

CONSENSUS TALKS Poor progress may delay July Charter

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR and MD ABBAS

Political parties have failed to reach an agreement on any reform proposals for the fifth consecutive day of the consensus talks.

This casts doubt on whether the National Consensus Commission will be able to release the July Charter, a document outlining reform proposals agreed upon by the parties, by the end of next month, as expected.

The consensus commission yesterday held talks with 30 political parties at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital. It was the seventh day of the second round of talks on reforms.

The commission initially planned to finalise the charter by July 16 and then aimed for the end of the month, said a member, requesting anonymity.

Since the discussions began on June 2, nine issues have been discussed so far, and the parties have agreed on only two.

The commission has plans to hold discussions over a dozen other matters in the coming days.

The delays are mainly caused by issues and conditions raised by the parties, said a commission member.



We made progress in certain areas over the last week. To be honest, we are still somewhat behind in making the kind of progress we had hoped for.

Prof Ali Riaz

Vice-chairman of National Consensus Commission

"If talks go on at this pace, it will be difficult for us to prepare the Charter by July," the member added.

At the beginning of the discussion yesterday, Prof Ali Riaz, vice-chairman of the consensus commission, said, "We made progress in certain areas over the last week. To be honest, we are still somewhat behind in making the kind of progress we had hoped for."

He said he was uncertain about when the much anticipated July Charter would be signed.

"There's only one day left before the month of July begins. The commission is committed. We hoped to sign the charter collectively on the death anniversary of Abu Sayed [July 16]. Whether that will be possible depends on you [political parties]. We may not be able to achieve that. We must reach a conclusion within July," Prof Riaz said.

He emphasised that achieving progress was crucial because "none of us want to go back to where we were".

He urged political parties to bear in mind that the commission was not

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With customs employees on strike, operations at Chattogram port come to a halt, leaving hundreds of lorries parked idle in the surrounding area yesterday. The strike was called off last night. More on B1.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

NCP to unveil declaration of July on Aug 3

Nahid blames govt for 'failing to deliver'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party (NCP) has decided to announce the "July declaration" on August 3.

Criticising the interim government for failing to uphold its promise to issue the July Charter within 30 working days, NCP Convener Nahid Islam said, "Since the government has failed, we will not rely

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NBR officials end strike after govt warning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following a stern government warning and mounting pressure from the country's top business leaders, officials of the National Board of Revenue have withdrawn their shutdown.

The announcement came from the NBR Reform Unity Council, the platform spearheading the protests, after a meeting with business leaders at the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) in Tejgaon yesterday evening. Before this meeting, the business leaders sat with Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed at his office.

In a statement, the protest leaders said they decided to withdraw the complete shutdown "in view of broader

economic and public interest", and requests from the business leaders. But the group has expressed hope that positive momentum will continue to achieve "comprehensive and sustainable reform" of the revenue system.

BCI President Anwar Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez) said they tried to understand the demands of protesting officials. He also said the country had to face such a crisis due to "some misunderstandings".

"In our discussions, we addressed the logical and legal aspects of their concerns. The government has assured them of considering their demands," he said.

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MURADNAGAR RAPE
Govt pledges a swift trial amid public uproar

STAR REPORT

In the wake of nationwide outrage, the government yesterday said it would ensure a speedy trial of those who raped, assaulted, and filmed a 21-year-old woman in Cumilla's Muradnagar upazila.

Also yesterday, the High Court issued directives for the government to see to the rape survivor's safety. It ordered the relevant authorities to remove the video, audio and photos related to the incident from all social media and digital platforms within 24 hours.

In response to a writ petition, the court also asked the authorities concerned to turn in a report after complying with the directives within 15 days.

The HC further issued a rule asking the

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New CrPC rules to prevent false cases: law adviser

STAR REPORT



New rules have been added to the Code of Criminal Procedure to prevent the filing of false cases and the harassment of innocent people, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said yesterday.

"An amendment to the CrPC has been presented at the advisory council meeting. We are embarrassed by some of the things that happened under our government, and we try to address these issues," Prof Asif told a press briefing after the advisory

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CUMILLA RAPE Naripokkho, ASK, MJF for punishment of culprits Demand urgent support for victim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), in separate statements, yesterday strongly condemned the brutal rape and violence committed against a woman in Cumilla's Muradnagar, expressing deep concern over the incident and demanding a swift, impartial, and exemplary trial.

The crime is not only a horrific act of violence but also a deliberate attack on a woman from the Hindu religious community and a blatant expression of hatred, said ASK.

Such brutality, it said, violates the fundamental principles of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the rule of law, and human rights.

The organisation also said this crime is not just the result of an individual's actions but also a reflection of the state's indifference, a long-standing culture of impunity, and failure to enforce the law against influential perpetrators.

"If a woman is not safe in her own home and identity, it represents a serious failure of the state and a breakdown in security," ASK said.

It added that this incident followed a pattern seen in past cases of violence against women, where justice was delayed or the perpetrators were shielded.

ASK called for a thorough and expedited investigation, immediate arrest of the accused, and the assurance of exemplary punishment.

It also demanded that the safety of the victim and her family be ensured, along with compensation and urgent legal, psychological, and medical support.

The organisation warned that without proper and severe punishment in such heinous cases, the dignity and rights of women and the rule of law will continue to erode.

The state must send a clear and

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PHOTO PRABIR DAS

Leaders and activists of progressive organisations carry torches while marching from Purana Paltan to the Jatiya Press Club in the capital last night, protesting the rape of a woman in Cumilla's Muradnagar and demanding exemplary punishment of the perpetrators.

IMF expects FDI inflows as polls timeline firms up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Monetary Fund has expressed optimism that foreign investment into Bangladesh will begin to flow again as the country's election timeline has removed a key source of uncertainty for investors.

"With the elections now being firmed, we believe that the investments will start coming in. This is very important for Bangladesh because it has one of the lowest foreign direct investments in the world," said Chris Papageorgiou, IMF mission chief for Bangladesh.

Papageorgiou made the remarks during an online briefing on the progress of Bangladesh's loan programme with the IMF yesterday, noting that foreign direct investment had slowed considerably in recent months amid concerns over

political uncertainty and governance transitions.

"There was an investment summit when we were on mission, and there was a lot of interest in investing in Bangladesh," he

**IMF mission chief for
Bangladesh is less upbeat
about revenue performance,
describes it as 'not very
encouraging' so far under its
\$5.5b loan programme.**

said. "But there was this uncertainty of how elections go, how the transition to elections goes."

The IMF, he said, does not take political positions, but said in its staff report that

investment decisions, especially from external sources, are sensitive to the timing and perceived credibility of elections.

The IMF believes that with the electoral timeline now firmed, Bangladesh may begin to unlock greater volumes of capital inflows, a much-needed boost for an economy seeking to graduate from least-developed country status and recover from recent economic and political turbulence.

Papageorgiou's comments come against the backdrop of a broader IMF-backed reform programme for Bangladesh. The original loan package, approved in 2023, totalled \$4.7 billion. Following the augmentation approved on June 23, the total size of the programme has increased by \$800 million to \$5.5 billion. Of this, \$3.31 billion has been disbursed so far.

In its latest assessment, the IMF cited

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New CrPC rules

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council meeting, reports BSS.

The false cases and people who make money by implicating innocent people in these cases embarrass the government, he said at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital.

He added that the amendment to the CrPC would prevent these.

"When a murder case is filed in line with the CrPC, the investigation takes three to four years. There are hundreds of accused in some cases...."

According to the new section, 173(a), a police commissioner, superintendent of police (SP), or any police officer of the rank of SP in a district will use their discretion and may direct the investigation officer to prepare and submit a preliminary probe report to the magistrate.

The magistrate will then exempt the individuals against whom there is no evidence before the trial begins, Prof Asif said, adding that a gazette notification will be issued in this connection soon.

NCP to unveil declaration of July on Aug 3

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on anyone. It's now our responsibility to present the proclamation on behalf of the students and the people."

The July declaration is a proposed document aimed at enshrining the aspirations of the people born of last year's mass uprising that ousted the Awami League government.

Speaking at a press conference at the party office in Dhaka yesterday, he also announced a 36-day nationwide party campaign titled "Desh Gortey July Padajatra (July March to Rebuild the Nation)", set to begin on July 1.

The programme will culminate in the reading of the July declaration and the party's manifesto at the Central Shaheed Minar on August 3.

The march will begin with a visit to the grave of Abu Sayed in Rangpur and continue through all 64 districts.

"We want to get closer to the people, to those who took part in the July movement, and hear their voices," said Nahid.

As part of the 36-day programme, the NCP will observe "Anti-Discrimination Martyrs' Day" on July 16 in memory of Abu Sayed and celebrate August 5 as "People's Liberation Day", marking the fall of the Awami League government.

NCP leaders Sarjis Alam, Hasnat Abdullah, and Anik Roy were also present at the press conference.

Poor progress may delay July Charter

FROM PAGE 1

their opponent, because it was merely fulfilling a responsibility.

The two matters on which the parties agree are: first, lawmakers will be allowed to vote against party lines, except on no-confidence motions and finance bills; and second, opposition MPs will chair at least four key parliamentary standing committees.

On June 18, the BNP and like-minded parties opposed a proposal to form the National Constitutional Council, which was supposed to oversee appointments to constitutional bodies and the position of chief adviser to caretaker governments.

Several political parties, including the Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party, supported the proposal. On June 19, political parties remained poles apart over how the president should be elected.

The method of electing the president came up in the discussions again in the second phase, and the BNP rejected a proposal to elect the president through an electoral college, comprising MPs and local government representatives.

The Communist Party of

Bangladesh and the LDP said the current system, in which MPs alone elect the president, should remain unchanged, while the Jamaat and the NCP endorsed the idea of an electoral college.

On June 22, after two days of discussions, all political parties, except the BNP and two others, agreed that an individual cannot be the prime minister for over 10 years.

The consensus commission, on June 25, revised the structure and functions of the proposed National Constitutional Council and renamed it as the Committee for Appointments to Constitutional and Statutory Bodies.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said amendments to current laws to appoint individuals to constitutional posts would be enough.

NCP leader Javed Rasin said at the meeting that the process stalled after hours of discussions.

"I propose that the commission first consult Salahuddin Bhai or the BNP about the proposals. Let them identify the ones they agree on, and only then should the commission bring them to the floor for discussion. Otherwise, there's no point in holding talks like this," he said.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said, "It seems achieving consensus on such matters is nearly impossible."

In the coming days, the commission will also hold discussions on several other key issues, including the process for amending the constitution, declaring a state of emergency,

women's representation in local government bodies, formation of district coordination councils, and the establishment of an independent commission for redrawing boundaries of constituencies.

NO BREAKTHROUGH

At yesterday's discussion, most parties except the BNP and its allies supported the formation of the Committee for Appointments to Constitutional and Statutory Bodies.

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Most participating parties suggested that the upper house be elected through proportional representation. However, the BNP, and several other parties opposed it.

Salahuddin at the meeting said that his party agreed to a bicameral legislature, 100 seats in the upper house, and having deputy speakers from the opposition in both houses.

However, the BNP wanted upper house seats to be allocated based on lower house constituencies; the Jamaat and NCP supported the commission's proposal; two leftist parties and the Amjanata Party opposed the idea of an upper house.

The Khelafat Majlis said those opposing the bicameral legislature were creating confusion.

"On the one hand, they talk about institutional independence, and on the other, they claim the executive's hands are being tied. That's contradictory. The executive branch should not interfere in appointments to constitutional bodies," said its Secretary General Ahmad Abdul Quader.

NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossain said if upper house seats were allocated based on lower house,

it would merely replicate the lower house.

He also expressed doubts over the success of the consensus effort. "The BNP and its allies continue to disagree on fundamental reforms. And even after hours of discussion, nothing is being resolved.

"Around this time last year, we dreamed of a Bangladesh with decentralised power, accountability, and institutional balance. If constitutional bodies remain under the prime minister's control, then these talks, and bloodshed of so many, will mean nothing."

If reforms are not done, the NCP may reconsider its participation in the next election, he added.

Islami Andolan Bangladesh leader Ashraf Ali Akon said that unless the lower house was not based on proportional representation, his party would oppose the proposal for the upper house.

Zonayed Saki of Ganosamhati Andolan proposed naming the lower house Jatiya Sangsad and the upper house Jatiya Parishad.

gathered at their house, she rushed back. "When I got back to my house, I saw that my daughter's clothes had been torn off and she was being beaten."

Abdur Rob, a former member of the local union parishad, said Fazor is notorious in the area for his involvement in drug dealing. "Although he does not hold any political posts, he switches from one party to another with the change of the regime."

Muradnagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Jahidur Rahman said Fazor is currently undergoing treatment at the Cumilla Police Lines Hospital with a broken hand and a leg.

Fazor was first admitted to the Cumilla Medical College Hospital after being beaten up by locals on Thursday night, he said.

He fled from the hospital to a private clinic at Jatrabari in Dhaka after hearing a rape case was filed against him on Friday.

Police arrested Fazor from there the following morning, the OC added.

[Our Correspondent from Cumilla contributed to the report.]

Khelafat Majlis to contest in all 300 seats Says Mamunul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis yesterday announced that it was preparing to nominate candidates in all 300 constituencies for the upcoming national election, prioritising Islamic values and national interests.

"However, if broader alliances or electoral understandings can ensure greater protection of Islam and the country's interests, the party is ready to take that route as well," Mawlana Muhammad Mamunul Haque, ameer of Khelafat Majlis, told a press briefing at the auditorium of Institution of Diplomatic Engineers, Bangladesh.

Outlining the party's position on the proportional representation (PR) system in parliament, he said, "We want a partial PR system. The current system does not truly reflect the majority's opinion. Therefore, to ensure fair and inclusive representation, a partial PR system should be introduced in the lower house and a full PR system in the upper house."

Proportional representation is an electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party.

Calling upon the government to clarify unresolved issues in the electoral framework to the nation without delay. Although there is consensus on a bicameral parliament, a decision is still needed on how the upper and lower chambers will be formed.

Responding to a question, he said that Khelafat Majlis has traditionally been a proponent of Islamic unity. Shortly after its formation, the party played a role in forming a broader Islamic alliance.

"We still uphold that tradition today."

Regarding local government polls, he stated that they too should be held based on national political consensus.

Calling for maintaining the anti-fascist unity, he said, "The historic unity forged on the streets must not be undermined. The current trend of political coordination -- where no one is toppling or suppressing the other -- must continue. If anyone reverts to the Awami League-style politics of suppression and elimination, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis will call for national unity and play an active role."

He further said, "Bangladesh must be governed based on the will of its own people. Our efforts will continue to ensure that no foreign agenda is reimposed."

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis believes that a strong and constructive opposition is essential for the country. The politics of eradicating opposition parties cannot continue in Bangladesh."

Before the press briefing, an orientation and introduction programme for potential candidates was held at the same venue from 10:00am.

