed to Iranian cyber groups with suspected Russian software support (*The Guardian*, June 23, 2025).

War rooms, simulations, and the creep of automation

In the Israeli war room, AI didn't just aid decision-making—it framed it. Military planners reportedly used predictive models to simulate thousands of Iranian retaliation scenarios. These simulations helped determine strike sequences and optimal timing—balancing operational success with political optics (*Haaretz*, June 25, 2025).

While final strike decisions remained under human command, AI-informed simulations carried significant weight. As one retired Israeli colonel noted in *Haaretz*, "When the machine tells you there's an 86 percent chance Iran will not respond to a specific strike, that shapes how you advise the cabinet."

a basic AI-based escalation-risk model (*Financial Times*, June 24, 2025).

Illusion of victory, reality of loss

As the war wound down after 12 exhausting days, each side claimed success, but the reality was more sobering. Iran's nuclear facilities were damaged but not destroyed. Israel's deterrence was reaffirmed, but only at the cost of caveats, international condemnation, and increased domestic polarisation. The US, having helped orchestrate and stabilise the conflict behind the scenes, emerged diplomatically weakened in the Global South, where perceptions of American double standards hardened (*Foreign Affairs*, June 26, 2025).

What did not emerge diminished was the role of AI itself. It triumphed—not by design, but by consequence. Its centrality in targeting, defending, simulating, and persuading made clear that wars are no longer shaped by generals alone, but by engineers and coders working in data centres far from the battlefield.

Global implications

The Iran-Israel conflict has not gone unnoticed by other major powers. China, already testing AI-enabled battlefield logistics and drone swarms, is closely studying the integration of algorithmic decision-making into active conflict scenarios. Russia, with its hybrid warfare experience in Ukraine and Syria, has reportedly accelerated the development of autonomous systems for electronic warfare and information operations.

The 12-day war served not only as a testbed but also as a model—demonstrating the disruptive capacity of AI not just to execute operations, but to shape them from planning to perception. As these technologies proliferate, so too does the risk of global military doctrines adapting in similarly opaque and unregulated ways.

The urgency of control

The Iran-Israel war of June 2025 was not an outlier. It was a blueprint. As AI becomes more embedded in military doctrine worldwide, the absence of international regulatory norms is no longer just dangerous—it's existential.

We urgently need a new Geneva-like framework for algorithmic warfare. That includes: i) Banning fully autonomous lethal weapons; ii) Mandating human oversight in AI-assisted strike systems; iii) Prohibiting AI-generated disinformation during armed conflict; and iv) Establishing an international AI-military audit body.

Without such controls, the next conflict may escalate not by political miscalculation, but by feedback loops between duelling algorithms—the digital equivalent of sleepwalking into war.

When the algorithm writes the aftermath
The Iran-Israel conflict was marked by devastation, confusion, and strategic ambiguity. But it also marked something subtler and far more enduring: the quiet displacement of human judgement by machine logic. While Iran, Israel, and the US all walked away weakened or chastened, AI emerged stronger, more embedded, and more ungoverned.

As we reflect on the costs of those 12 days, we must ask not only who fired the first shot or signed the last truce—but who, or what—is writing the next chapter of military history. The answer may not be found in a capital or bunker—but in a server rack humming quietly in the background, running simulations that never sleep.



Israeli air defence systems are activated to intercept Iranian missiles over Tel Aviv on June 16, 2025.

PHOTO: AFP

scenarios (*Defense One*, June 19, 2025). When the airstrikes commenced, they did so with a transnational AI-enhanced framework already in place.

Iran's asymmetric AI response

Iran, though technologically behind, showed how asymmetry combined with AI can disrupt even a highly digitised adversary. Its use of Shahed-136 drones was not new, but this time they were deployed in greater volume and with more coordinated timing (*AlJazeera*, June 22, 2025). While lacking advanced autonomous navigation, their integration with basic AI routines—such as visual recognition to avoid decoys—represented a low-cost, high-impact evolution in drone warfare.

Perhaps more disruptive was Iran's use of AI-generated content and narrative warfare. Deepfake videos of Israeli military officials, AI-scripted propaganda clips, and bot-driven amplification campaigns flooded Arabic

peak missile salvos (*Haaretz*, June 2025), reducing overkill and improving resource management.

Anti-drone systems like "Smart Shooter" were activated across northern and central Israel, demonstrating how computer vision and human-in-the-loop design can still function under swarm conditions. Iran's mass launches did not overwhelm Israeli defences, but they did reveal a cost-effectiveness gap: while Iran lost low-cost drones, Israel had to expend expensive interceptors (*Defense News*, June 24, 2025).

In cyberspace, the Cyber Dome system, developed after years of Iranian and Hezbollah infiltration attempts, neutralised dozens of coordinated cyberattacks during the conflict, according to Israeli cyber officials (*Israel National Cyber Directorate*, June 25, 2025). But Israeli infrastructure was still hit. Several water facilities and municipal services

Yet this reliance introduces profound vulnerabilities. Predictive models, no matter how sophisticated, operate on historical data, limited inputs, and probabilistic logic. A single misfire—whether from incorrect assumptions or adversarial deception—could misguide decision-makers into a catastrophic escalation. In an environment where minutes count and signals are noisy, an AI's false sense of certainty may lull human actors into overconfidence, eroding the caution traditionally built into military deliberation.

