

## Reinforce the police without delay

### Prolonged vacancies, personnel issues in the force must be addressed

It is disheartening to learn that more than 400 key posts in the police force remain vacant or effectively non-functional, thus hindering its operational effectiveness and overall capacity to combat crime. Among the vacancies are at least 424 vital positions, including nine for additional inspector general of police (IGP) and 34 for deputy inspector general (DIG). There are also two vacancies for additional DIG, 47 for additional superintendent of police (ASP), and 332 for assistant SP. Besides, 119 top and mid-level officers—including DIGs, additional DIGs, and SPs—have been “attached” to various units without specific responsibilities, limiting their duties to office attendance and routine paperwork.

Police have been further weakened by a wave of forced retirements following the 2024 uprising that left over 1,400 people dead, many in police shootings. This was more or less expected, as the interim administration sought to hold accountable those involved in the brutalities. In fact, such disciplinary measures have long been overdue given the force’s widespread involvement in corruption and excessive use of force during Awami League’s 15 year rule, when police were routinely used to suppress dissent through arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, etc. By one estimate, at least 40 police officers with 25 years of service have been sent into forced retirement in recent months, while 23 officers with the ranks of ASP and above have been arrested in cases related to the uprising. There have also been notable instances of absenteeism.

The police force stands weakened by the cumulative effects of all these factors. Although it has performed relatively well in maintaining security during the recent Eid and puja festivals, any sense of complacency would be misplaced. The statement given by a top officer—that police are “ready and capable of facing any situation”—seems more a PR exercise than a reflection of reality, especially when seen against the backdrop of rising crime rates in general, the growing list of unresolved murders, or the lack of pre-emptive interventions. During recent visits to six police stations by our correspondents, locals have complained that officers often delay interventions and avoid recording complaints unless a crime draws public attention. Clearly, there is a need for urgent reinforcements and recalibrations. And existing bottlenecks are only hindering the progress.

Unfortunately, the problem of delaying key postings and promotions is not limited to the police force alone. The government, according to a report by this daily, has yet to appoint new deputy commissioners (DC) in around half the districts across the country, thus delaying critical field-level governance and electoral preparations ahead of the February election. As DCs serve as returning officers, any prolonged delay in their appointment could have serious implications for election management. Security and election preparations are also intrinsically related.

It is, therefore, important that the government acts swiftly both to reinforce the police force and to fill key administrative positions, before the combined effects of these delays start to threaten national stability and public confidence. The police headquarters, in particular, must resolve the personnel issues without delay.

## JU’s crippled medical centre

### Authorities must end culture of neglect, improve its services

We are concerned about the deplorable state of Jahangirnagar University’s medical centre that has repeatedly failed to provide adequate and emergency healthcare to students, faculty, and staff. The centre has long been plagued by various challenges including underfunding, staff shortages, and mismanagement. These issues have once again come to the fore after the recent death of Zubayer Hossain, a third-year student at the Department of Anthropology. Zubayer, who suffered from haemophilia, reportedly did not receive timely ambulance support from the medical centre, which allegedly worsened his condition and ultimately led to his death. Students have repeatedly voiced their concerns about the substandard services at the centre, citing poor quality of care, lack of emergency preparedness, and failure to respond to critical situations. Yet, their grievances have been largely ignored.

Reportedly, the centre lacks specialists, medical assistants, and support staff. It currently has only nine doctors for over 12,500 students. No new doctor has been recruited since 2005. The centre’s budget has also failed to keep pace with the growing demands of students and rising costs of medical services. The JU administration’s apathy towards the healthcare needs of students and staff is also evident in its recently announced budget, where the allocation for medical services stands at Tk 45 lakh, or just 0.14 percent of the total budget. Medical allocations have hovered around this paltry percentage for the past few years. Despite the rising prices of essential medicines and pathology kits, allocations have not increased. According to JU’s chief medical officer, the current budget falls far short of actual needs, as at least Tk 80 lakh is required annually for medicines and dressing equipment, along with an additional Tk 75 lakh to maintain pathology services. Therefore, increasing the health budget is imperative. Recruiting more doctors and medical staff will also require increased budgetary allocations.