Over 300 aspiring candidates from across the country, who are interested in contesting with the rickshaw symbol, attended the event.

Central leaders provided them with necessary guidance on elections, politics, and party ideology.

submitted the petition as a public interest litigation. He appealed to the HC to order the respondents to initiate a judicial inquiry into the rape incident and ensure Tk 5 crore in compensation and adequate treatment for the rape survivor.

DAG Shafiqur told the court that a case was filed over the rape, and five men had already been arrested in this connection.

In the afternoon, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul expressed his shock and outrage over the heinous crime.

"The home ministry took immediate action ... the key suspects and others have already been arrested," he told reporters at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

"We are committed to dealing with the case with the utmost importance."

Meanwhile, Cumilla's Additional Superintendent of Police (Muradnagar Circle) AKM Quamruzzaman said, "Many people tried to label the incident as an extramarital affair, but our primary investigation didn't bear out anything like that."

"The woman, whom we found to be quite simple in her demeanour, was subjected to brutal torture. We're attaching highest importance to the matter."

"We want to get closer to the people, to those who took part in the July movement, and hear their voices," said Nahid.

As part of the 36-day programme, the NCP will observe "Anti-Discrimination Martyrs' Day" on July 16 in memory of Abu Sayed and celebrate August 5 as "People's Liberation Day", marking the fall of the Awami League government.

The HC bench of Justice Fahmida Quader and Justice Sayed Jahed Mansur passed the order and issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Mir AKM Nurun Nobi seeking necessary directives.

The incident has sparked nationwide outrage with people from all walks of life demanding exemplary punishment to the perpetrators.

Several rights organisations have sharply condemned the crime and extended their support to the survivor.

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5 killed in two road crashes in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were killed in two separate road accidents in the capital's Uttara and Bijoy Sarani areas early yesterday.

The victims of the Uttara crash were identified as Fahim Uddin Bin Ahmed, a student of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology; Khaja Naimul Haque, 34, an employee of a travel agency; and Javed Alam Khan, 61, a trader.

In the other accident, two motorcyclists – Sajjadur Rahman, 18, a class X student in Narayanganj, and Md Fahim, 20, an expatriate – died after being hit by a microbus in the Bijoy Sarani area.

Golam Mostafa, officer-in-charge of Uttara East Police Station, said a Dhaka-bound truck carrying stones rammed into pedestrians around 2:30am. Two of the victims died on the spot, while the third succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital.

Police seized the truck and detained its driver.

Investigation Officer SI Mustafizur Rahman said Fahim Uddin and Naimul Haque were killed.

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Students of Ideal College in Dhanmondi block the road at the Science Lab intersection in the capital yesterday, demanding justice for a fellow student who was allegedly intentionally run over and killed by a truck last week.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

JCD LEADER KILLING ICT complaint filed against 62 Saber Hossain, ex-DMP chief among the accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A complaint was filed yesterday with the ICT chief prosecutor's office against 62 individuals, including former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia and former lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury, over the death of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Nuruzzaman Jonny in 2015.

Jonny, who was general secretary of the JCD Khilgaon Thana unit, was killed in what police described as a "shootout" with detectives in Dhaka -- just a day

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Education in remote areas still overlooked

Say experts, call for urgent reforms to primary edn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education experts and teachers yesterday called for urgent reforms to the country's primary education system, which has long been plagued by a widening gap in access to education and its quality, alongside crises including teacher shortages, falling enrolment, and little support for children in remote and marginalised areas.

Educators, government officials, and NGO leaders spoke at a national seminar organised by NETZ Bangladesh in association with CAMPE at Parjatan Corporation Bhaban in Dhaka.

Saira Hossain, an associate professor at Dhaka University, delivered the keynote

presentation.

Addressing the event, Professor Taposh Kumar Biswas of DU said, "Even after five years of schooling, many students can't comprehend a simple text in their mother tongue. How can we dream of building global citizens if our children can't read basic sentences?"

A headteacher from a government primary school in Jashore mentioned the ground reality in the context of their school, where only four teachers are working against nine sanctioned posts. Classes are being conducted in dilapidated structures, and student numbers have dropped by around half.

"We haven't received development funds for the past six years," she added.

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No special celebration on Aug 8

Says CA's press secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Council of Advisers has decided to observe July 16 as July Shaheed Dibosh (July Martyrs' Day) and August 5 as "Gono-ovutthani Dibosh" (Mass Uprising Day), commemorating key events during last year's student-led movement.

There will be no special celebration for August 8, previously declared New Bangladesh Day, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam confirmed in

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Certain groups trying to delay February polls

Says Mirza Abbas; Khosru sees no election uncertainty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two standing committee members of BNP yesterday came up with two differing views over the forthcoming national election.

At a programme organised by the Dhaka South City unit of the BNP in the capital's Kakrail in the morning, BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas said a group is trying to delay the election and harm the country by making 'unreasonable demands, such as introducing a proportional representation (PR) system and holding local polls first.

"Each person is raising a different demand to delay the election, ruin the electoral process and thereby destroy the nation," he said.

Referring to Islami Andolan Bangladesh, he said, "A political party – that applauded Sheikh Hasina from afar and indirectly supported her when she was oppressing the BNP and Jamaat, and did not protest against three rigged and

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13 senior cops suspended for long absence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has suspended 13 senior police officers for prolonged absence without leave or permission, following a breakdown in the police chain of command after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year.

One official left for Thailand on medical leave and never returned. Some disappeared just days after joining duty, while others went on approved leave and did not come back. A few did not apply for leave at all.

The Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs issued 13 separate suspension notices on its website yesterday. Signed by Senior Secretary Nasimul Ghani on June 26, the orders

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A boy holds onto the back of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw while skating through traffic on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital yesterday. Such stunts are unsafe and endanger both the rider and others on the road.

'RETRACTING NEWS' PIB responds to misleading news on study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) yesterday said confusion has arisen over certain information involving various media outlets, including Prothom Alo, in a study on the withdrawal of news.

In a clarification, it said not all retracted reports may necessarily be misinformation. "Incomplete and unclear reports have been published by some media outlets on the study findings," it added.

At a seminar titled "Recent Trends of Misinformation in Bangladesh's Media," held on Saturday at the PIB office in Dhaka, consultant Mamunur Rashid

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Indict 8 cops for crimes against humanity

Prosecution appeals to ICT over July killings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday appealed to the International Crimes Tribunal-1 to indict eight police officials, including former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman,

This marks the first indictment hearing related to crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

Reading out the charges before

a three-member tribunal, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam alleged that the killing of six protesters in the capital's Chankharpul area on August 5 last year took place under the direct supervision and orders of senior police officials.

This marks the first indictment hearing related to crimes against humanity during the July uprising. Four of the accused are

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মুক্তির পথে
সাউথ ইস্ট ব্যাংক পিএলসি.
চট্টগ্রাম ইপিজেড শাখার

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সিইপিজেড শাখা

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'We want land rights, Tk 600 daily wage'

Tea Workers Trade Union Center holds first national conference in Sreemangal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The first national conference of the Tea Workers Trade Union Center was held in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal yesterday, with a renewed call for land rights, increased wages, and an end to discrimination against the tea garden community.

The daylong event, held at the Zilla Parishad auditorium, opened with a cultural programme showcasing the heritage, struggle, and resistance of tea workers through music, recitation, and drama.

The conference began with the hoisting of the national and organisational flags.

The national flag was raised by Mujahidul Islam Selim, former president of Communist Party of Bangladesh, while Sabuj Tanti, convenor of the Trade Union Center, hoisted the organisation's flag.

The formal inauguration was announced by organiser Manisha Wahid.

A procession followed, drawing hundreds of tea workers and students from across Sylhet division.

Mujahidul Islam Selim said the tea worker community remains "one of the most deprived and oppressed" in Bangladesh. He urged the government to grant land rights to tea workers, citing available land outside tea estates that could be allocated.

"During Ershad's time, we won some rights through movement. What is stopping the current government from doing the same?" he asked, while demanding implementation of a 10-point charter of demands that includes a minimum daily wage of Tk 600.

The conference was presided over by Sabuj Tanti and moderated by SM Shuvo.

Other speakers included Dr Nazia Chowdhury, professor at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology; Sohrab Hasan, joint editor of Prothom Alo; Jolly Talukder of the Garments Workers Trade Union Center; journalist Mamabub Alam; and several tea garden leaders and workers.

Speakers called for the inclusion of the tea workers' demands in the manifestos of political parties ahead of national election.

They said land rights and a fair wage of Tk 600 are no longer just demands, they are necessities. They also stressed the need for improved housing and education for families of tea workers.



Hundreds of tea workers and students bring out a procession in Sreemangal as part of the first national conference of the Tea Workers Trade Union Center yesterday. At the daylong event, they demanded land rights, increased wages, and an end to discrimination against the tea garden community.

PHOTO: STAR

ALOKBALI UNION IN NARSINGDI Lack of bridge puts 50,000 locals in peril

JAHIDUL ISLAM, Narsingdi

Over 50,000 residents of Alokballi union in Narsingdi Sadar upazila continue to suffer due to the absence of a bridge connecting their river-encircled villages to the district headquarters.

Surrounded by the Meghna, this remote char area consists of nine villages where residents rely solely on boats for travel.

Despite being just 20 kilometres from the town centre, locals often spend four to five hours navigating the river, frequently delayed by water hyacinth and adverse weather conditions.

"Due to water hyacinth, even a one-hour route takes up to four hours," said Rubel Ahmed, 32, of Alokballi village.

Ahmad Mia, 25, of Bakhrnagar shared

a tragic personal account. "On January 10, my father suffered severe chest pain around 2:30am. Because of thick fog and river blockages, no boatman agreed to take us. By dawn, we managed to cross



the river after 90 minutes and reached Narsingdi Hospital, but my father had already had a major heart attack. Though doctors referred him to the National

Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Dhaka, he died at the hospital gate. Timely medical attention could have saved him, but the delay proved fatal."

Fulkam Badsha, executive engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department, said, "During my field visit, I experienced a three-hour delay due to water hyacinth. A feasibility study for a 300-metre bridge from Alokballi to Srinagar in Karimpur union has already been completed. We're actively working to move the project forward."

Asma Jahan Sarkar, UNO of Narsingdi Sadar upazila, said, "I recently visited the area by boat. The residents are indeed deprived of many facilities due to poor connectivity. We have assessed the feasibility for a bridge, and necessary steps will be taken soon."

13 senior cops suspended for long absence

FROM PAGE 3
said the officers were suspended under civil service rules for desertion.

The suspended officers include three superintendents of police (SPs), eight additional SPs, and two assistant SPs.

The 13 officers are -- SPs Sanwar Hossain, Md Shahjahan and Golam Mostafa Russell; additional SPs SM Jahangir Hasan, Shah Alam Md Akhtarl Islam, SM Shamim, Iftekharul Islam, Moshu Biswas, Hasanuzzaman Molla, Rubaiyat Zaman, and Masudur Rahman Monir; and assistant SPs

Mahmudul Hasan and Md Imrul.

According to the notifications, Sanwar Hossain, former SP of the Anti-Terrorism Unit and currently attached to the Barishal Range DIG office, has been absent since January 1 without approval. Former Narayanganj SP Golam Mostafa Russell, who is attached to the same office, has been absent since the same day.

SP Md Shahjahan, formerly posted in Rangpur and now with the Chattogram Range DIG office, has been absent since January 16.

Among the additional SPs, SM Jahangir Hasan of the Naval Police went on 15 days' leave for cardiac treatment in Thailand on October 8. He was due back on October 23 but instead requested an additional 60 days citing treatment at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore. The extension was not approved. Two official notices were sent to his address, but he did not return.

Shah Alam Md Akhtarl Islam, former ADC of Ramna Division and now posted at the Sylhet In-Service Training Centre, has been absent since January 26.

SM Shamim, former ADC of DMP, has not reported for duty since September 18 last year.

Iftekharul Islam, former ADC of DMP and now serving with the Cox's Bazar APBn, has been absent since February 16.

Moshu Biswas, former ADC of the Detective Branch and now at the Jamalpur In-Service Training Centre, has been

5 killed in two

FROM PAGE 3

were cousins and Javed was their uncle. They went to Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital to see one of their relatives, and while returning to Khilkhet, they were hit by the truck.

In another incident, the motorbike carrying Sajjadur and Md Fahim was hit by a microbus on Bijoy Sarani, said Abdullah Al Mamun, OC of Kafrul Police Station. The motorbike was heading towards Jahangir Gate when the microbus made a sudden turn.

Both riders died on the spot. The microbus driver fled the scene.

"We are trying to identify the vehicle using CCTV footage," the OC added.

Redwanur Rahman, Sajjadur's uncle, told The Daily Star that Fahim had returned from Dubai a few days ago. "Around 2:00am, they went out for a ride on the motorbike. In the morning, we heard the tragic news."

Bangladesh Power Development Board

Office of the Senior System Analyst
Dhaka Computer Center
Wapda Building (4th Fl.), Motijheel, Dhaka
Phone No. 47113484

Date: 29/06/2025

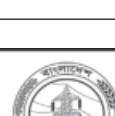
Invitation for e-Tenders

e-Tender are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of following work.

Sl. No.	Tender ID & Ref. No.	Name of works	Tender publication date	Tender closing date
1	Tender ID: 1128676 Ref. No: 27.11.0000.716.77.25.902 Dt: 29.06.2025	Work for Bulk SMS in connection with Online New Connection System and ERP System of BPDB with supporting service for 1 year.	29.06.2025	17.07.2025 Time: 14:00

বিদ্যুৎ/জন-১৫৫২ (২)/২৯/০৬/২৫

29.06.2025
A.S.M. Foizullah
Senior System Analyst
(Additional Charge)
Dhaka Computer Center
BPDB, Dhaka



বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড

Bangladesh Power Development Board
www.bpdb.gov.bd

Directorate of Purchase
WAPDA Building (10th Floor)
Motijheel, Dhaka-1000
Tel. 0222338081
E-mail: dirpurchase@bpdb.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of:

SL. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of goods/ works	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
01	ID-1129197	EA-GRL-02 (FY 2024-25)	27.11.0000.304. 25.227.25 Date: 29/06/2025	Procurement of Portable Meter Testing Set	21-Jul-2025, 17:00	22-Jul-2025, 14:00	22-Jul-2025, 14:00

These are online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (eprocure.gov.bd).

For more details please contact to the PE's Support Desk (01768015538).

বিদ্যুৎ/জন-১৫৫৬ (৩)/২৯/০৬/২৫

29.06.2025
Md. Nannu Miah
ID No. 1-01304
Director
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Dhaka

GD-1482

Iran voices 'doubts' over durability of truce: report

AGENCIES

Iran is highly doubtful that Israel will maintain the ceasefire that ended an air war between the two countries, Iranian armed forces Chief of Staff told Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman yesterday, according to Iranian semi-official Tasnim news agency.