In Tehran, AI tools were used more sparingly but not insignificantly. Iranian media campaigns were shaped by sentiment analysis tools tracking how global audiences responded to images, videos, and hashtags (*Middle East Eye*, June 23, 2025). Even Iran's decision to target US bases in Qatar—later walked back after Washington's direct warning—was reportedly gamed through

Rohingya repatriation at a crossroads



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

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ABDULLAH SHIBLI

As the war in the Middle East continues and escalates unabated, it is time to reflect on the potential fallout from festering refugee problems, including the unresolved Rohingya repatriation programme.

The history of Palestine is a lesson for all. The British government and its allies decided in 1917, through the Balfour Declaration, to provide the Jewish people with a homeland by implanting them among the Arabs in Palestine. That was the catalyst for the Nakba—the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948. In almost identical fashion, the military and their cohort in Myanmar pushed more than a million Rohingya into Bangladesh. Now, it is time to take a fresh look at the Rohingya crisis that has been brewing in Bangladesh and make a renewed effort to expedite their resettlement in Myanmar.

The interim government has promised to prioritise Rohingya repatriation, and Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has repeatedly sought international help. Various advisers have visited China and held meetings to revive the Kunming Understanding, but things remain at a standstill. Since the interim government took over, hundreds of thousands more Rohingya people have crossed into Bangladesh. On the positive side, a "high-level meeting" on the situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar is scheduled for September 30 this year to be held at the UN headquarters in New

York. At the urging of the CA during his visit to the UN in September 2024, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on November 13, 2024, to convene a high-level conference within this year on the Rohingya situation in Myanmar. But it is difficult to pin much hope on the outcome of this conclave.

In the meantime, there is much talk about repatriation emanating from the interim government. During a visit to Bangladesh, UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited the Rohingya camps and expressed his solidarity with the refugees. The CA, alongside Guterres, pledged to work towards a future in which Rohingya people can celebrate Eid in their homeland in Myanmar's Rakhine state next year. Given that elections in Bangladesh will be held early next year, the interim government will likely need to work on an expedited schedule to accomplish this before transferring power to the next prime minister.

It is laudable that the interim government has given repatriation of the Rohingya high priority. During his trip to London earlier this month, Dr Yunus warned that the current state of affairs is grim. He even mentioned that the plight of the Rohingya should be a reason for alarm and warned that, "if there is no hope for them, this might lead to an explosion."

I will now turn to a few ideas on the repatriation issue. In light of the current

global environment, it is difficult to foresee much progress before the national elections. Hopes were raised when the interim government and the press reported that the Myanmar authorities had confirmed the eligibility of 1,80,000 Rohingya refugees for repatriation. But it is now clear that this is an illusion. In the past, one obstacle has been the unwillingness of refugees to return unless certain conditions are met. And there are

to persuade China to exercise more of its influence over Myanmar. China's approach, which could be described as "transactional," prioritises economic and strategic interests. Accordingly, its role in the Rohingya crisis has

fluctuated.

Ye Myo Hein, a Chinese scholar at the Wilson Centre in Washington, DC, warned in a recent paper: "As Western interest in

Myanmar has waned, China has seized



Since the interim government took over, hundreds of thousands more Rohingya have crossed into Bangladesh.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

other roadblocks to the process.

As noted earlier, China can—and needs to—play its part in facilitating repatriation. China is a powerful and influential patron of the military government in Naypyidaw, as well as a long-standing ally of Bangladesh.

However, our diplomats have not been able

to expand its strategic footprint...It now holds considerable sway over key actors on all sides of the conflict and has systematically sidelined Western influence by alienating groups aligned with the West."

Deng Xijun, the Chinese special envoy for Asian Affairs—Beijing's point person

for Myanmar—joined the junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and other international guests at the 2025 Peace Forum, which began on June 25 in Naypyidaw. Deng indicated that Myanmar may take back the Rohingya living in Cox's Bazar to their own villages in North Maungdaw and nearby locations, instead of relocating them to camps or "model villages" as previously planned.

One must remember, however, that the Chinese initiative is tied to its economic interests and investments in Rakhine. The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) is a key component of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), linking China's Yunnan Province with Myanmar's vast energy reserves, natural resources, and access to the Indian Ocean.

The end result of all this is that Bangladesh must take a long-term view and appoint highly skilled diplomats to navigate these waters and negotiate with both China and Myanmar.

Bangladesh welcomed the recent donation of food grains and other edibles for the Rohingya refugees, though it is merely a drop in the bucket. It comes at a critical time: international contributions are dwindling, and July marks the beginning of the lean season, when food shortages hit hardest. Dr Yunus, in a recent speech, alluded to this and noted that the UN food ration will soon be halved.

The takeaway from the recent flurry of activity was summed up clearly by Guterres for the world to hear. During a press encounter at the end of his trip to the camps in Cox's Bazar, he said he had heard "two clear messages: First, Rohingyas want to go back to Myanmar; and second, they want better conditions in the camps." The international community must take notice and facilitate the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees to their homeland.

STEVEN SPIELBERG speaks out against AI in filmmaking

Steven Spielberg, known for his 2001 film *AI Artificial Intelligence*, has voiced strong opposition to using artificial intelligence in creative aspects of filmmaking.

Speaking to Reuters during a ceremony at Universal Studios, he said, "I don't want AI making any creative decisions that I can't make myself." While he acknowledged AI's potential in fields like medicine, he warned its use on film sets could threaten human creativity and jobs.