JU students have long been demanding improvements to the medical services. Their demands include increasing the number of ambulances, recruiting experienced doctors, nurses, and support staff, ensuring a consistent supply of essential medicines, adding necessary diagnostic equipment, enhancing emergency services, upgrading the medical centre into a full-fledged hospital, implementing health insurance for students, etc. We think these demands deserve serious consideration. Students need proper medical care and reliable emergency services on their campus.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### US Civil Rights Act signed

On this day in 1964, US President Lyndon B Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, perhaps the most important US law on civil rights since Reconstruction (1865-77) and a hallmark of the American civil rights movement.

# Bangladesh must change to protect its women



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NAZIBA BASHER

How many more times do we have to write this?

Another rape, another woman brutalised, another family silenced, another round of outrage. Another case of the government assuring us that they will ensure justice. Yet, it keeps happening.

This is the brutal truth women in Bangladesh face today. This country has become no less than a battlefield for women—one on which we are losing because, let’s face it, we hardly have anyone on our side.

Whether it’s an alley, a classroom, or a rice field, almost every corner of this land seems to be a reminder of how vulnerable women are in Bangladesh.

When it comes to the deplorable Muradnagar incident, please don’t pretend this has not happened before; don’t feign your shock and ask, “How could people do this?” Because then I ask, “How could you forget the woman in Subarnachar from 2018?”

The Muradnagar survivor’s trauma is unimaginable. Her fate, though? Predictable. Because here, sexual violence is no longer an anomaly, it is a day-to-day activity for some—a recurring headline, a twisted ritual that seems to have gotten stitched into the fabric of our society. And yet, we show no shame. The predators know it. They know the system; they know the silence of those in power.

Within days of the rape in Muradnagar, a sixth-grader was raped in Mymensingh. Another was almost raped in a madrasa dormitory, by the director of the institution. Days before, a woman was raped in a train toilet. On Sunday, another 10-year-old was raped.

These were just the cases that were reported. Remember, our victims don’t like to report being assaulted because they know the level of impunity our legal system grants rapists and sexual abusers. The Muradnagar survivor has been dragged through the mud just because she dared to file a case against her rapist.

And if you think these are isolated tragedies, look at the data.

From January to May 2025 alone, 383 rape incidents were recorded. Seventy-one of those cases could

not even be traced to formal police reports—nearly one in five survivors whose trauma was ignored and erased.

And even when women do report, the system makes them pay for it all over again. Our justice process is designed not to protect women, but to exhaust them, humiliate them, and ultimately silence them. We force survivors to prove their violation, to surrender their bodies again for immediate DNA evidence before they have even had a moment to breathe. My colleague, during a *Viewsroom* episode I recently hosted, laid it bare,



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

“Right after rape, women need to choose between healing and justice, and that is not fair.”

The legal system piles indignity upon indignity, while survivors endure trials that drag on for years, sometimes decades. Many survivors simply give up, unable to withstand the endless character assassinations, public scrutiny, and procedural hurdles.

Worse still, many have to prove in court that they were “good enough” to not deserve rape.

Meanwhile, we see in Facebook

comments how there are so many men who think almost all women deserve to be raped, just because they are women, proving once again that rape is not borne out of sexual attraction but is a form of powerplay.

Imagine surviving the worst violation of your life, and being told in court that your own behaviour, your choices, your so-called “character” are on trial, but not the man who destroyed you.

In the case of the Muradnagar rape, the court did not even have to go so far. We had our own “esteemed” journalists crowding the traumatised victim, asking her, “What was your relationship with the man who raped you?” Trying to prove she had something to do with the crime she’s a victim of. How much we love shaming our women is evident just by this.

Even recent legal reforms, like the 2020 High Court guidelines on rape trials, remain ineffective due to poor implementation. Comprehensive

reforms have been demanded for years: trauma-informed investigations, expedited trials, removal of archaic evidentiary rules. But progress? Progress limps while women bleed, and no one seems to care. Cases pile up in court dockets, police investigations are slow, botched, or deliberately sabotaged. All the while, survivors face stigma in their own communities, some driven to suicide before their cases even make it to a courtroom.

This script plays out on repeat and you cannot blame one government.