"Since we have complete doubts about the enemy's (Israel) adherence to its commitments, including the ceasefire, we are prepared to give it a strong response if it repeats the aggression," Abdolrahim Mousavi said.

UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said Iran likely will be able to begin to produce enriched uranium "in a matter of months," despite damage

IAEA chief warns Tehran can enrich uranium for a bomb within months

to several nuclear facilities from US and Israeli attacks, CBS News said Saturday.

Israel launched a bombing campaign on Iranian nuclear and military sites on June 13. The United States subsequently bombed three key facilities used for Tehran's atomic program.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says the extent of the damage to the nuclear sites is "serious," but the details are unknown. US President Donald Trump insisted Iran's nuclear program had been set back "decades."

But Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said "some is still standing."

"They can have, you know, in a matter of months, I would say, a few cascades of centrifuges spinning and producing enriched uranium, or less than that," Grossi said Friday, according to a transcript of the interview released Saturday.

Another key question is whether Iran was able to relocate some or all of its estimated 408.6-kilo (900 pound) stockpile of highly enriched uranium before the attacks.

Meanwhile, Iranian judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangir said yesterday that Israel's attack on the Evin Prison in Tehran on June 23 killed 71 people, reports Reuters.



Mourners react near the body of a Palestinian child killed in an Israeli strike on a house late at night, according to Gaza's health ministry, during a funeral at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Make deal in Gaza, get hostages back'

Trump steps up pressure for ceasefire; 17 Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes across the enclave

AGENCIES

The Israeli military ordered Palestinians to evacuate areas in northern Gaza yesterday before intensified fighting against Hamas, as US President Donald Trump called for an end to the war and renewed efforts to broker a ceasefire.

"Make the deal in Gaza, get the hostages back," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform early yesterday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was due to hold talks later in the day on the progress of Israel's offensive. A senior security



➤ Israel orders evacuations in northern Gaza
➤ Hamas ready to resume talks, willing to release hostages

official said the military will tell him the campaign is close to reaching its objectives, and warn that expanding fighting to new areas in Gaza may endanger the remaining Israeli hostages.

But in a statement posted on X and text messages sent to many residents, the military urged people in northern parts of the enclave to head south towards the Al-Mawasi area in Khan Younis, which Israel designated as a humanitarian area. Palestinian and UN officials say nowhere in

Gaza is safe.

The evacuation order covered the Jabalia area and most Gaza City districts. Medics and residents said the Israeli army's bombardments escalated in the early hours in Jabalia, destroying several houses and killing at least 12 people.

In Khan Younis in the south, five people were killed in an airstrike on a tent encampment near Mawasi, medics said.

The escalation comes as Arab mediators, Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, begin a new ceasefire effort to halt the 20-month-old conflict and secure the release of Israeli and foreign hostages still being held by Hamas.

Interest in resolving the Gaza conflict has heightened in the wake of US and Israeli bombings of

Iran's nuclear facilities.

A Hamas official told Reuters the group had informed the mediators it was ready to resume ceasefire talks, but reaffirmed the group's outstanding demands that any deal must end the war and secure an Israeli withdrawal from the coastal territory.

Hamas has said it is willing to free remaining hostages in Gaza, 20 of whom are believed to still be alive, only in a deal that will end the war. Israel says it can only end it if Hamas is disarmed and dismantled. Hamas refuses to lay down its arms.

Israel's military assault has killed over 56,000, displaced almost the entire 2.3 million population and plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis.

AIR INDIA CRASH Sabotage angle also being probed

Says India minister

NDTV ONLINE

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is probing from all angles, including sabotage, the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad that killed 274 people on board and on the ground last month, Indian Minister of State (MoS) For Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said.

Mohol also said the black box of the Air India flight AI 171 that has been recovered is in AAIB's custody and will not be outside the country for a thorough assessment.

The MoS was in conversation with NDTV's Jitendra Dixit at the Pune chapter of the Emerging Business Conclave when he made the remarks.

"It was an unfortunate incident. The AAIB has begun a full probe... It is being probed from all angles, including any possible sabotage. The CCTV footage are being reviewed and all angles are being assessed... several agencies are working on it," he said.

On June 12, London-bound AI 171 crashed seconds after taking off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Airport. Only one of the 242 passengers and crew members onboard survived the crash.

Wave of Russian strikes hits Ukraine; 12 hurt

Ukraine F-16 pilot killed while repelling air attack

AFP, Kyiv

Fresh Russian strikes targeting Ukrainian regions in the night of Saturday to yesterday wounded at least 12 people, according to the war-torn country's authorities, calling on Western allies for increased military support.

Talks on ending the fighting between the two sides are at an impasse, with Kyiv accusing Moscow, which occupies nearly one-fifth of Ukraine's territory, of wanting the war to drag on.

In the night the Russian army launched 477 drones and 60 missiles of various types, according to the Ukrainian air force, which said it had intercepted 475 and 39 of those respectively.

The strikes led to "six impacts", the air force said, without giving further details. Besides the civilian casualties, a fighter pilot was killed in the night after his F-16 jet was damaged in mid-air "without him having the time to eject", according to an air force statement.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a decree on plan to withdraw Ukraine from anti-landmine treaty.

Pointing to the Russian bombardment, he argued it showed that his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin "has long decided to pursue this war, despite the international community's calls for peace".

Israeli strikes on south Lebanon kill three people Hezbollah warns its patience wearing thin

AFP, Beirut

Israeli strikes killed three people in southern Lebanon later on Saturday despite a ceasefire in force there, authorities said, with Iran-backed Hezbollah suggesting its patience for the "ongoing aggression" was wearing thin.

The Lebanese health ministry said an "Israeli enemy" drone strike on a car in Kunin, south Lebanon, killed one man and wounded another person.

The Israeli military said the strike "eliminated the terrorist Hassan Muhammadi Hammoudi", who it said was responsible for anti-tank missile attacks on Israeli territory during the recent war.

In a second statement later on Saturday, the health ministry said a strike on a motorcycle in Mahrouna, near Tyre, resulted in "two martyrs and wounded one person", with one of the dead a woman.

The Israeli military said it carried out a strike Saturday that "eliminated the terrorist Abbas Al-Hassan Wahbi in the area of Mahrouna in southern Lebanon.

The IDF statement said Wahbi was a Hezbollah intelligence official "involved in efforts to rebuild Hezbollah and weapons transfers."

"These activities constitute a blatant violation of the understandings between Israel and Lebanon," it said.

The attacks came a day after Lebanon blamed Israel for strikes that killed a woman and wounded 25 others.

Trump's tax-cut, spending bill clears first Senate hurdle

REUTERS, Washington

The Republican-controlled US Senate narrowly advanced President Donald Trump's sweeping tax-cut and spending bill on Saturday, during a marathon weekend session marked by political drama, division and lengthy delays as Democrats sought to slow the legislation's path to passage.

Lawmakers voted 51-49 to open debate on the 940-page megabill, with two of Trump's fellow Republicans joining Democrats to oppose the legislation that would fund the president's top immigration, border, tax-cut and military priorities. Trump on social media hailed the "great victory" for his "great, big, beautiful bill."

After hours of delay, during which Republican leaders and Vice President JD Vance worked behind closed doors to persuade last-minute holdouts to support the measure, Democrats demanded that the megabill first be read aloud in the chamber - a task that could delay the start of the debate until yesterday afternoon.

Democrats say the bill's tax cuts would disproportionately benefit the wealthy at the expense of social programs for lower-income Americans.

"Senate Republicans are scrambling to pass a radical bill, released to the public in the dead of night, praying the American people don't realize what's in it," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said on the Senate floor.

"Democrats are going to force this chamber to read it from start to finish," he said. Once the bill has been read, lawmakers will begin up to 20 hours of debate on the legislation. That will be followed by a marathon amendment session, known as a "vote-a-rama," before the Senate votes on passage. Lawmakers said they hoped to complete work on the bill today.

IMF expects FDI inflows

FROM PAGE 2

"broadly satisfactory" performance despite considerable headwinds, including political instability, rising trade barriers, and financial sector stress in the wake of the 2024 popular uprising that unseated the previous government.

LONG ROAD AHEAD

While the investment outlook appears to be improving, Papageorgiou was less upbeat about revenue performance, describing it as "not very encouraging" so far under the IMF-supported programme.

"We have been having targets since the beginning of the programme, and if you look at the performance, it has not been very encouraging," he said. "The authorities are making efforts. Some of these efforts come short."

Each programme review has resulted in new corrective actions aimed at rebuilding momentum. "What we have in mind is always something that is ambitious in terms of a target, but always achievable."

Bangladesh is currently "at a critical juncture,"

Papageorgiou said, citing both economic and geopolitical headwinds. Still, the IMF believes the revenue targets are within reach, particularly on the VAT and income tax sides, given renewed commitments from the authorities.

He acknowledged the structural nature of the challenge. "This is really an issue that goes back decades. And we really try to turn the corner there, and that is challenging and we recognise this."

To support long-term reforms, the IMF and the World Bank have launched a joint revenue mobilisation initiative built around key pillars, including policy measures and structural changes such as separating tax policy from administration, Papageorgiou said.

He added that if revenue targets are missed, the IMF will continue engaging with the government. "We have to sit together again, look through corrective actions that the authorities have to take for the next review. We look at what are the issues, how can we resolve the issues, so that we can build on this positive momentum."

Bangladesh is currently "at a critical juncture,"

NBR officials end strike after govt warning

FROM PAGE 1

The strike that continued for two days crippled the port and customs services. Protesting officials held a sit-in in front of the NBR headquarters in Agartaoon.

The shutdown disrupted operations at ports, the Chattogram Custom House, and Dhaka airport, severely affecting export-import activities and revenue collection. Only international passenger services remained exempt from the work stoppage.

Earlier in the day, the government signalled it would take tougher measures to break the impasse. In a parallel move, the government formed a five-member advisory committee led by Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan to help resolve the standoff over the contentious NBR reform ordinance, which had triggered protests across the revenue administration.

The panel includes Housing and Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, Labour and Employment Adviser Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain, Environment

Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, and Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin, according to the Cabinet Division.

The actions came amid growing pressure from business leaders and a spiralling economic toll, as protesting NBR officials refused to back down from demands that include the removal of NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan and an end to what they termed "vengeful transfers".

In a separate development, the Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday launched an investigation into six NBR officials, including Hasan Mohammad Tarek Rikabder, the president of the NBR Reform Unity Council, over allegations of facilitating large-scale tax evasion and accumulating illicit wealth through bribery.

ACC Director General Md Akhter Hossain said the commission initiated the probe after verifying allegations.

"The government was taken following due diligence," he told reporters. The accused include AKM Badilul Alam, member (Income Tax Policy); Mirza Ashiq Rana, additional tax commissioner, Tax Zone-8; Mohammad Morshed Uddin Khan, joint tax commissioner at BCS Tax Academy; Monalisa Shahreen Sushmita, joint commissioner; and Sadhan Kumar Kundu, additional commissioner of the Customs, Excise and VAT Commissionate.

In a statement, the government said it was "deeply concerned to observe that, for the past two months, a section of NBR officials and employees have been unjustly and unethically obstructing the country's trade, import-export operations, and revenue collection activities under the pretext of a movement."

In the statement, the Chief Adviser's Office said the government decided to declare customs, inland container depot (ICD), and bond and customs stations as essential services to ensure imports, exports, and international trade.

Public sector functions designated as essential services must continue uninterrupted even during strikes, emergencies, or crises. This designation restricts actions such as strikes or lockouts that impede critical public functions.

Gaza is heading for complete erasure

Palestine's plight demands immediate global actions

The world has likely never witnessed horrors of the kind we are now seeing in Palestine—not, at least, since the end of World War II. According to Gaza's health ministry, over 56,300 people have died in Gaza since Israel launched its latest campaign against the Palestinians in October 2023. But even that figure appears to be greatly understated, according to the Israeli daily *Haaretz*. The newspaper estimates that nearly 100,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, which represents about four percent of its population.

According to *Haaretz*, in addition to the high number of deaths directly caused by Israeli attacks, many have also died from indirect effects such as hunger, cold, and disease amid the collapse of Gaza's healthcare system. Earlier, the World Health Organization reported that at least 94 percent of all hospitals in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed as a result of Israel's continued aggression. There is, therefore, every reason to believe that the death toll is much higher than the ministry's estimate. Only last week, 400 people were killed and over 3,000 wounded during an "aid" operation. As starving civilians gathered for aid in massive numbers, Israeli troops opened fire, killing dozens as they tried to collect a few kilos of flour or canned goods. Palestinians have dubbed this "the hunger games." That people are willing to risk their lives to collect aid, despite knowing the brutality that awaits them, is an indication of the level of desperation and destitution they have been reduced to.

The *Haaretz* report was based on a study conducted by Prof Michael Spagat, a leading expert on mortality in violent conflicts. His findings suggest that 56 percent of those killed have been either children under the age of 18 or women—an exceptional figure compared to almost every other conflict since World War II. Moreover, while the overall number of war victims in Syria, Ukraine, and Sudan may be higher in absolute terms, Gaza appears to rank first both in the ratio of combatants to non-combatants killed, and in the death rate relative to population size. These are staggering findings that clearly reveal the severity of the war crimes being committed by Israel against the Palestinians.

It is apparent that Israel is on the verge of completely eradicating—or displacing—the remaining population from Gaza and, perhaps eventually, from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. While this is unfolding, US President Donald Trump recently stated that he believes a ceasefire could be reached within a week. The unfortunate reality, however, is that we have heard such rhetoric many times before. The fact remains that Israel has continued its genocidal campaign with both direct and indirect support from the West, including the US. This must stop. The West must abandon its double standards regarding whose human rights matter, and compel Israel to end its aggression. A permanent solution to the Gaza crisis must be found by recognising and ensuring full autonomy for a Palestinian state.

Universities must give research priority

JU-DU research allocations speak of institutional apathy

We are concerned by the continuing neglect of research at public universities, as evidenced once again by the just-announced budget of Jahangirnagar University. According to a report, out of a total Tk 323.35 crore budget for FY2025-26, JU allocated only 2.85 percent—just over Tk 9 crore—for research and innovation. Earlier this month, Dhaka University approved a Tk 1,035 crore budget with only Tk 21.57 crore—about 2.08 percent—allocated for research. The trend in other universities is more or less similar, and aligns with the similarly poor allocations for education in the national budget approved by the interim government, all of which shows how little priority knowledge creation or education in general holds in the country.

This is certainly not what one expected after a bloody uprising that sought a departure from the anti-people, anti-student practices of the past. To see the continuation of this trend of neglect feels like a betrayal to the promise of collective progress that can only be achieved through proper support for merit and innovation, especially at the universities where the leaders of tomorrow are forged. When it comes to research, the problem is not just underfunding. It's the entire public university ecosystem that seems designed to disincentivise research.