Recalling how CGI in *Jurassic Park* replaced stop-motion animation, Spielberg noted that it made certain careers obsolete. Though open to AI for behind-the-scenes tasks like budgeting, the director made it clear he does not support its use in front of the camera— "not quite yet."



RAINDROPS & RABINDRA SANGEET HSBC's monsoon soiree

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Every year, monsoon rolls in with its familiar grace, cloud-sealed skies, the smell of petrichor, and a quiet pull towards the poetic. A season that makes hearts feel a little softer, and time stand still amidst the urban chaos.

To welcome the onset of this season, HSBC Bangladesh hosted an intimate soiree *Abar Eshchhe Ashar* last Friday evening with timeless songs of Rabindranath Tagore, the maestro whose verses have etched the beauty of Bangla's monsoon into the hearts of millions.

The event took place in a warm indoor setting at Hotel Sheraton, Dhaka, bringing together over 600 clients, stakeholders, and guests. After a short video setting the mood of monsoon, Chief Executive Officer Md Mahbub ur Rahman of HSBC Bangladesh, took to the stage to welcome the guests.

The programme started off with prominent artiste Adity Mohsin's charming renditions of Tagore's classics. As the first strains of the classic *Abar Eshchhe Ashar* filled the air, the ballroom turned into a sanctuary of silent emotions. Behind the vocals, a skilled ensemble brought



PHOTO: COURTESY

mellow magic to the space.

Adding more to the charm, renowned artiste Jayanta Chattopadhyay mesmerised the audience with soulful recitations of Tagore's poems in between the ballad of songs. With each verse, his voice traversed the essence of monsoon's glory throughout the room.

The evening's performances mirrored the shifting moods that define Tagore's artistry, moving from whispered prayers, quiet yearning, to dreamy narratives; delicate, immersive and filled with memories.

One after the next, soft verses of

Badol Diner Prothom Kodom Ful, Oi Malatilata Dole, Bajra Manik Diye Gantha, Amar Nishitho Rater Badol Dhara, Aji Jhoro Jhoro Mukhoro and more of Tagore's masterworks floated through the room, creating a kaleidoscope of nostalgic tunes. Each song steeped in monsoon's romanticism became a moment of shared language and feelings.

As the final note faded into applause, the evening slipped into its closing chapter filling the room with gentle conversations and ending the quiet celebration of drizzles and melodies.

Cate Blanchett's surprise cameo ends 'Squid Game' finale

Cate Blanchett makes a surprise appearance in the *Squid Game* series finale, fuelling speculation about a possible US spinoff. In the final scene, the camera cuts to Los Angeles, where Blanchett appears as a mysterious recruiter, hinting at an American version of the deadly game.

Her cameo adds major star power to the franchise, already Netflix's most-watched series. All six episodes



of the third and final season were released globally on Friday, June 27.

The season concludes Gi-Hun's (Lee Jung-jae) journey and heightens the show's anti-capitalist themes, including a shocking twist involving a newborn contestant. Blanchett's arrival signals a global expansion, with Netflix expected to reveal more about the future of *Squid Game* in the coming weeks.



'Kaanta Laga' fame Shefali Jariwala dies at 42

Shefali Jariwala, best known for her iconic appearance in the music video *Kaanta Laga*, has passed away at the age of 42, reportedly due to cardiac arrest. She was brought to Bellevue Hospital in Mumbai on Wednesday, June 25, but was declared dead on arrival.

Her husband, actor Parag Tyagi, and others were present. The news was first confirmed by journalist Vickey Lalwani. Her body has been sent to Cooper Hospital for a post-mortem.

Known for her roles in *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi*, *Bigg Boss 13*, and *Nach Baliye*, Shefali was also an advocate for mental health and women's empowerment. Tributes have poured in from celebrities, including Mika Singh and Aly Goni, mourning the loss of the beloved actor-model.

'Neelpodmo' wins Best Feature Film at Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival



Towfique Elahi's directorial film *Neelpodmo (The Blue Lotus)*, produced by Impress Telefilm and starring Runa Khan, has won the Best Feature Film award at the Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival 2025.

The director described the film as a research-based project and expressed surprise and joy at the recognition, calling it the film's first major honour. He credited the entire cast, crew, and streaming platform iScreen for the achievement.

Featuring performances by Runa Khan, Rashed Mamun Apu, Rokeya Prachy, and others, *Neelpodmo* explores the lives and rights of sex workers in Daulatdia. The film had its world premiere at the Suchitra Sen International Bengali Film Festival in New York and was also screened at the Dhaka Int'l Film Festival.

NEWS

Left warns of tougher protests

FROM PAGE 10
government move.

Mentioning that there is a war situation in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, Prince expressed concern that providing aid passage to the area would involve the country in the war trap of imperialist powers.

Socialist Party of Bangladesh (SPB) General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoze vowed to start tough street movements like hartals and blockades if the government proceeds with such decisions.

The interim government was supposed to conduct trials of mass killings committed during the July uprising last year, carry out some reforms and hold a free and fair national election for democratic transition of power, he said.

There is no visible progress of the desired trials of mass killing and no specific date has been declared for the election yet.

"Rather, the interim government

is keeping busy with some activities for which they are not mandated," he added.

Other left leaders demanded cancelling the agreement with Elon Musk's Starlink project and terminating all unequal treaties with imperialist powers.