For instance, one persistent problem has been the underutilisation of even the measly funds provided for research, which reflects the poor absorption capacity of the universities. The process of accessing funds is often mired in bureaucratic hurdles, discouraging faculty members from applying for grants. Thus, many opt for NGO or external funds instead. The lack of priority given to research or higher academic standards in case of faculty promotion also indicates a lack of institutional commitment. It is no surprise then that Bangladesh doesn't have a single university that qualifies as a real research institute. We remain trapped in a teaching-focused, degree producing system that rarely nurtures scholars. Just imagine: over 92 percent of the JU budget has been allocated for salaries, allowances, pensions, goods and services!

This trend must change. Our universities cannot remain merely teaching institutions if we want to build a knowledge economy. The time has come to invest in research infrastructure and initiatives, not just in salaries or buildings. We urge the university administrations and higher education authorities to take this matter seriously, and ensure an enabling environment for research in our universities.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Night of the Long Knives

On this day in 1934, the "Night of the Long Knives" took place, in which German dictator Adolf Hitler had his elite SS guards summarily execute many leading officials of the SA, a Nazi paramilitary group.

EDITORIAL

NBR crisis is the result of institutional egos clashing



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MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

"As a young civil service officer, I never imagined I would have to take to the streets to defend my professional career," an income tax cadre official told me on the first day of the indefinite shutdown at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) headquarters. "Refraining from my official duties and standing in protest wearing a badge, under the adverse weather—this was never what I signed up for. But we have been pushed into a corner. There is no other way," said the official, who travelled from outside Dhaka to join the "March to NBR."

A day later, the finance ministry said the NBR protesters had agreed to withdraw the shutdown programme. But just hours after that announcement, the NBR Reform Unity Council dismissed it and reaffirmed their commitment to continue the protest.

It was a complete misstep on the government's part to handle such a critical issue while ignoring the protesters.

In addition, the government again said a follow-up meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday [July 1], aiming to discuss the Revenue Policy and

When revenue officials go on strike, containers pile up at the ports, raw materials stay locked behind paperwork, exporters miss deadlines, and small businesses suffer cash crunches. Yet, the silence from both policy bureaucrats and the officials on strike has persisted for days, each waiting for the other to blink.

The first phase of the protest ran from May 14 to May 25, while the second phase began on June 23. The situation had started to simmer down after the Eid-ul-Azha holidays after the first round of protests as the officials received assurances regarding their demands from the government. However, a recent transfer order involving some protesting officials, coupled with restrictions on the use of the NBR conference room for meetings and the deployment of law enforcement members, rekindled tensions and reignited anger within the tax administration.

The mistrust between the senior leadership, particularly the NBR members, and the lower-tier officials, who are mostly protesting, has only

Revenue Administration Ordinance, 2025, based on the finance ministry's earlier press release issued on May 25. In its statement, the ministry also said the authorities would review the transfer orders of the five officials.

In this turmoil, however, neither side showed any attempt to find a solution to the ongoing stalemate.

On Saturday night, the finance adviser told *Prothom Alo*, "I have scheduled a meeting with them (the protesters) on July 1. But the condition is that they must withdraw their movement before attending."

"If they want to meet earlier, I am open to that too. I hope they (the protesters) will come to their senses. They must prioritise the interest of the country. Revenue collection must not

be disrupted," he further added.

The protesters, meanwhile, signalled their willingness to sit for talks, but insisted on the NBR chairman being removed from his post beforehand.

On Sunday, as of 6:20pm, the protesters did not make an announcement of ending the shutdown. the government issued another statement urging the

on strike has persisted for days, each waiting for the other to blink.

In a joint press conference on Saturday, the country's top businesses, including industry leaders from apparel, pharmaceuticals, leather goods, textiles, and accessories, raised alarm over the mounting financial losses and operational gridlock caused by the NBR shutdown. They warned



The ongoing NBR crisis belongs not in the streets, but at the negotiating table where mature dialogue should lead the way.

FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

protesters to withdraw from "activities against the law and against national interest," warning that it would be forced to take a tough position otherwise.

However, the ongoing shutdown has truly cut through the noise. At a time when the state is counting every crore to manage a strained budget, this standoff between government high-ups and the revenue officials has laid bare the high cost of delayed dialogue, deep-seated bureaucratic mistrust, and bruised institutional egos.

This is no ordinary administrative dispute. This is a paralysis at the very nerve centre of Bangladesh's revenue system—one that underwrites over 88 percent of the national budget. With June being the peak month for collections, contributing nearly Tk 58,000 crore last year, each passing day of disruption bleeds the economy and deepens uncertainty in trade and business.

When revenue officials go on strike, containers pile up at the ports, raw materials stay locked behind paperwork, exporters miss deadlines, and small businesses suffer cash crunches. Yet, the silence from both policy bureaucrats and the officials

that prolonged disruption would have serious economic consequences for Bangladesh.

For instance, the RMG sector alone is facing trade disruptions worth more than \$230 million per day as the movement of goods and raw materials through Chattogram port, land ports, and airports remains stalled due to the shutdown by revenue officials. One business leader remarked that customs operations are never halted except in times of war.

In this situation, one might argue that the protesting officials are holding on to their egos. But while they stand firm, it is the economy that suffers and ultimately, it is the people who pay the price for this prolonged stalemate.

And that raises a fundamental question: why should ordinary citizens bear the burden of a bureaucratic breakdown? This is not a crisis that belongs in the streets. It belongs at the negotiating table where mature dialogue, not institutional ego, should lead the way. If the government and the protesters truly care for the country and not just their institutional ground, then they must speak, listen, and act so that this stalemate is resolved as soon as possible.

The weaponisation of religious sentiments



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On June 22, 2025, in Lalmonirhat, a 70-year-old Hindu barber named Paresh Chandra Shil and his son Bishnu Chandra Shil were brutally attacked by a mob following accusations of hurting religious sentiments. The two were beaten in public, reportedly with the involvement of local religious leaders, before being handed over to the police.

This is not an isolated incident. It signals a deeper and more dangerous crisis: the weaponisation of blasphemy laws against minorities. In a country where any perceived insult to the majority religion triggers swift and sometimes violent reactions, mere allegations—without verifiable evidence—often ignite mob justice.

What happened in Lalmonirhat reflects a disturbing pattern across Bangladesh, where accusations of hurting religious sentiments increasingly target, silence, and punish minority communities. These claims rarely lead to proper investigations. Instead, they fuel immediate, extrajudicial violence, with law enforcement agencies often turning a blind eye.

Other tragic incidents have also been triggered by blasphemy allegations over the years. In Ramu, Buddhist temples were torched over a false Facebook post in 2012. In Nasirnagar, Hindu homes and temples were

attacked following rumours in 2016. In Lalmonirhat in 2020, a mentally ill man was killed and his body burned based on another unverified claim.

This time, the spark was allegedly a petty personal dispute over Tk 10. Such is the fragile reality: a rumour, a whisper, a grievance can destroy lives.

Blasphemy accusations in

while some majority religious figures freely make derogatory remarks about other faiths, without consequence. The issue isn't blasphemy, it's who is speaking.

In this system, Hindus, Christians, or Buddhists—especially if poor and powerless—remain vulnerable. A rumour can erase decades of coexistence. A lie can destroy a life.

The most haunting aspect is the state's lack of proper action. Politicians arrive too late. Investigations stall. Perpetrators go free.

This failure sends a clear message: in the absence of state protection, sometimes justice can bow to public fury.

Some political actors even benefit from this divide, posing as defenders

There will be no real change without the rule of law. The police, judiciary, and administration must be completely free from political and religious influence and operate independently and impartially. Swift, transparent, and strict legal action is necessary to effectively address religious incitement and mob violence.

Bangladesh have become tools of power, not matters of faith. They settle personal scores, assert communal dominance, or provoke political chaos. For the poor, marginalised, and religious "others," these accusations could be death sentences—no defence, no protection, no voice.

This is not about religion, it's about scapegoating. There are glaring double standards in how religious speech is treated. Minority voices face silencing and attacks over perceived blasphemy,

of the majority faith while quietly enabling violence that consolidates their power. In this environment, defending minorities becomes an act of courage, not a civic duty.

Make no mistake, this is not a religious problem. It is a political and social crisis disguised in religious language. Religion is the excuse, not the cause. It is a mask worn by those who seek to dominate, punish, and terrorise.

Mob violence in the name of religion is fascism. It betrays the principles of

justice, mercy, and coexistence upheld by all faiths.

If Bangladesh is to break this cycle, accountability must come first. Mob violence and hate crimes must be prosecuted swiftly and transparently.

Accusations of blasphemy should follow due legal process, not public retribution. Law enforcement must be trained to prevent incitement and protect the accused until facts are verified.

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The media in Bangladesh is not free from blame either. In many cases, their reporting makes the victims appear as the offenders. Biased reporting misleads the public and deepens social divisions. Such media partiality increases the vulnerability of victims and obstructs the path to justice.

Justice must be blind to religion, wealth, or politics, and it must be swift.

Paresh Chandra Shil was not a threat. He was a fixture of his community, offering shaves and smiles for decades. But one rumour was enough to mark him for violence.

Let us not forget his name or his story. If mobs are allowed to play the roles of judge, jury, and executioner, we abandon justice. And when justice dies, no one—majority or minority—is safe.

It's time to reclaim justice for all Bangladeshis.

Why the WHO Pandemic Agreement matters for Bangladesh

Dr Md Zakiul Hassan
is associate scientist at icddr,b and DPhil fellow, Moh Foundation fellow, and Clarendon scholar at the Pandemic Sciences Institute, University of Oxford, UK.

Dr Md Mustafizur Rahman
is senior scientist and senior director of the Infectious Diseases Division at icddr,b.

**MD ZAKIUL HASSAN and
MD MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN**

In May this year, member-states of World Health Organization adopted the WHO Pandemic Agreement following three years of intensive negotiations. Signed by 124 countries, including Bangladesh, this agreement marks a major shift in how the world prepares for and responds to future health crises. It aims to move from a fragmented, reactionary approach to one of coordinated resilience. For Bangladesh, a country burdened with emerging diseases and growing climate vulnerabilities, the agreement presents both an opportunity and a challenge.

The COVID pandemic exposed the stark inequities in global health. Vaccines, treatments, diagnostics, oxygen, and personal protective equipment were hoarded by high-income countries, leaving low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) struggling for access. Bangladesh, like many LMICs, waited months to secure vaccine doses. By the time many people in Dhaka and rural districts received their first shot, booster campaigns were already underway in wealthier nations. This inequity was not only unjust—it was dangerous. As long as one part of the world remains vulnerable, no country is truly safe.

The new pandemic agreement seeks to address these failures. One of its most important provisions is the establishment of a Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system. Under PABS, countries detecting new pathogens are required to share samples and data promptly. In return, they are guaranteed equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments developed from those samples. For Bangladesh, which has long provided vital disease surveillance data on cholera, Nipah virus, and avian influenza, this represents long overdue recognition of the value LMICs contribute to global health. PABS also requires pharmaceutical companies to reserve 20 percent of pandemic related products for global distribution, half as donations and half at affordable prices, through WHO-coordinated channels. This mechanism aims to prevent the kind of vaccine apartheid

witnessed during COVID. However, the PABS framework remains incomplete, with key details still under negotiation. In the absence of a binding legal structure, Bangladesh and other LMICs must remain vigilant in pushing for enforceable commitments.

The agreement also emphasises the need to strengthen national health systems. Articles 6 and 7 of the agreement call for investment in primary healthcare, laboratories, workforce

pressure with minimal protection. Many suffered from burnout and infection. The pandemic agreement calls for safer working conditions, gender responsive policies, and fair compensation. Bangladesh can lead by example by investing in improved working conditions and professional development for its health workforce.

Another notable component is the push to decentralise manufacturing capacity.

its commitment to equitable research and development (R&D). Article 9 challenges the prevailing model in which LMICs serve as data sources but are excluded from authorship, leadership, or access to resulting products. The agreement promotes open science, fair collaboration, and transparency in clinical trials. For Bangladeshi researchers, this offers a pathway to greater recognition and influence in global health research. However,

systems and cross-sectoral collaboration aligns well with national needs. This must be paired with decisive national leadership. At present, multiple institutions—including the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—share overlapping responsibilities, leading to delays in data sharing and coordination. Designating a central authority—whether the DGHS, IEDCR, CDC, or the Prime Minister's Office—would improve coordination, reduce redundancies, and support timely, evidence-based responses.

A further critical feature is the financial mechanism outlined in Article 18, which proposes the creation of a coordinating financial mechanism to support pandemic preparedness, especially in resource-limited settings. Bangladesh, which has historically benefited from international development assistance, can leverage this platform to fund laboratory upgrades, workforce training, and surveillance networks. However, donor fatigue and recent funding cuts—particularly from the US—highlight the importance of domestic co-financing and regional cooperation.

Of course, the agreement is not without criticism. Many of its provisions are voluntary, and enforcement mechanisms are weak. Nevertheless, it marks a vital shift: from treating pandemics as isolated emergencies to recognising them as systemic risks that demand ongoing, collective investment. It signals the beginning of a more equitable model of global health governance.

For Bangladesh, the road ahead is clear. The country must strengthen its health infrastructure (particularly in rural and underserved areas), invest in local R&D and manufacturing capacity, advocate for enforceable global commitments under the PABS framework, integrate One Health across government institutions, ensure protection and empowerment of its health workforce, and promote regional cooperation in South Asia. Most importantly, it must establish a resilient, integrated disease surveillance system, staffed by trained professionals and guided by empowered leadership.

As the world shifts from reaction to resilience, Bangladesh must not simply follow—it must lead. The memories of COVID and the lives lost demand more than statements and signatures. They demand action. The pandemic agreement provides the compass to navigate this path.



Signed by 124 countries, including Bangladesh, the WHO Pandemic Agreement marks a major shift in how the world prepares for and responds to future health crises.

SOURCE: WHO

training, and mental health support. In Bangladesh, where progress has been made but rural facilities remain underresourced and urban hospitals overburdened, this serves as a critical call to action. A particular priority is the creation of a coordinated and comprehensive disease monitoring system. Current surveillance mechanisms are fragmented, with limited integration between laboratories, clinical settings, and public health agencies. Enhanced local laboratory capacity, streamlined reporting systems, and investment in trained field-level personnel are essential for achieving early detection and rapid response.

Workforce protection is another cornerstone of the agreement. During COVID, Bangladesh's frontline healthcare workers—many of whom were women—faced extreme

The agreement's articles 10 and 11 promote technology transfer to LMICs to enable local production of vaccines and diagnostics. This is highly relevant for Bangladesh, which has already demonstrated capacity in manufacturing generic medicines and vaccines. By leveraging its existing pharmaceutical infrastructure and implementing supportive policies, Bangladesh could emerge as a regional hub for pandemic countermeasures. Encouragingly, initiatives like the WHO mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub in South Africa, along with facilities in Rwanda and Senegal, illustrate what is possible. Bangladesh should advocate for similar partnerships, not only to serve domestic needs but also to support the broader South Asian region.

A major highlight of the agreement is

it will require local investment in research institutions and training programmes. Building robust, transdisciplinary research frameworks that connect epidemiology, clinical medicine, and laboratory science is essential. Bangladesh must move beyond siloed data collection and foster networks that integrate field surveillance, clinical data, and diagnostics into a cohesive platform.

The agreement also endorses the "One Health" approach, which integrates human, animal, and environmental health. With its dense population, livestock farming, and climate-sensitive ecosystems, Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to zoonotic spillovers. Coordinated action across ministries and investment in veterinary and environmental health infrastructure are urgently needed. The agreement's focus on integrated early warning

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Are our preschools truly preparing our youngest?



SAYMA CHOWDHURY
has MEd from Dhaka University and specialises in pre-primary and primary education.

Just a month ago, while searching for a preschool for a young relative, I had an experience that made me seriously reflect on the current approach to early childhood education in Bangladesh. During a conversation, the school principal remarked that textbooks of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) for pre-primary education contain "nothing to learn," claiming they are mostly filled with pictures and lack academic content. To compensate, the institution had introduced 11 additional books for the pre-play. My concern was that when we place such heavy cognitive demands on very young children, what space do we leave for meaningful, age-appropriate learning and exploration during the stages that matter most for their growth?

A relative of mine recently shared her concern about her daughter, who is currently enrolled in a nursery class. The child changed schools not long ago, and since then, she has been facing difficulties adjusting. The new

school places a strong emphasis on academic content, which is hard for her to cope with. Her teacher has even complained to the mother, saying that the child fails to complete classwork. She often comes home tired and disinterested. In contrast, her previous school focused more on learning through play and interactive activities. That environment made her enthusiastic about school and learning. She used to look forward to going to school every day because it was fun and engaging.

The concept of kindergarten was first introduced by Friedrich Froebel, a German educator. He envisioned kindergarten as a nurturing "children's garden," where young learners could grow and develop holistically. According to Froebel, this environment should encourage self-directed play, exploration of nature, and creative activities, all guided by supportive and understanding teachers. The teacher serves as a facilitator rather than a traditional instructor.

The primary goal of preschool is to

prepare children for formal schooling. However, this preparation should not be narrowly interpreted as early exposure to academic content. Instead, preschool plays a crucial role in fostering foundational social and emotional skills that are essential for success in later schooling. According to the National Education Policy 2010, the fundamental aim of pre-primary education is to spark children's interest in learning and

In our society, there is often a common belief that a child who can memorise and reproduce content at an early age is more meritorious. Additionally, there is a widespread notion that learning happens only through books, while play-based activities are merely for entertainment. However, play is not just a form of enjoyment—it is a powerful learning method.

motivate them to attend school before formal education begins. At this early stage, children should be encouraged to develop a love for learning, while also having the chance to

nurture their social and emotional growth, such as learning to cooperate, work in teams, and follow simple rules, by engaging with their peers.

However, as reflected in the two cases mentioned at the beginning of this article, many preschool and kindergarten institutions still focus heavily on academic content and rely on traditional teaching methods. This practice goes against the core objective of pre-school, which is to prepare children for formal schooling through enjoyable, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate experiences. When children are exposed to academic pressure too early, learning can become a source of fear and disinterest rather than a process driven by curiosity and engagement.

During my academic research on pre-primary education last year, a teacher from a government primary school shared a revealing insight. She noted that when the school strictly adhered to the textbook and instructional guidelines prescribed by the NCTB, many parents expressed dissatisfaction. According to her, the parents often compared government-run pre-primary programmes with nearby kindergartens, which typically follow different approaches and appear to offer more academic content, leading to unrealistic expectations about early learning.

In our society, there is often a common belief that a child who can memorise and reproduce content at an early age is

more meritorious. Additionally, there is a widespread notion that learning happens only through books, while play-based activities are merely for entertainment. However, play is not just a form of enjoyment—it is a powerful learning method. Through various types of play and interactive activities, children can connect their experiences to the real world, develop critical thinking, enhance curiosity, and, most importantly, learn social skills, manners, and appropriate behaviour.

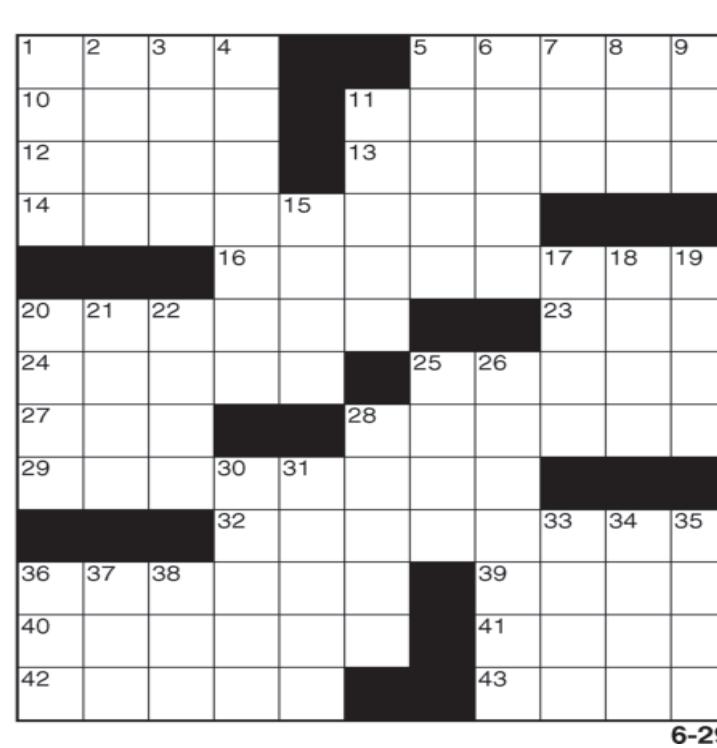
While government primary schools in Bangladesh include pre-primary sections for children aged four to five, with trained teachers and supervision, many private kindergartens operate differently. Although they receive initial approval to run, this approval is often based only on administrative requirements. Many private kindergartens, driven by parental demand for accelerated learning, tend to introduce a multitude of academic books and memorisation for very young children. This directly conflicts with the NCTB's focus on joyful, play-based learning and holistic development. To ensure children's well-being and meaningful growth, it is essential to raise awareness among all stakeholders about developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education. Ensuring consistent pedagogical supervision and ongoing monitoring is also crucial to realising the true purpose of preschool education.

ACROSS

- Cell features
- Church doctrine
- Resting on
- Entice
- Diminutive suffix
- Cleopatra's love
- Garden harvest
- Garden harvest
- Big hits
- Objective
- Dodge
- Effect preceder
- Spanish king
- Like lava
- Garden harvest
- Garden harvest
- Craving
- Country singer
- Jackson
- Tooth layer
- Quick drink
- Borders
- Chopping tools
- Folk's Joan
- Westernmost Aleutian

island

- Campus mil. org.
- Gave design details
- Disco's Summer
- Choose to participate
- Earth: Prefix
- Hr. part
- Some amount of
- Train supports
- Take on
- Lacking slack
- Ascend
- Portent
- Oregano or sage
- Finished
- Sub spread
- Soda choice
- Cave raider of story
- Roadside stop
- Battery, e.g.
- Makes sound
- Baseball's Rodriguez
- Strong wind
- Picnic pests
- Ruby of films
- Break off
- Droop



6-29

SATURDAY'S ANSWERS

S	O	D	A			S	W	A	M
A	R	E	N	A		A	N	I	S
F	A	T	A	L		P	O	S	T
E	T	A			B	R	E	W	R
R	O	C	K	I	E	S	T	O	Y
R	H	I	N	E		L	O	S	
N	O	L	T	E					
B	A	G			S	O	N	A	R
A	R	E			P	I	R	A	T
M	A	R	L	I	N	S	T	E	E
I	V	I	E	S		O	L	I	V
G	E	N	A			S	A	L	E
A	S	S	T			P	A	S	S

Women are not spoils of war, stop letting your inner animals out

JAYA AHSAN

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

"Wait, let me move into another room," said Jaya Ahsan over the phone from Kolkata, not wanting the staff in her makeup room to hear what she had to say. "We are turning into animals. I already knew that we are in a male-dominated society, but what happened last Saturday is in no way a reflection of the country that we want Bangladesh to be."

What was supposed to be a conversation on Jaya's spectacular success in both *Taandob* and *Utshob* soon turned into a pseudo-political discussion on the future of women in the country. How could it not? The entire country has meanwhile been shaken to its core after the brutal rape of a woman in Cumilla. A gut-wrenching video of the victim is making rounds on social media, angering every sane citizen who has come across it. "It doesn't even matter which political party is in power; women are always marginalised and treated as spoils of war," she said, insinuating that there are people who change political allegiances to enjoy power and, at times, quench their animalistic desires. "We need to protect our women and minorities, and I am waiting to see what our government does about it."

She continued in anguish, "Women are not spoils of war or objects. We need to treat them with respect, and we need to make sure that our inner animals are controlled. Actually, it's not fair to animals if we compare (the criminals)

to them." When I brought up if women should unite and take to the streets in protest of these actions, Jaya had a different perspective. "When I protest an injustice as a gender, I am automatically conceding that we are perceived to be 'weaker.' We are humans, entities, institutions. I should not have to say it out loud that we deserve respect; it should be a given, especially in this day and age."

Jaya, who is now across the border to promote *Dear Maa*, is redefining herself

"It doesn't even matter which political party is in power; women are always marginalised and treated as spoils of war."

with every role she takes up. After all, 2025 has been one of resurgence for her. "While I was proud of my box office hits during *Purno Doirgho Prem Kahini* and *Debi*, this Eid has been special. I knew *Taandob* would do well at the box office, but none of us—and I really mean that when I say it—none of us thought that it would go on to be so beloved by the audience." At the time of writing, *Utshob* has grossed around a total of Tk 3.5 crores in multiplexes in the country and \$93,000 in its first week in North America.

When the conversation turned to why younger actors aren't consistently stepping up to the plate, the National Award-winning actress shared an interesting observation. "No one really hits their stride in acting before they're 32," she said, while audibly smirking over the phone. "The more you age, the more you see life and mature, both as a person and as an artiste. That being said, so many talents, like Shoumya Joyti and Sadia Aymen—who you've seen in *Utshob*—are doing well. However, it's important to remember to be consistent. An actress like Meryl Streep can come to your screen for the thousandth time, but her work will still feel fresh. A great actor has to reinvent themselves like that if they want to have a serious career."

A lot is yet to come this year for the superstar, the earliest of which is the July 18 release of Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury's directorial *Dear Maa*, which claims to 'reimagine' motherhood through the lens of adoption as an act of courage, intimacy, and resistance. If Jaya's track record in 2025 is anything to go by, we are in for another emotional roller-coaster.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSED

NEWS

Govt okays draft MoU

FROM PAGE 12

in Bangladesh. We had a discussion in this connection, and significant progress was made. Today [yesterday], a draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) on this issue has been approved in principle in the advisory council meeting."

Prof Nazrul added that the final draft would be sent to Turk after further talks, and it would be signed within the quickest possible time after his consent.

Meanwhile, UNB reports, the law adviser said if the two sides think it is necessary to renew the MoU, it can be considered.

He said a few advisers would further examine the draft MoU before sending the final text of the draft to Turk.

The adviser added that once the UN side agrees, they hope to sign the MoU as soon as possible and based on the signed MoU, an office will be established here.

Prof Nazrul hopes that Bangladesh's local agencies, which deals with the human

rights issues, together with the UN office, will play an important role if there is any case of severe human rights violation in the country.

A milestone was the interim government's invitation to the OHCHR for an independent fact-finding mission following the July-August uprising last year.

The UN Fact-Finding Mission in February published its report on human rights violations during the period.

The report said about 1,400 people were killed during the July-August uprising and in the aftermath.

The UN Human Rights Office will establish its office in Bangladesh to support the country that is going through reforms in various sectors, including political, bureaucratic, police, and judicial ones.

"We understand from the government that a MoU is finalised. We are waiting for signing it soon. That means we will be able to open an office of the human

commissioner for human rights soon to support a lot of processes that are underway," said UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis on June 4.

Since becoming a UN member in 1974, Bangladesh has consistently demonstrated strong support for peace and international cooperation.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam was also present at the briefing.

The Cabinet Division said several other decisions were approved at yesterday's advisory council meeting.

These include the "Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025".

In addition, the council approved a proposal to operationalise an MoU titled "Counter-Terrorism and Security Cooperation" between Bangladesh and Turkey.

The council, as part of a supplementary agenda, okayed the proposal for implementing the "National Rooftop Solar Programme.

FROM PAGE 2

firm message that such barbarity has no place in this country," ASK urged, calling on the government to take decisive and transparent action in this case and uphold the safety and rights of all citizens.

Meanwhile, MJF also demanded the swift trial and maximum punishment of all individuals involved in this heinous crime.

In its statement, the organisation said that it vehemently condemns the inhumane and reprehensible act of filming and circulating videos of such brutal crimes on social media. Recording and spreading the footage of rape constitutes a second assault on the survivor, causing severe damage to her psychological and social

well-being, and is itself a punishable offence.

"Such acts only fuel a culture of violence," it said, urging all citizens to refrain from such cruelty.

Citing data from Ain O Salish Kendra, MJF said that it is deeply alarmed by the rising trend of violence against women and calls on the interim government to take more proactive legal measures.

"Effective enforcement of existing laws, increased public awareness, and collective efforts to essential to combat gender-based violence," it said.

MJF also urged the interim government to ensure all necessary support for the woman.

The organisation said it firmly believes that such

heinous crimes severely disrupt social stability and gravely violate women's safety and dignity.

"Justice must be served by uncovering the truth and ensuring exemplary punishment for the perpetrators," it said.

Naripokkho, a women's rights organisation, also expressed outrage and called for immediate and effective action from the government and law enforcement to ensure justice.

It said such incidents continue to occur across the country, yet effective state measures to prevent or respond to them remain grossly inadequate, according to its statement.

"We are deeply angered, disheartened, and alarmed," the statement read.

Draft polls code

FROM PAGE 12

chief election agent, or individual conducting election campaigning on social media must submit the name, account ID, email ID, and other identifying details of the relevant social media accounts to the returning officer before beginning such activities.

The draft strictly prohibits the creation and dissemination of harmful contents, including hate speech, misinformation, and fabricated election-related information. Banning of personal attacks or inflammatory language targeting opponents, minorities, or any group has been proposed. Disallowing the use of religious or ethnic sentiments for electoral gain has been proposed.

All election-related contents shared on social media must be fact checked prior to publication. Furthermore, all forms of digital campaigning must stop 48 hours before the start of voting, the draft says.

All expenses related to digital campaigns, including content creation, advertising, boosting, and sponsorship, by a registered political party, its nominated candidate, an independent candidate, or any individual acting on their behalf, must be reported to the EC, it says. These expenses will be added to the candidate's total election expenditure.