Central Coordinator of Left Democratic Alliance as well as SPB (Marxist) Masud Rana, Bangladesher Samyabadi Andolon Convener Shubhrangshu Chakrabarty, Gono Mukti Union Central Coordinator Nasir Uddin Nasu, Bangladesher Biplobi Communist League General Secretary Iqbal Kabir Jahid, Gonotantrik Biplobi Party General Secretary Mosharefa Mishu and Bangladesher Socialist Party General Secretary Shahidul Islam spoke among others.

CPB Chattogram district unit President Ashok Saha chaired the rally moderated by SPB Chattogram In charge Al Kadery Joy.

The road march kicked off on Friday morning with an inaugural rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka. On the first day, several street rallies were held on the way to Comilla where the protest rally was held at Comilla Town Hall at night. The march later reached Feni.

The march resumed yesterday morning with a rally at Feni followed by street rallies and processions at Baroijarhat in Mirsarai and Sitakunda.

Later, a huge procession of over 2,000 people marched toward the port area to end at the concluding rally.

As part of the demonstration, activists displayed placards with slogans such as "Go DP World, go Dubai", "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".

Israeli strike on south Lebanon kills one: ministry

FROM PAGE 10
Odhikar Parishad, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Andolon Bangladesh and AB Party, attended the event.

An Israeli strike on southern Lebanon killed one person on Saturday, the Lebanese health ministry said, the latest attack despite a ceasefire between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah.

In a statement, the health ministry said that an "Israeli enemy" drone strike on a car in Kunin, south Lebanon, killed one man in a preliminary toll.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the incident.

The attack comes a day after Israel killed a woman and wounded 25 other people in strikes across the country's south.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that the woman was killed in an Israeli drone strike on an apartment in the city of Nabatiyah.

Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee said on social media that the army "did not target any civilian building".

The Friday attacks included a "wave of successive heavy strikes" in the Nabatiyah region which injured seven people, according to the NNA.

Bangladesh's digital sphere in freefall

FROM PAGE 10
and citizens, threats, violence against women journalists, restrictions on freedom of assembly and the abuse of enforcement mechanisms.

The developments are not isolated incidents but part of a broader architecture of repression, it said.

A culture of impunity, ideological backlash, and selective enforcement of laws are enabling the steady erosion of rights that underpin a democratic society.

"If left unchecked, this climate will continue to marginalise critical voices, dismantle trust in institutions, and undermine the very ideals of justice, equity and inclusive governance that Bangladesh aspires to."

The report urged the government, policymakers and relevant stakeholders to enact laws consistent with international human rights treaties and standards, ensuring they do not curtail freedom of expression.

Ahmed Swapan Mahmud, executive director of VOICE, condemned recent government remarks labelling mobs as pressure groups, stating that organised groups are orchestrating mob attacks. He underscored the need to raise voices against such practices.

A culture of silence continues to prevail in society, where people often remain quiet unless a crisis directly affects them, said Rezaur Rahman Lenin, a researcher and human rights activist.

Meaningful change can take place if individuals view another person's crisis as their own and if the society collectively sees state issues as shared problems.

"If I cannot transform 'I' into 'we', then the cage of stagnation in which we live will remain unbroken, and we will not find a way out," he said.

Mahpara Alam, researcher fellow at One Future Network, South Asia, emphasised the need for partnerships with social media platforms such as

Facebook and TikTok to ensure the swift removal of harmful content.

She called for digital literacy campaigns in colleges, universities, and among young people, enabling them to understand which types of content may cause harm if shared and to identify misinformation.

While a well-structured wage board framework exists on paper, the key question remains whether it is being implemented and monitored effectively in practice, said Uddisa Islam, city editor at Bangla Tribune.

She recommended establishing a clear monitoring mechanism to track whether the wage board framework is in place, which institutions are complying, and which are not.

"Journalists cannot be expected to fulfil their duties with only an ID card while being denied a dignified life and economic security. Such conditions are essential for independent journalism," she added.

IAB calls for unity among Islamist forces

FROM PAGE 10
Odhikar Parishad, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Andolon Bangladesh and AB Party, attended the event.

"Because Islam is the safeguard for the existence and sovereignty of Bangladesh, this must be reflected in the fundamental principles of the constitution," read the declaration.

The rally was a part of IAB's efforts to put pressure on the interim government to press home its key demands, including a proportional representation system to elect lawmakers in both proposed chambers of parliament in the next election.

The party also called for the continuation of the ongoing state reforms and the trial of the perpetrators responsible for the July atrocities.

At the rally, IAB Ameer Rezaul Karim said the aspiration of the July uprising was to save the country from autocracy and to build an egalitarian Bangladesh.

Stating that every citizen's vote is equally valuable, he said, "Therefore, in the next election, both houses of parliament must be elected through the proportional representation system. The number of seats a party gets in parliament should be proportional to the percentage of votes it receives."

Addressing the interim government, he said, "Remain steadfast in fulfilling the promises of reform, justice, and fair elections for which you have taken responsibility. Do not deviate from your goals under anyone's influence. Carry out your duties with neutrality. We were with you, we are with you, and we will remain with you."

IAB also demanded making public all deals signed with neighbouring India, as well as scrapping of all "anti-state" deals.

The Islamist party also called for practicing Islamic ideology at all state levels to protect the country's sovereignty, ensure people's safety and communal harmony, establish peace and order, and achieve desired development and progress.

Suhrawardy Udyan and surrounding areas -- stretching from Shahbagh to Paltan intersection, Kakrail Mosque, and Doel Chattar -- were packed with hundreds of thousands of participants, including both party supporters and members of IAB.

The huge turnout caused significant traffic congestion in the nearby areas.

Those backing proportional

FROM PAGE 10
February next year.

"All democratic people have not struggled for local government elections. We have fought for 17 years for a free, fair, and neutral national election. We have lost countless lives to establish our right to vote."

Salahuddin said the sacrifice made by martyrs during the student-led mass uprising reflects the desire for a truly democratic state in this country.

"We'll certainly be able to build that democratic state if a political government is established through a free and fair national election."

He said a consensus proposal has

No money

FROM PAGE 10
Hawladar lamented the minimal four percent allocation for research this year.

He said research should ideally receive 10 to 15 percent of the budget to meet public expectations in the health sector.

Asked why around 45 percent of last year's research funds remained unused, VC Shahinul attributed it to frequent administrative changes over the past

year, which stalled implementation.

He added that the 2025-26 budget prioritises several areas, including increased funds for patient medicine, a dedicated allocation for infection prevention, and more resources for the library and journals.

BMU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof Md Abdul Kalam (Azad) and Treasurer Prof Nahreen Akhtar also spoke at the press conference.



PHOTO: AFP
Sri Lanka's premier spinner Prabath Jayasuriya finally found his foothold in the two-match Test series against Bangladesh as his five-wicket haul on Day 4 of the second Test led the Lankans to an innings and 78-run win against the Tigers in Colombo yesterday. The left-arm, who was expected to be the primary threat, scalped a solitary wicket in the first Test in Galle last week and went wicketless in the first innings of the second before claiming 5-56 to get his side off to a solid start in the new cycle of the World Test Championship.

U-18 ASIA CUP HOCKEY Bangladesh women, men eye semifinals

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are eyeing semifinal berths in both men's and women's events of U-18 Asia Cup hockey, which will be held in Dazhou, China from July 3-13.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation's president and Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan met with the players of the two teams and unveiled jerseys during an event in Dhaka yesterday, two days prior to their departure for China.

Bangladesh, who were the runners-up in the men's event last time around in 2016, have been pitted in Pool A alongside Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

The team's coach Moududur Rahman Shuvo informed The Daily Star that the 18-member team is made up of BKSP players, with two of the players having experience of playing for the under-21 side.



"Our first target will be to reach the semifinals. With Pakistan and China are in the group, we will try to fight against Pakistan and get a positive result against the hosts. And then we will take step by step from there."

The youth team coach, who guided the under-21 team to their first-ever Junior World Cup, informed that the team has played practice matches against Army and Air Force teams as well as among themselves with some senior BKSP players among the ranks.

He also informed that Bangladesh might play a preparation match against Kazakhstan the day before the start of the tournament.

Meanwhile, the women's team will be playing in the tournament for the very first time, with coach Zahid Hasan Raju eyeing semifinals berth.

The coach said that despite the inexperience of the team, the four-month training camp in BKSP has given the players maturity and understanding of the tactical and technical aspects of the game.

Bangladesh women's team are in Pool A alongside favourites Japan as well as Uzbekistan and Hong Kong. The coach believes the group formation gives them a chance to qualify for the final four.

"We will try to win against Uzbekistan and Hong Kong," Raju told The Daily Star. "Japan, China and India are world-class teams and we will try to play well when we them (in group or knockout rounds)."

Youth hockey team in tough World Cup group

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have been pitted alongside last edition's runners up France as well as hockey powerhouses Australia and South Korea in Group F of their debut campaign in the upcoming Junior World Cup Hockey, the draw for which was held in Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday.

This year's tournament, to be played in Chennai and Madurai from Nov 28 to Dec 10, marks the first time 24 teams will participate, divided into six groups of four. Bangladesh enter the group as the fourth seed.

Although the men in red and green secured their berth last December, the team is yet to begin formal training. According to the Bangladesh Hockey Federation's general secretary, Lt Col (Retd) Riazul Hasan, the under 21 team's training camp will begin on July 27. A foreign coach is expected to lead the squad for three months, with confirmation expected in early July.

It has been learnt that the federation is in advanced discussions with Dutch coach Siegfried Aikman, who previously worked with the Oman national team.



Inter Miami superstars Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, veterans of high-stakes clashes, face a daunting task tonight in the FIFA Club World Cup last 16 against European champions PSG. The former Barcelona duo inspired a stunning group-stage win over Porto but they may have to step it up another notch as overcoming the gulf in class with PSG may demand a lot more.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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T SPORTS

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1st Test, Day 2

Live from 10:00 pm

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Live from 2:00 am

Quarterfinals
PSG vs Inter Miami
Live from 10:00 pm
Bayern Munich vs Flamengo
Live from 2:00 am
(Monday)

SHANTO'S RESIGNATION leaves BCB's blunder bare

SPORTS REPORTER

The fate of the Colombo Test and Najmul Hossain Shanto's captaincy was decided yesterday and the outcome in both cases was ill-fated but not unexpected.

After a woeful batting performance in the first innings, followed by toothless bowling, the writing was already on the wall for Bangladesh after the third day. And on the fourth day, Sri Lanka claimed the final four wickets and wrapped up the Bangladesh tail in less than six overs to claim an innings and 78-run win and take the two Test series 1-0.

In the post-match press conference that followed, Shanto ended weeks-long speculation and stepped down from Test captaincy.

Shanto insisted that he made the decision only for the betterment of the team, and without directly spelling it out, implied that him losing the ODI captaincy to Mehidy Hasan Miraz earlier this month had nothing to do with it.