The draft also prohibits any foreign funded advertising or promotional activities on social media platforms during the campaign period.

If the use of social media violates the polls code, it will be a punishable offence in line with law that deals with cyber security issues.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Abul Fazal Sanaullah said the provision to cancel the candidacy is being included for the first time.

The draft has a provision

that allows the EC to cancel candidature in line with the Representation of the People Order, 1972.

According to article 91 (1) of the RPO, if the EC receives information that a candidate, their agent, or someone acting on their behalf has committed a serious offence or violated election rules — directly or with their consent — the EC can launch an investigation. The candidate will get a fair chance to respond to the allegation.

If the probe finds the candidate guilty, the EC can cancel that individual's candidacy.

As of now, the highest punishment for violation of the electoral code of conduct is six months in prison and a fine of Tk 50,000. For a political party, the highest fine is Tk 50,000.

The provision for imprisonment remains unchanged, Sanaullah said, but the fine will be raised to Tk 1.5 lakh.

"This was one of the recommendations from the Electoral Reform Commission," Sanaullah said.

Campaign posters will be prohibited, according to the draft code, which also bans the use of plastic or any other environmentally harmful materials for wrapping banners and other campaign items.

The draft makes it mandatory for all political parties and candidates to formally commit to abide by the code while submitting their nomination papers.

Besides, members of the advisory council will not be able to take part in any election campaign as the advisers, ministers, and lawmakers are now in a category of "very important persons".

Candidates can join televised election dialogue, but no one will be allowed to attack their opponents personally, according to the draft.

UP member hacked to death

FROM PAGE 12

The incident took place in the courtyard of his house in the remote char area that is surrounded by the Jamuna river, said Kulkandu union parishad Chairman Anisur Rahman.

Quoting family members, AFM Atiqur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Islampur Police Station, said, "Pretending to be members of law enforcement, a group of 10-12 assailants called Rahim out of his house around

2:00am. As soon as he stepped into the courtyard, the attackers began stabbing him with sharp weapons indiscriminately.

"Hearing screams, Rahim's wife and other family members rushed out and tried to intervene but failed. Rahim died on the spot due to excessive bleeding."

Informed, a team of Islampur police rushed to the char area on a trawler and recovered his body around 2:30am.

Adviser from Muradnagar

FROM PAGE 12

Condemning the Muradnagar rape incident and demanding exemplary punishment, he said there is a dangerous conspiracy afoot to damage the reputation of the BNP.

"It is because they have the blessings from powerful quarters that the miscreants are being encouraged to carry out acts of violence."

Mentioning that criminals who harm women do not belong to any political party, Fakhrul described the

rape incident in Muradnagar as inhumane, cruel, and politically motivated.

A vested quarter is attempting to politicise the incident for their own gains, he said.

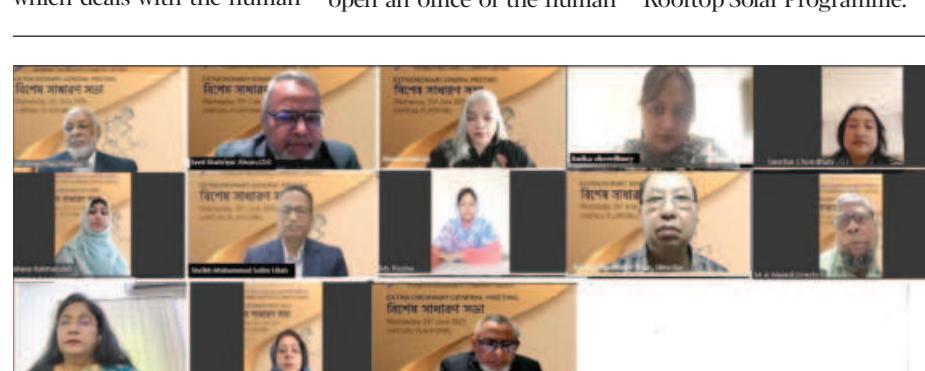
However, hinting at the incident, Asif said those sheltering and endorsing Awami League men are responsible for the current situation.

"They have unleashed these criminals on the general public for repression, and an even bigger mafia."

extortion and rape," he wrote in a Facebook post.

Previously, when an extortioneer was caught red-handed, a mafia gang attacked and vandalised the police station to snatch him away, he said.

"Today, I am ashamed — I have no words. Whenever I meet locals, they say that the country may have been freed through a mass uprising, but Muradnagar has fallen into the hands of an even bigger mafia."



PIONEER INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED HOLDS EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING VIRTUALLY ON 25 JUNE 2025

"Pioneer Insurance Company Limited held an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 25th June 2025 via digital platform, approving the change of its name to "Pioneer Insurance PLC" and an increase in authorized share capital from 100 Crore to 200 Crore."

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Zakir Ahmed Khan, with board directors, Chief Executive Officer, Company Secretary and shareholders in attendance. The Chairman thanked shareholders for their support and praised employees for their dedication."

PIONEER INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

Certain groups

FROM PAGE 3

flawed elections -- is now making tall claims. These include that local government elections should be held first and that there will be no polls without a PR system."

"First, the local government elections will be held. Then the PR system will be used for voting. Why, brother, where did you invent these things? Who gives you this ill advice? A group of people have come to the field now to destroy this country and the nation with all this bad advice. They will not let the nation move forward."

He urged politicians not to mislead people. Later in the day, another standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said he doesn't see any sign of uncertainty about the national election taking place in February next year.

"So unnecessarily questioning something that hasn't happened yet is meaningless. There is no benefit in trying to disrupt the upcoming election. People across the country are preparing for the February election."

Asked whether the government has given any clear indication about the February election, he said, "The Election Commission is also making preparations. Everything is on track."

He said disagreements among political parties are not a problem.

"Everyone has the right to hold differing opinions," Khosru said after a meeting between Canadian High Commissioner Ajit Singh and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Indict 8 cops for crimes against

FROM PAGE 3

in custody, while the others are absconding.

Two defence lawyers sought more time to prepare, while two others requested bail for their clients. The tribunal adjourned the hearing until July 3 for defence arguments.

The tribunal had accepted the formal charges against the accused on May 25.

The other accused officials are Sudip Kumar Chakraborty, then DMP joint commissioner; Sha Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam, former additional deputy commissioner; Mohammad Imrul, former assistant commissioner of Ramma Zone; Arshad Hossain, former inspector (operations) at Shahbagh Police Station; and constables Sujon, Imaz Hossain, and Nasirul Islam.

Of them, Arshad, Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul are currently in jail.

According to the prosecution, Habibur, along

with Sudip, Akhtarul, Imrul, and Arshad, bore command responsibility and were involved in a joint criminal enterprise. The prosecution accused them of incitement, abetment, and complicity in the killings.

Citing the case dossier, Tajul said Habibur deployed 40-45 armed police personnel in Chankharpul and nearby areas to stop protesters heading towards Shahbagh from the Central Shaheed Minar. He allegedly arrived at Shahbagh Police Station around 5:00am and ordered the operation.

The deployment was supervised by Sudip, while Akhtarul oversaw field execution and logistics, said the chief prosecutor. Imrul coordinated the units and allegedly instructed them to open fire. Arshad enabled the conditions for targeted shooting, the prosecution said.

Constables Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul then used rifles to shoot protesters in Chankharpul and surrounding areas, resulting in six deaths between early morning and 2:30pm.

The victims were identified as Shahriar Khan Anas, Sheikh Mahadi Hasan Junaid alias Mostakin, Md Yakub, Md Rakib Hawladar, Mohammad Ismail Haque, and Manik Mia alias Shaharik Chowdhury.

The prosecution claimed that audio evidence supports allegations that Habibur issued shoot-to-kill orders, which were documented in a general diary by Constable Sheikh Shafiq Mohammad, wireless operator of the DMP control room.

The prosecution contends that these actions constitute murder, attempted murder, abetment, incitement, and complicity in crimes against humanity, which are punishable offences under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973.

No special

FROM PAGE 3

a Facebook post yesterday. On June 25, the interim government had declared August 5 as "July Mass Uprising Day" to commemorate the student-led protests that toppled the Sheikh Hasina regime that day last year.

It had also declared August 8 as "New Bangladesh Day", marking the formation of the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, and July 16 as "Shaheed Abu Sayed Day" in memory of Abu Sayed, a student of Rangpur's Begum Rokeya University, who was shot dead by police during protests in the district.

A government source confirmed that the New Bangladesh Day will now be cancelled. However, no gazette has been issued in this regard.

Earlier, three top leaders of the National Citizen Party (NCP) -- Sarjis Alam, Hasnat Abdullah, and Akhtar Hossain -- raised objections to declaring August 8 as New Bangladesh Day.

Education in remote

FROM PAGE 3

79 shoals, most of them located in remote areas. There's no specific model for communities from such shoal areas, nor any reliable data or dedicated policy."

They also expressed concern about whether the new curriculum is a replacement or an add-on, and warned of policy paralysis in the absence of clear directives.

Nahid Parvin of the BRAC Institute of Educational Development said the government's revised two-year pre-primary curriculum, focusing on play-based learning and creative classroom setups, is ready for rollout.

The participants also discussed the issue of children from shoals (char), wetlands (haor), tea gardens, and other climate-vulnerable areas often being denied adequate access to education.

Shafaat Ferdous of Friendship NGO said, "We operate 43 schools in

HC asks govt

FROM PAGE 4

Port Authority (CPA) and chief executive officer of Public Private Partnership (PPP) Authority have been mentioned as respondents in the petition.

Earlier, the petitioner's lawyer Ahsanul Karim told The Daily Star that the CPA's action to initiate the process for awarding the container handling contract of the NCT to DP World, which is a 100 percent foreign company, without holding any open tender is arbitrary and a violation of the Bangladesh Public-Private Partnership Act, 2015, and the Policy for Implementing PPP Projects through Government to Government Partnership, 2017.

He said the previous government had decided to award the container handling contract of the NCT to DP World in 2019 and the current government has initiated a process to finish the job.

ICT complaint filed

FROM PAGE 3

and Krishna Pada Roy, who was deputy commissioner of the Detective Branch at the time. Several other law enforcement officials and political figures have also been named.

On February 6, 2023, a Dhaka court dismissed a case filed against 15 police officials, including the former DMP commissioner, over Jonny's alleged custodial death.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order, citing lack of sufficient grounds to proceed, Additional Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal told The Daily Star in that time.

Contacted, Saber Hossain declined to comment on the matter.

PIB responds to misleading news on study

FROM PAGE 3

from an ICT Division project presented findings from an ongoing study. He conducted the research on behalf of the PIB.

A section of Mamun's presentation mentioned that Prothom Alo had withdrawn the highest number of "false reports" in six months, which was 121 in total. Next are bdnews24.com, Jugantor, and Samakal.

However, in the same presentation slide, a chart showed Kaalbela in the second place, Ittefaq in third, and Jugantor in fourth.

After the PIB seminar, some media outlets published reports citing the statistics of retracted news. The issue drew attention on

social media.

Some fact-checkers posted on Facebook, suggesting that the research methodology might have some flaws.

In this context, the PIB issued the clarification. It said various journalists from different media houses, including the keynote presenter, spoke at the seminar. Later, some media outlets published "incomplete and unclear" reports on the event.

"One part of the presentation was a comparative analysis of data on retracted reports and misinformation in online media. But some media reports presented this in such a way that it created confusion. In some cases, headlines were even

written against certain media houses," it said.

Mentioning the analysis of 404 (page not found) links from news websites, PIB in its clarification said the numbers presented in the slide identified retracted reports, which may also include misinformation.

While the presentation speech clarified that not all data points are necessarily misinformation, this was not stated on the slides themselves, leaving room for confusion, it said.

Meanwhile, to verify the authenticity of the information about retracted reports, Prothom Alo contacted the researcher on Saturday.

In a written statement last night, he told Prothom Alo that misleading reports

had indeed been published regarding Saturday's seminar. He condemned such reporting and urged a more professional mindset in news presentation.

A 404 message means the report is no longer available at the corresponding link. This is commonly known as a "dead link."

According to experts, a 404 message may appear if a report is withdrawn, but there maybe many other reasons as well. Dead links can also result from website redesigns, archiving policies, or broken URLs, among other factors. News reports are not withdrawn solely due to false information; there can be other reasons too.

Meanwhile, Prothom Alo also requested the

mentioned dead links from the researcher on Saturday.

After he sent those, according to Prothom Alo, upon primary review of a few of those links, it was found that some content had been published multiple times. To avoid confusion, duplicate links had been removed, keeping just one. This had no relation to the publication or withdrawal of false news, said the newspaper.

PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 30
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-17
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-57 8-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

b) Technical Competence:

- i. Firm's specialization compared with the sectoral focus of the assignment;
- ii. Firm's specific experience the NGO consortium must include at least one representative from each hill district with proven experience in CHT's agricultural sector, along with staff fluent in local ethnic languages to cover all priority upazilas. The partnership should feature at least one women's NGO (if not a specialized women's organization) and demonstrate 10+ years of CHT development experience, including 5+ years in agricultural capacity-building projects. Additionally, the consortium must show the ability to recruit technical experts in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, with at least 70% of project staff from CHT ethnic communities, ensuring balanced representation;
- iii. Firm's experience in ADB/World Bank funded similar projects will be given priority.

c) Geographic Competence: Experience in similar geographic area (i.e. country experience, regional experience).

7. In addition to the above, the list of the experts along with their CVs are required for the Consultants' Qualifications Selection evaluation. For CQS selections, proposed experts during the EOI stage will be evaluated using the Personal Evaluation Sheet template, like (i) General Qualifications, (ii) Project-Related Experience, and (iii) Experiences with international/development partners organizations or in their projects.

8. Only EOIs submitted electronically through ADB's CMS using ADB template will be evaluated. EOI submitted using other than ADB templates will not be evaluated.

9. Interested consulting firms are requested to submit the Expression of Interest (EOI) electronically, using standard EOI template available through ADB's CMS by 11:59 PM (Manila Local Time) and by 09:59 PM (Dhaka Local Time) on or before 28 July, 2025 through the link of <http://csm.adb.org> [Project Name: Climate Resilient Livelihoods Improvement and Watershed Management in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Sector Project, Package Name: Consultancy Service regarding "Agriculture Implementation NGO" (Package No: Package No: CRLIWM/SD-48, ADB Package No: CRLIWM/CI/Agri/NGO/SD-4)]. Please note that only online submission of EOIs in ADB's CMS is allowed. Any offline or manual EOI submission is not permissible and will not be considered.

10. Only the first ranked short-listed firm will be invited to submit a "Request for Proposal (RFP) for Technical & Financial Proposals which will be evaluated by the Proposal Evaluation Committee (PEC) of CHTRC.

11. Under no circumstances will ADB or CHTRC, be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the firm(s) in connection with the preparation or submission of the EOI. Interested consulting firm(s) is/are requested to submit relevant documentary evidences in support of their competence in EOI submission.