"I want to clearly send a message to everyone that my decision... it is nothing

personal. It is totally for the betterment of the team. I think this will only benefit the team," Shanto told reporters yesterday.

"Personally, I feel that having three different captains [in three formats] can be a bit difficult for the team. Hence, for the team's betterment, I am stepping aside," Shanto added.

On June 12, just hours after Shanto had sat for a pre-tour press conference for the Sri Lanka tour, he got to know that he would no longer lead the one-day side and his long-time teammate Miraz would replace him.

The decision of appointing a new ODI skipper was made during a board of directors' meeting held over Zoom right after Shanto's press conference.

In the same meeting, BCB's cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim was given the responsibility to

discuss the captaincy matter with both Shanto and Miraz. But the way the message came from him, it didn't go down well with Shanto as he immediately made up his mind to quit captaincy and the matter was even reported in the media.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul sent Fahim to Colombo on Thursday night to discuss the matter with Shanto but Fahim could not dissuade the 26-year-old.

"There was a discussion going on. I didn't expect such thing to happen today [yesterday]. But I respect the decision he [Shanto] announced today," Fahim said in his reaction to Shanto's announcement to the travelling Bangladeshi journalists in Colombo.

This entire episode is another example of BCB's poor communication and

mishandling of players.

Over the years, such miscommunications in handling players have put the BCB in difficult situations several times. Ironically, both Fahim and Bulbul have criticised the board in the past for such mishaps and always took the players' side.

As they are now at the helm of BCB, expectations were that they would not repeat the same mistakes of their predecessors. Unfortunately, they have ended up taking the same route, and have not shown players the respect they deserve.

According to the Future Tour Programme (FTP), Bangladesh's next Test series will be in November against Ireland, so, the BCB don't have to appoint a new Test skipper straightway.

But the entire ordeal will go down as another failure in communication of the cricket board while the way Shanto, who led Bangladesh to four victories in 14 Tests, stepped down from captaincy will be remembered as a silent protest against disrespect.



Butler optimistic about Asian Cup berth

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Peter Butler feels that if his players can bring their 'A' game to the pitch, they can get through to the AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Speaking ahead the qualifying campaign in Yangon, the Englishman told media yesterday that this young group of players have shown in recent past that they can compete against higher-ranked opponents.

Bangladesh, in C Group, will play their first game against Bahrain at 6:30pm (Bangladesh time) tomorrow. They will then face the toughest side of the group, Myanmar (ranked 55th), before wrapping up the campaign against Turkmenistan (141st).

While Bahrain are 36 places above the 128th-ranked Bangladesh, recent draws against similarly higher-ranked Indonesia and Jordan gives Butler the confidence about qualifying.

"We played Indonesia and Jordan and that really gave us a good sort of benchmark and a little bit of a marker in the sand of actually where we are and what we're capable of doing. I would never dismiss our chances of actually qualifying," Butler said during a pre-tournament press conference.

"We're on a journey. I'm positive and I'm very optimistic about the progress my young players have made," Butler said. "We have to be honest with ourselves and say, 'can we qualify out of this group?' The answer to that is, if everybody brings their A game, I think they can."

Bahrain coach Mohammed Adnan Hussain said they want to play good football.

"We've had a short time period of training, gathering of the players and we had three games -- two against Emirates and one against Saudi Arabia. The team is mixture of young players and seniors. Hopefully we're going to present something good in Myanmar."

"We've had a short time period of training, gathering of the players and we had three games -- two against Emirates and one against Saudi Arabia. The team is mixture of young players and seniors. Hopefully we're going to present something good in Myanmar."

Cummins praises Webster's consistency

AGENCIES

In a match defined by momentum swings, it was Beau Webster's calm resolve that anchored Australia's crucial first Test victory over the West Indies in Bridgetown, marking a strong start to their 2025-27 World Test Championship campaign.

With Australia reeling at 65 for 4 in their second innings, Webster stepped in to arrest the collapse. The towering Tasmanian stitched together a 102-run partnership with Travis Head before adding another vital stand with Alex Carey. His composed 63 off 120 balls not only steadied the innings but ultimately turned the tide in Australia's favour, setting up a match-winning lead.

"He's been a fantastic asset over the last six months," skipper Pat Cummins said after the win. "Even on a tricky wicket, he knew exactly where his scoring areas were."

Since making his debut against India earlier this year, Webster has emerged as a dependable all-rounder. A gritty half-century on a lively Sydney pitch and a composed 72 in the World Test Championship Final

at Lord's had already signalled his arrival. Against the West Indies, he reinforced that reputation—not just with the bat, but also with two first-innings wickets that kept Australia in the contest.

Cummins credited Webster's years of consistency in Sheffield Shield cricket, noting, "He's kind of knocked down the door... He always contributes in some way."

In a side stacked with experience, the 31-year-old has quietly carved out a crucial role—blending resilience with utility. As Australia look to build long-term Test stability, Webster's emergence could not have come at a better time.

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Left warns of tougher protests over port lease

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, City

Leftist leaders threatened to launch tougher movements if the government does not cancel its anti-sovereignty moves like leasing out the Chattogram port's New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) to a foreign operator and providing aid passage to Myanmar's Rakhine state.

The announcement was made yesterday at the concluding rally of the two-day Dhaka to Chattogram road march organised under the banner of "Anti-Imperialist Patriotic People", a coalition of left-leaning parties and organisations to protest foreign control of ports as well as other demands.