12. Interested consulting firm(s) may obtain further information including Scope of Works and Terms of Reference (ToR) from the Consultant Management System on the ADB website at <http://csm.adb.org> or from the office of the undersigned during regular office hours on all working days before deadline of submission. The EOI notice will also be available at the following websites www.cptu.gov.bd.

13. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs received without assigning any reason thereof.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Climate Resilient Livelihoods Improvement and Watershed Management in the Chittagong Hill Tracts
(CRLIWM-CHT) Sector Project
Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, Rangamati

Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)(Firm/NGO) (National) for

Consulting Services for Agriculture Implementation NGOs (A-NGOs) (Package No: CRLIWM/SD-

48, ADB Package No: CHT/NGO-Agri/SD-01

1. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) under the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA), has been allocated public fund from Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the "Climate Resilient Livelihoods Improvement and Watershed Management in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CRLIWM-CHT) Sector Project". A portion of the GoB and ADB fund is intended to be used for payments under the contract for Recruitment of Consulting Firm(s) for which this Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) is being issued.
2. The overall objective of the services is to support the implementation of the project's Output 3: Agriculture production, storage, processing and marketing improved, an Implementing Agriculture NGO (A-NGO, which can be a consortium) will be contracted to support men and women farmers in the upazilas where the project will operate. Details are included in the Terms of Reference (ToR)
3. The main scope of services is the A-NGO consortium will be responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing all project interventions related to agriculture production, storage, processing, and marketing across the CHT region and selected upazilas. Key tasks include establishing operational protocols, identifying high-potential produce, mobilizing and training farmers, forming producer groups, and facilitating market linkages with buyers in CHT, Chittagong, and Dhaka. Additionally, the consortium will collaborate with government and private sector stakeholders, conduct technical studies, ensure capacity building, and provide regular reporting to PMO/DPMO while adhering to project guidelines for monitoring and evaluation.
4. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) now invites national eligible consulting firms (NGOs) to submit Expression of Interest (EOI) for providing the required services.
5. The consulting firm(s) should be nationally reputed and may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications. No firm should form more than one association or joint venture (JV). If a firm submits more than one EOI forming more than one JV/association, all EOIs submitted by forming JV/association with that firm and also EOI submitted by that firm will be rejected.
6. The Consultant will be selected under Consultant Qualitative selection (CQS) method in accordance with the procedures set out in the ADB Procurement Policy 2017 ("Policy") and the Procurement Regulations for ADB Borrowers 2017 ("Regulations"):

<https://www.adb.org/documents/adb-procurement-policy>
<https://www.adb.org/documents/procurement-regulations-adb-borrowers>

'Short-listing' of the Consulting Firms submitting Expression of Interest (EOI) will be done by Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) based on the complete information submitted in the Standard EOI form by the intending Consulting Firms through the Consultant Management System (CMS) as mentioned in sl. 8. Intending Consulting Firms shall have, but not limited to the following competences-

a) Management competence: Firm's management and organizational strength, financial strength, number and capabilities of permanent employees and key staff, etc.

THE MAVERICK PUNDIT

Reflections on the Life and Times of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar



Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (26 September 1820 – 29 July 1891)

We may also see in Vidyasagar the juxtaposition of two important agendas: first, the wider dissemination of modern public education alongside character-building; and second, a sense of social justice—the desire to speak for those, particularly women and the lower classes, who could not speak for themselves. He placed tradition and modernity not hierarchically but in a kind of kinetic relationship. In this view, tradition, rather than being fully replaced by modernity, had to co-exist with that which was arguably modern.

AMIYA P. SEN

The poet and playwright Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824–73) made no effort to conceal his disapproval of traditional Brahmin pundits. "Barren rascals", he called them, presumably pointing to their dogmatism, deep anchoring in social conservatism, and failure to move with the times. And yet, there was one man of this class with whom he made an important exception: Pundit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820–91). Madhusudan called this pundit "the first man among us" – an honour usually reserved for heads of state or else a social figure of extraordinary qualities. Some of us might be misled into thinking that this was the poet's way of acknowledging the pecuniary help he often received from the pundit while struggling to make ends meet in a foreign land. Such an explanation only belittles the genius of Madhusudan, as also the selfless, humanist compassion of his benefactor. In his adult life, Vidyasagar rescued many in financial distress, none of whom, however, showered such praise on him. The irony of it all is that many beneficiaries either cheated him of his dues or else spoke ill of him in public.

Here it is also important to recall that, after some initial hesitation, Vidyasagar acknowledged the daring innovation underlying Madhusudan's use of blank verse in Bengali poetry – an act one would not ordinarily associate with a man of his class or upbringing. The Pundit, as I shall also argue, was no less an innovator himself, often defying accepted social ideas or practices. Though born a Brahmin, he cast himself in the mould of a very different order of Brahminhood, affirming the view that, in the social and cultural history of the Hindus, the Brahmin, paradoxically enough, could equally be the source of conservatism, conformity, and courageous dissent. For me, Madhusudan's exception provides valuable clues to a better understanding of Vidyasagar's prodigious life and work.

At first sight, no two men could appear more dissimilar than Madhusudan Dutta and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Intellectually, Madhusudan situated himself in the classicism of Greco-Roman civilisation and, by extension, in some English Romantic poets closer to his time. Socially, he coveted the life of the English gentry. Madhusudan was the son of a fairly affluent professional and received the best of modern education then available in India. He renounced his ancestral religion in favour of one he considered 'superior', usually lived

beyond his means, and died a poor man.

Vidyasagar, by comparison, was the son of a poor father, fought grinding poverty in early life, and was essentially rooted in the Sanskrit knowledge system. Apparently, he had no ambition to visit the West, even when some in the West knew of him and his work. Someone like Prime Minister Churchill may well have called him a 'naked fakir', judging by the manner in which he habitually dressed. Vidyasagar wore the cheapest and coarsest clothes – not for want of money but from an innate sense of humility and a desire to identify with the common man, as Gandhi was to do after him.

The Pundit had little or no interest in religious doctrines, preferred to socialise more with unlettered Santhals than members of his own class, even when his income from various sources well exceeded that of the average Indian. Unlike Madhusudan, he exhibited filial piety, always seeking permission from his parents before undertaking important work. On the day of his death in 1891, certain parts of Calcutta had a deserted look, even with petty traders and shopkeepers



Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824–1873)

people unconnected with the world of teaching, authorship, or publishing – shutting down their shops as a mark of respect to the departed.

What, then, led a man like Madhusudan to valorise an unpretentious and misleadingly ordinary-looking Brahmin scholar? He could see that Vidyasagar belonged to a new class of Brahmins. He was not the conservative Brahmin that the fellow educator Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827–94) turned out to be, nor the quasi-anglicised professional we find in a man like Bankimchandra

Chattopadhyay (1838–94). On the contrary, he was, in some ways, the reincarnated model Brahmin of the old: scholarly, honest, courageous, independent, forthright, a seasoned social counsellor, and a man who respected tradition but could also suitably reinterpret it in the light of changing requirements.

Vidyasagar taught himself English and was reasonably well-read in the reigning discourse of the contemporary West. Like Rammohun Roy (1772–1833), he could cite Bacon to attack convoluted argument and dogmatism – "cobwebs of learning", as he called them – and freely admitted the superiority of contemporary Europeans in certain spheres of knowledge. Even as a Brahmin, he doubted the practical value of traditional Hindu philosophy and called the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* literary works, not religious texts. His was clearly a historicist view of time and tradition, not something frozen in antiquity. One may reasonably find in Vidyasagar a rare combination of humanism and humanitarianism, compassion and firmness of purpose, a willingness to learn from other peoples and cultures while remaining rooted in one's own.

We may also see in Vidyasagar the juxtaposition of two important agendas: first, the wider dissemination of modern public education alongside character-building; and second, a sense of social justice—the desire to speak for those, particularly women and the lower classes, who could not speak for themselves. He placed tradition

thereafter by fellow Bengalis for locating virtues only in contemporary or near-contemporary Europeans. Interestingly enough, it appears as though some of these qualities of mind that he intended for children he exhibited in his own life—never fearing opposition or reprisals from superiors and preferring self-respect to slavish acceptance of unreasonable demands. At the peak of his professional career, Vidyasagar decided to run a private school all by himself rather than give in to unjust demands made by the government. He also refused the post of professor of Sanskrit at Presidency College when the government declined to pay him the salary of a European professor.

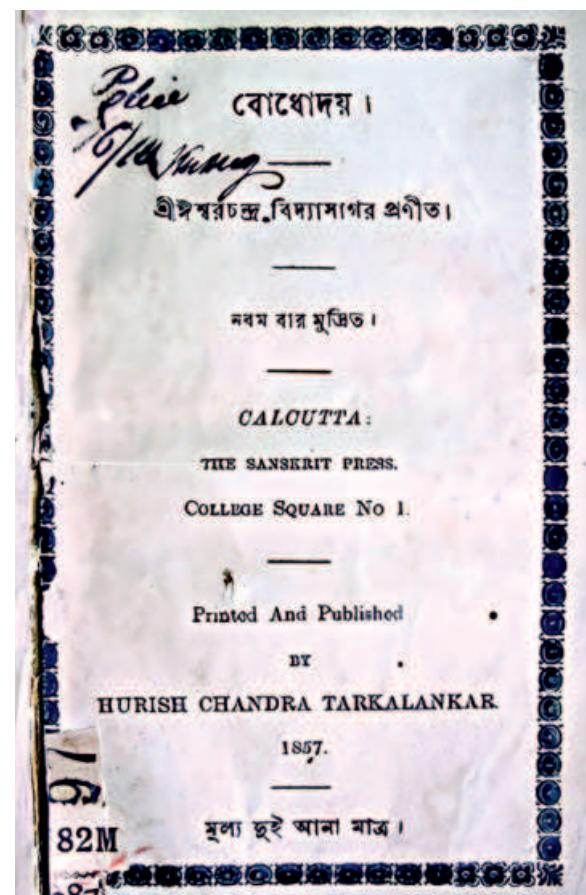
It is in the domain of social justice that Vidyasagar made his greatest mark. While his campaigns to promote widow marriage or end polygamy are all too well known, little attention has been paid to his administrative and curricular reforms at the Calcutta Sanskrit College. On one level, his efforts aimed to make the courses simpler, more intelligible, and professionally useful. But there are certain social dimensions to such changes that cannot be overlooked.

Vidyasagar was no rebel seeking to dramatically defy or subvert Hindu society by openly violating established conventions, as was once the case with the Young Bengal group. His preference was for a more gradual but meaningful reform. Previously, only students of the Brahmin and Baidya castes were admitted to the Sanskrit College; he extended this opportunity to Kayasthas and even to the socially

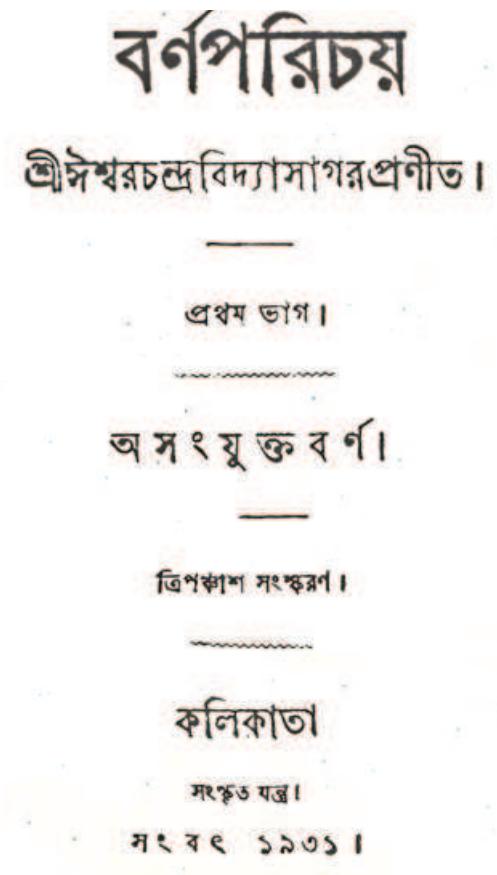
observed that Gupta's conservatism led him to ridicule women—preventing him from appreciating the virtues of selflessness, love, and affection that they were capable of imparting. Vidyasagar's heart cried out in anguish at the suffering, repression, and premature self-denial to which even child widows were subjected. He also worried about the moral vulnerabilities faced by unprotected widows, who were nonetheless promptly ostracised. This led him to advocate women's education and to reject premature marriage. His own daughters were married at the ages of 14 and 16—extraordinarily progressive for the time.

There was, however, one regressive side to Vidyasagar that deserves mention—if only to better assess the man and the context in which he worked. Evidently, the pundit made a fetish of the *shastras*. To an extent, this stemmed from tactical necessity. Had his countrymen listened to the voice of reason, social justice, or compassion, neither Rammohun Roy nor Vidyasagar would have needed to rely on *shastric* authority for the purpose of legislation. On the other hand, Vidyasagar eventually became a prisoner of his own strategy.

For instance, he opposed Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan's (1820–86) proposal to impose stiff penalties on men who married a second time while their first wives were still living—on the grounds that the *shastras* permitted such marriages under certain conditions. Reportedly, second marriages were sanctioned if the wife failed to bear a son eight years after marriage. When



Title pages of two books by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar



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and modernity not hierarchically but in a kind of kinetic relationship. In this view, tradition, rather than being fully replaced by modernity, had to co-exist with that which was arguably modern. Vidyasagar was himself modern in the sense that he wore many hats: he was an author, essayist, translator, publisher, printer, polemicist, philanthropist, educator, administrator, and social reformer. Perhaps such a combination of motley roles and functions did not materialise in Bengal, whether before his time or after him.

Character building was a virtue that Vidyasagar consistently upheld in his writings, especially in his primers and school textbooks like *Bodhodoy*, *Jeevancharit*, and *Charitabali*. The distinctive quality about such books was the intention to instil in the average Indian student qualities he allegedly lacked: openness of mind, hard work, perseverance, but above all, the human quest to master the social and physical environment around him. In his textbooks, Vidyasagar did not valorise the docile, overly obedient, unenergetic, and unquestioning student; on the contrary, his preference was for the rebellious, hyperactive, even mischievous boy whose spirit or energy could not be suppressed by the combined weight of excessive disciplining and puerile social custom.

Not surprisingly, the pundit was critiqued both in his time and

marginalised Subarnabakis, Tantis, and Goalas. Quite uniquely, he also introduced courses in English at the Sanskrit College.

The pundit did not scruple to share food with non-Brahmins—much to the horror of his family and peers—he had little regard for routine ritual obligations expected of Brahmins, ridiculed religious preachers, mocked Hindu ideas of the afterlife, and even disinherited his only son for impropriety.

Apart from his popularity as the author of Bengal's best-known primers, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar is best remembered for his reform efforts related to women. In truth, he was not practically very successful in these. Some regions outside Bengal saw more widow marriages than Bengal itself, and the government refused to pass a law prohibiting *kulin* polygamy.