Handing over a profitable and equipped port terminal to a foreign entity and providing an aid corridor to a conflict-prone neighbouring state are against the spirit of last year's mass uprising, said Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh.

Terming such decisions as 'anti-state moves', Prince said such crucial decisions are beyond the jurisdiction of an interim government.

"We won't allow any move of leasing out NCT to a foreign operator. If the government doesn't refrain from these anti-state activities, we will start a tougher movement after the celebration of the anniversary of mass uprising."

He criticised Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's appeal to citizens to resist those who would protest the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Islami Andolan Bangladesh leaders and activists gather at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka yesterday afternoon for a rally, calling for reforms, justice for the July killings, and a proportional representation system in parliament.

PHOTO: STAR

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Those backing proportional representation don't want polls

Says Salahuddin

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday alleged that those advocating for a proportional representation system and prioritising local government polls may have intentions to delay or obstruct the upcoming national election.



"Those who are talking about a proportional representation system have a motive. Those who want local government elections before the national election also have a motive. Either they want the election to be delayed, or they want no election at all in Bangladesh. This could be their intention."

Salahuddin made the remarks while speaking to reporters after a memorial publication event on late president Ziaur Rahman and an archive unveiling programme organised by the Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network at the International Mother Language Institute Auditorium.

The BNP leader said people are united in their demand for the national election to be held in early

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

BANGLADESH MEDICAL UNIVERSITY BUDGET No money for its new specialised hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) yesterday approved a Tk 976 crore budget for the next fiscal year but made no allocation for its Super Specialised Hospital, raising fresh doubts over the prospect of making the facility fully operational nearly three years after its inauguration.

No specific funds were allocated for the 750-bed premier healthcare facility by the health ministry, university authorities said at a press conference yesterday.

The hospital, established under a Tk 1,868 crore project, was inaugurated in September 2022. However, no dedicated workforce has been appointed so far, and limited services are being provided using BMU's existing staff and budget.

Aimed at offering world-class healthcare and reducing the need for Bangladeshis to seek treatment abroad, the hospital has five specialised centres: the Cardio and Cerebrovascular Centre, the Hepatobiliary and Liver Transplant Centre, the Mother and Child Healthcare Centre, the Kidney Disease and Urology Centre, and the Accident and Emergency Centre.

BMU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Shahinul Alam said the hospital has generated high public expectations. "Although the hospital has been offering several services, it has yet to reach the expected level," he told reporters after the university syndicate approved the budget.

Of Tk 976cr budget, health ministry to give Tk 568.22cr; UGC to provide Tk 144.86cr, university to contribute Tk 135cr and cover Tk 127.87cr deficit.

He said the university had sought Tk 60 crore from the health ministry, primarily for workforce recruitment, but the funds were not granted. "Currently, the hospital is being run using BMU's own budget."

Prof Shahinul added, "Once the workforce issue, which is pending with the ministry, is resolved and people are recruited, full-fledged operations could begin within a week."

ONLY FOUR PERCENT FOR RESEARCH
Of the Tk 976 crore revenue and development budget, only Tk 37.10 crore (around four percent) was allocated for research at the country's top medical university.

The overall budget is roughly Tk 175 crore (18 percent) higher than the revised budget of the outgoing fiscal year. However, it is Tk 78 crore less than the original allocation of Tk 1,054 crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Of the total Tk 976 crore, the health ministry will provide Tk 568.22 crore, the University Grants Commission Tk 144.86 crore, and the university itself will contribute Tk 135 crore. The remaining Tk 127.87 crore deficit will likely also be covered by the university.

In the outgoing budget, Tk 35.60 crore had been allocated for research, but the revised figure stood at Tk 19.9 crore, according to budget documents.

BMU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Development) Prof Md Mujibur Rahman

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Protests for removal of KMP chief continue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Students Against Discrimination (SAD) continued their demonstrations in Khulna city for the third consecutive day yesterday, demanding the removal of KMP Commissioner Zulfikar Ali Haider.

They blocked the Khan Jahan Ali Road in front of the Khulna Metropolitan Police.

Students from different colleges and universities joined the protests that began around 3:30pm. Members of the Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swachchhaseba Dal also took part in the demonstrations.

On Tuesday, locals detained Sub-Inspector Sukanta Das of Khan Jahan Ali Police Station and handed him over to the police after beating him up. They alleged Sukanta assaulted students and people during the July uprising last year.

The students began demonstrating after police released Sukanta,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Over 100 Babui chicks dead as tree felled in Jhalakathi



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Locals of Jhalakathi yesterday expressed outrage after over 100 weaver bird (Babui pakh) chicks were killed and several eggs damaged when a palm tree, considered a vital nesting site for the species, was cut down in Jhalakathi Sadar upazila.

One Mizanur Rahman allegedly felled the tree, which stood adjacent to a paddy field in Purba Guaton village.

The tree had been sold to Mizanur by the owner of the field, Mobarak Ali Fakir, locals said.

The tree housed over 100 weaver bird nests. While many of the adult birds managed to fly away, the chicks and eggs were destroyed, witnesses said.

UNOFarhana Yeasmin said they learned about the incident and conducted an investigation. "We found the allegations to be true and decided to take action against the accused. She requested the forest department to file a case against Mizanur in this regard."

Md Kabir Hossain Patowary, deputy conservator of forests and divisional forest officer of Barishal's social forestry division, confirmed that legal action would be taken against the accused.

"We will file a case against the accused under the Wildlife [Conservation and Security] Act for killing the chicks, damaging eggs, and destroying the nests," he said.

21-yr-old raped in Cumilla, a 6th grader in Mymensingh

STAR REPORT

A 21-year-old woman was raped at knifepoint in Cumilla on Thursday, while two men were sent to jail yesterday for the rape of a child in Mymensingh.

In another incident, a madrasa director was arrested in Noakhali for attempting to rape a child.

In Cumilla, the survivor, a mother of two, had gone to visit her father's house around two weeks ago.

A neighbour, Md Fazor Ali, 36, known for stalking her during her visits, entered the house on Thursday night when other family members were out attending a fair. He raped her at knifepoint and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident, according to the case statement filed by the survivor the next day.

She added that locals rushed to the scene when she began screaming and they beat up Fazor, but he still managed to escape.

Jahidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Muradnagar Police Station,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



Sheep graze on the "football pitch" set up on a dried-up bank of the Padma next to the Rajshahi city protection dam. Street food stalls have closed as people do not go there anymore. The river is now far away despite it being the rainy season. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Bangladesh's digital sphere in freefall
Says study supported by EU, Article 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's digital and civic space (DCS) is in a deepening crisis with rising violence, intimidation and gender disinformation targeting journalists, activists and citizens who speak truth to power, found a recent study.

Amid growing intolerance and unchecked impunity, the country's civic environment, both online and offline, is shrinking, silencing critical voices and undermining democratic freedoms, according to the report titled 'Striking Cases Impacting Digital and Civic Space and Gender Disinformation in Bangladesh'.

The report was jointly prepared by VOICE and The Daily Ittefaq under the project Collaborative Actions for Promoting Digital and Civic Space and Combating Gender Disinformation, supported by the European Union, Free Press Unlimited, and Article 19.

Since October last year, VOICE documented at least 80 significant incidents relating to DCS violations and cases of gender disinformation reported in media, with 25 detailed as case studies.

Among these, 24 incidents involved bodily harm and assault, 11 related to gender disinformation, eight involved harassment and intimidation and four were linked to alleged vexatious cases.

The report also documented incidents of killings, media censorship, arbitrary detention, abductions, cases filed under the Cyber Security Act against journalists

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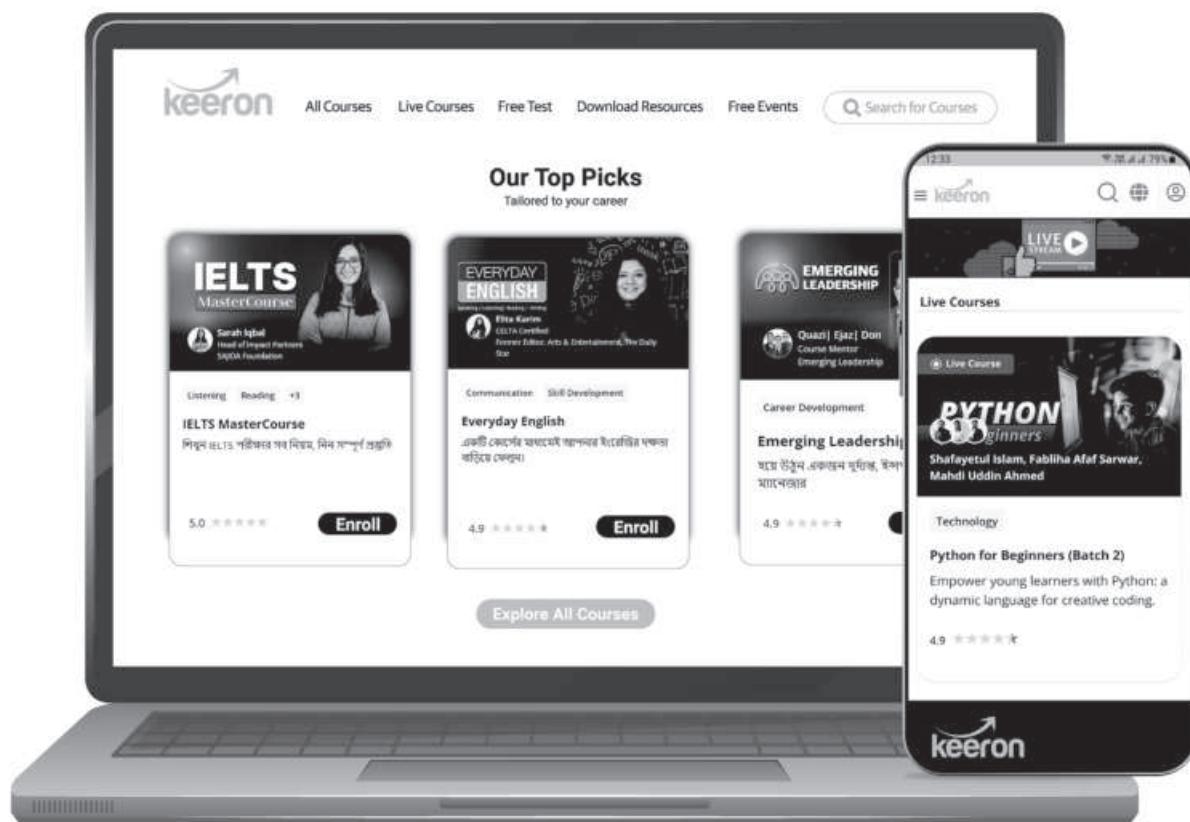
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