On the other hand, it would be erroneous to assume that such efforts stemmed solely from the man's great compassion (*karuṇā*). His compassion, incidentally, extended beyond human beings: he eventually stopped using horse-drawn carriages, moved by the cruelty inflicted upon the animals. Arguably, Vidyasagar saw women as not only deserving of greater empathy and understanding, but as a class from whom men had much to learn.

In an obituary for the early modern poet Iswarchandra Gupta (1812–59), Bankimchandra rightly

a critic pointed out that the fault might lie with the husband, and suggested medical examinations for both partners. Vidyasagar dismissed the objection by once again citing the *shastras*.

In hindsight, we may argue that Vidyasagar's life and work represent one of the two discernible trends within the so-called Bengal Renaissance: one, the rationalist, humanist, secular, and utilitarian strand; and the other, where these qualities were tempered by deep religious self-expression. Admittedly, the latter was more common, but the first had at least two stellar representatives: Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Akshaykumar Dutta (1820–86).

Vidyasagar reminds me of the Buddha—minus the spiritual angst—and Swami Vivekananda—minus the ascetic façade. It is no coincidence that, after his own guru Sri Ramakrishna (1836–86), the man Swami Vivekananda most admired was Vidyasagar. I partly found the key to this admiration in a statement from *Karma Yoga* (1896), where Vivekananda asserts that a *karma yogi* need not believe in God or religion.

Vidyasagar was not quite an atheist, but I have a feeling he would have very much liked to be thought of in those terms.

Amiya P. Sen is a historian and currently Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford.

Bangladesh on 7th heaven

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a flying start to their AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign with a 7-0 thrashing of Group C opponents Bahrain in Yangon on Sunday, proving yet again that they are a far better side than what their lowly FIFA ranking of 128 suggests.

Peter Butler's charges dominated proceedings right from the word go, controlling play with crisp passing and measured build-up football against a physically superior Bahrain side, who are 36 places above them in FIFA rankings.

The women in red and green scored five goals in the first half before taking the foot off the gas a bit after restart, yet adding two more while managing to keep a clean sheet.

Tohura Khatun bagged a brace while Shamsunnahar Jr, Ritu Porna Chakma, Kohati Kisku and Munki Akter scored one apiece. The other was an own goal.

The big win sets up the women in red and green nicely for their crucial second match against group's top ranked team, Myanmar (55), who handed an 8-0 defeat to Turkmenistan (141), the lowest ranked side, in the first match of the group earlier yesterday.

Only the top finishers will advance to the Women's Asian Cup, which will be held in Australia next year.

Bahrain are way ahead of us in rankings. But our target was to make use of the hard work we had been doing. Everyone gave their 100 percent.

Bangladesh forward
Tohura Khatun

Butler, who has experimented quite a bit with his formation and style of play since taking charge in March last year, deployed a 3-5-2 system in this match, with Tohura and Shamsunnahar Jr operating as forwards.

But it was the partnership of Monika Chakma and Sapna Rani in the midfield that pulled the strings while Ritu Porna and Kohati operated diligently down the flanks, creating most of the chances.

Sapna, the young No. 7 from Thakurgaon, set up the first two goals with brilliant throughs, with Shamsunnahar Jr finishing the first move with a chip in the 10th minute before Ritu Porna doubled the scoreline with a bullet of a shot five minutes later.

The third goal took some time coming, but once it came, the floodgates opened. Kohati poked home from a goalmouth

melee following a low cross from Maria Manda to make it 3-0 in the 40th minute. Tohura, dubbed the Lionel Messi of Kalshindur, then scored a quickfire brace in the stoppage time of the first half – the first one with a powerful shot and the second one with a clever placing effort – as the Bahrain players looked amateurish in the face of Bangladesh's enterprising football.

Bangladesh, who had never previously scored a goal at this level and lost all five of their matches in two campaigns, went through a number of changes in the second half, perhaps to preserve tiring legs ahead of the Myanmar game.

Yet Shamsunnahar Jr saw two attempts saved by Bahrain keeper from one-on-one situations early in the half before Rawan Alali's own goal on the hour-mark made the scoreline 6-0.

Substitute Munki Akter wrapped up the victory in the 74th minute with a fine effort while at the other end, Rupna Chakma made two excellent saves – the only scoring chances for Bahrain – to come out with a clean sheet for Bangladesh.

With an awe-inspiring win against a much higher-ranked opponent to start the campaign, Butler's charges will be full of confidence for their potentially decisive next match against the hosts on July 2.



Maria Manda, Shamsunnahar Jr, Tohura Khatun, Monika Chakma, and Ritu Porna celebrate one of the goals during a scintillating 7-0 win against a higher-ranked Bahrain to open their 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign in Yangon, Myanmar, yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Chasing glory on the green

Alcaraz eyes three-peat, Sabalenka seeks redemption

WILDCARD WONDER

Xu draws her idol

Seventeen-year-old Mimi Xu adds a compelling subplot to the British narrative this year. The Welsh teenager, handed a wildcard, will make her Grand Slam debut by facing British No. 1 Emma Raducanu – the very player who inspired her love for the sport.

"I was 13, watching Emma win the US Open with the other girls at our tennis academy," recalled Xu, one of three British players aged 17 or under in the women's draw. "Now I get to play her at Wimbledon. It's surreal."

Ranked just outside the top 300, Xu arrives on the back of two top 100 wins this summer, having balanced her rise through the ranks with A-Level biology exams. She found out about her draw in the middle of a house move.



AGENCIES

The hallowed lawns of the All England Club are primed once more as Wimbledon 2025 kicks off today, with the world's best tennis players vying for the sport's most coveted crown.

Carlos Alcaraz returns to Centre Court with history in his sights. The 22-year-old Spaniard, winner of the past two editions, opens his campaign against 38-year-old Italian Fabio Fognini.

Fresh from conquering Jannik Sinner in a pulsating French Open final and riding an 18-match win streak, the reigning champion is vying to become just the fifth man in the Open Era to win three successive Wimbledon titles.

Standing in his way is Sinner himself, the current world number one and perhaps the most complete all-court player this season. Despite falling short in Paris, the 23-year-old Italian's powerful baseline game could be just as potent on grass.

Also looming is Novak Djokovic. At 38, the seven-time Wimbledon champion returns in pursuit of a record-equalling eighth title and an elusive 25th Grand Slam crown. Injury setbacks may have slowed his momentum, but the Serb remains a master of the big stage and cannot be written off.

On the women's side, world number one Aryna Sabalenka begins her quest



against Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine. A two-time semi-finalist at Wimbledon, the Belarusian arrives determined to rewrite recent heartbreaks, including a turbulent French Open final

receive £3 million, with first-round losers guaranteed £66,000.

27,000 flowers are arranged annually to maintain the "tennis in an English garden" aesthetic.

Strawberries and cream remain a Wimbledon staple – over 190,000 portions are consumed each year.

against Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine. A two-time semi-finalist at Wimbledon, the Belarusian arrives determined to rewrite recent heartbreaks, including a turbulent French Open final

loss to Coco Gauff.

With defending champion Barbora Krejčíková struggling with injury and a wide open draw ahead, Sabalenka enters as the favourite.

SHORT CORNER

No Shakib in Rangpur Riders' GSL campaign due to 'circumstances'

Rangpur Riders were initially interested in drafting in all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for their campaign in the upcoming Global Super League (GSL), slated to begin in Guyana on July 10.

However, the franchise eventually decided against it after considering the existing circumstances. "It is not like that we did not want him in the squad, but we know the situation of the country at this moment," Rangpur team director Shanin Tanim told the media at the sponsor signing event in Dhaka yesterday.

BFF to stick to online ticketing for HK, India matches

Despite hassles in online ticket purchasing during this month's FIFA friendly against Bhutan and Asian Cup Qualifier against Singapore at the National Stadium in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is set to continue selling tickets online for next matches. "We believe the ticketing system we have employed is the right way to go," said Tajwar Awal, member of BFF's technical committee. Bangladesh next play Hong Kong (October 9) and India (November 18).

CR7 prefers rest to playing in CWC

Cristiano Ronaldo preferred to take a rest rather than play in the Club World Cup, the Portuguese international said on Saturday. Al Nassr announced on Thursday that Ronaldo had signed a two-year contract with the club. "I had some offers to play in the World Cup but I think it didn't make sense because I prefer to have a good rest, a good preparation," Ronaldo said in a video posted by Al Nassr on X.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.



Chelsea forwards Pedro Neto (L) and Christopher Nkunku (R) celebrate after the Frenchman put The Blues ahead in extra-time during their FIFA Club World Cup last 16 clash against Benfica in Charlotte yesterday. Chelsea eventually won 4-1 to book a quarterfinal date with Brazil's Palmeiras who beat Botafogo 1-0 earlier. Reece James' clever freekick had put Chelsea 1-0 up four minutes from full-time just before the game was hit with nearly a two-hour storm delay. After resumption, a revitalised Benfica forced extra-time with Angel Di Maria's injury-time penalty. Nkunku, Neto and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall then struck in extra-time to seal the win in a match that lasted for four hours and 39 minutes.

'Team culture key' in Tigers' quest for stability

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's white-ball cricket is at a crossroads. After a string of disappointing results – including six consecutive losses in the 50-over format and recent T20I series defeats against the UAE and Pakistan – the Tigers face mounting questions about their ability, team selection, and overall direction.

Amid this challenging phase, with a new ODI captain in Mehidy Hasan Miraz set to lead the side in the upcoming Sri Lanka series starting June 2, the pressure to rebuild and restore confidence is more immense than ever.

Nurul Hasan Sohan, currently sidelined from the national team and preparing to join the Rangpur Riders for the Global Super League in Guyana, emphasises the bigger picture.

"I won't have regrets if I don't get opportunities in the national team if the team plays well. I want Bangladesh cricket to recover from the current tough phase," Sohan said ahead of his departure.

Sohan had remained unpicked because there were too many wicket-keepers – not an abysmal explanation in itself. But selectors also explained that they wanted Litton Das, the T20I skipper, to find form



through ODIs, which is why Sohan was left out.

Since the last ODI World Cup, Bangladesh have played 23 ODIs, losing 17 – a downturn reflected in the fact that they slipped to their lowest position, 10th, in nearly two decades.

The question remains whether Bangladesh have seen through plans to regain the impetus required for white-ball cricket.

While there was no big controversy surrounding a big name being dropped, a few of the reasons provided by the national selection panel regarding why someone like Sohan or batting allrounder Mosaddek Hossain have remained

unpicked left room for clarity.

The latter has a case as a domestic performer – considering the likes of Mohammad Naim or Anamul Haque Bijoy have made it to the ODI or Test formats.

Mosaddek, who was the player of the tournament in the last Dhaka Premier League, played in the 'A' side's series against their New Zealand counterparts. Chief selector Gazi Ashraf said something that sparked curiosity regarding Mosaddek's non-selection.

"As long as Mehidy Hasan Miraz is in the squad, Mosaddek simply doesn't have a place," he said, but also informed that Mosaddek was on their radar.

Dashing opener Soumya Sarkar missed the UAE series due to injury and was also left out of the Pakistan series for the same reason, despite training with the ODI team in Chattogram beforehand.

If performance played a role in Soumya's case, it was veiled as an intensity concern by the chief selector.

Cricketers outside the national setup can be required at any time and, if clarity is not found, the players face a degree of frustration. As Sohan puts it, "team culture is key," and it may well be the key to building up that morale in one of Bangladesh's hardest phases in white-ball cricket.

What to WATCH

T Sports

Zimbabwe vs South Africa
1st Test, Day 3
Live from 2:00 pm
Sony Sports 2 and 5
Wimbledon

Live from 4:00 pm
DAZN website and app
Club World Cup
Inter vs Fluminense
Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)

Remittance flows over \$30 billion in FY25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Remittance inflows crossed the \$30 billion mark on Saturday, two days before the fiscal year is due to end, making it the highest receipts yet in Bangladesh's history.

In the first 28 days of this month, the country received \$2.53 billion in remittance, up 7 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

The trend indicates the remittance receipts in fiscal 2024-25 would hit a historic high. As of June 28, \$30.4 billion was received in remittance in fiscal 2024-25.

Before this, Bangladesh received the highest volume of remittance in fiscal 2020-21: \$24.8 billion.

The surge in money sent home by Bangladeshi expatriates is being



credited to a cocktail of factors, such as a narrowing gap between official and informal exchange rates, a clampdown on money laundering and renewed sense of patriotism among Bangladeshis living abroad after the political changeover in August last year.

This has lifted the country's gross foreign exchange reserves to \$26.32 billion, this highest since October 2022.

Foreign reserves were propped up by the release of \$1.34 billion as third and fourth instalments of the International Monetary Fund's loan programme and budget support from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other development partners, said a BB official.

The reserves are sufficient to meet four-and-a-half months' import bills.

Draft polls code seeks to regulate digital campaigns

Enables EC to cancel candidature for violations

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission is likely to have a set of guidelines in its electoral code of conduct for the use of social media in campaigning.

The guidelines are aimed at curbing misinformation and promoting responsible online behaviour during electioneering.

A draft of the guidelines also introduces stricter provisions, including

granting the commission the authority to disqualify candidates found guilty of serious violations.

Besides, it imposes a ban on posters and the use of any kind of plastic materials for campaigning.

The EC yesterday evening uploaded the draft code of conduct for political parties and candidates on its website, inviting citizens' feedback by July 10.

CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

According to the draft, any candidate,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

'Adviser from Muradnagar' abusing power

Says Fakhrul; Asif Mahmud blames 'AL patrons' for crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An adviser of the interim government from the Muradnagar area is continuously abusing power to serve his own interests in that area, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Without directly naming anyone, he said: "Since becoming an adviser, he has been busy establishing dominance and influence in the area like Awami MPs."

Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan, the adviser to LGRD and youth and sports ministries, hails from Muradnagar.

If the adviser remains more focused on self-interest than public service, peace in the area will be disrupted, Fakhrul said in a statement.

"Just like during the fascist period, they are occupying and persecuting the homes of minorities and then blaming others. This pattern is still ongoing."

Emboldened by the adviser's actions, miscreants have been involved in various anti-social activities.

"And for this, they are receiving constant support from both domestic and foreign sources."

Govt okays draft MoU to host UN rights office

STAR REPORT

The advisory council yesterday approved in principle a draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) that will pave the way for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to set up an office in Bangladesh.

After the council's meeting, presided over by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul told a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy that the mission will be established for three years initially after the MoU is signed, reports BSS.

"United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk had visited our country, and the agency wanted to open a mission here

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

UP member hacked to death in front of family

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A union parishad (UP) member was hacked to death by a group of armed assailants posing as law enforcers in Islampur upazila of Jamalpur early yesterday.

The deceased, Abdur Rahim, 50, was a resident of Jigatola village under Ward 1 of Kulkandi union. He had been elected a member of his local union parishad twice consecutively.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

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