They have all done the same to us: political influence protecting predators, silencing survivors, portraying the destruction of a woman’s life as a temporary scandal.

We are a country that flaunts its female leaders and boasts of women’s “empowerment” at global forums. Scratch beneath the glossy veneer, and the rot is impossible to ignore.

We raise girls to believe education will liberate them. But what liberation exists when you can be raped on your way to school? What protection exists when even infants are not spared or where every rape is followed by victim-blaming, legal loopholes, and deafening silence from those in power?

Let’s stop pretending. Bangladesh needs to change, urgently, to protect its women, in all its corners.

Like many of you, I too am only left with the soul-crushing knowledge that until this country stops treating

women’s bodies as battlegrounds, until the powerful stop shielding monsters, until justice becomes more than a televised performance, until our society learns and we teach our boys that rape is *always* wrong no matter who the victim is, we will have to keep writing these headlines. We will continue to cry while they keep making false promises of “safety for all women under our government.”

Until then, this so-called nation of progress will keep failing us.

# The silent revolt that no one talks about



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MARUF AHMED

There is a building in Dhaka that most of us pass by without a second glance. It doesn’t scream for attention. It doesn’t compete with the shiny towers of our neoliberal skylines. It stands quietly, almost shyly, under the canopy of trees at Dhaka University. But what it holds inside—historically, symbolically, psychologically—is nothing less than a revolt. Not with banners or bullets, but with brick and silence. I’m speaking, of course, of the Institute of Fine Arts, designed by Muzharul Islam and completed in 1956. In a time when East Pakistan was caught in the tightening grip of West Pakistan’s ideologies, this building emerged, not as a reaction, but as a radical proposition.

Most people at the time didn’t fully grasp what had happened. The building was “just architecture,” a place for artists to study, to paint, to sculpt. It looked clean, modest, and rational. But it was anything but ordinary. At a time when architecture echoed the imperial leftovers of British neoclassicism—with their hierarchical axes, pompous symmetry, and enclosed monumental facades—the fine arts institute did something radical: it opened itself to the courtyard, to the sky, to trees

and human movement. It brought life into the plan. No grand staircase, no ceremonial façade, no temple-like portico, no restriction on walking around the place. Instead, a shaded walkway, porous boundaries, a humble yet dignified spatial democracy.

Psychologically, this space broke with authority. Where colonial architecture was designed to intimidate—to control through verticality, scale, and detachment—this building offered a horizontal intimacy. It invited people to linger, not march. You could enter from multiple sides; it had no “official” front. The courtyard was not ornamental; it was simultaneously a spatial breathing room and a studio, evoking a distinctly Bangalee sense of openness and collective presence. It signalled, subtly but unmistakably, a return to ourselves. It was, quite literally, an architecture of freedom.

Philosopher and social theorist Henri Lefebvre argues that liberation manifests through two interdependent media: the linguistic and the spatial (*The Production of Space*, 1991). The 1952 Language Movement was our linguistic revolt—bloody, visible,

undeniable. But what followed just four years later was our spatial revolt. The fine arts institute did for space what the Language Movement did for speech: it returned us to ourselves. It reminded us, silently, that we were not what the colonial powers—first British, then Pakistani—tried to make us. It reminded us that we had a consciousness before we had a country, and that consciousness needed space where to live, breathe, and become.

The genius of Muzharul Islam was not in spectacle, but in restraint. He didn’t reach for arches, Mughal motifs or colonial symmetry. Instead, he turned to local materials: handmade brick, indigenous proportions, shaded verandas, *jaali*-like wall perforations. Yet, these elements were not nostalgic—they were transformed, modernised, made metaphysically new. He constructed a space that felt ancient without looking backwards, and felt modern without betraying its roots. In doing so, he performed an act of resistance that was both spatial and civilisational.

This, I argue, was our mnemonic rupture—a moment where memory became form. Before we gained territorial independence in 1971, we had already begun to liberate our psyche. The fine arts institute was not just a building, it was a premonition. It knew, before we did, that to become a nation, we had to reclaim more than our land; we had to reclaim our spatial consciousness, and our cultural and existential memory. We had to unlearn colonial monumentality and

reimagine ourselves not as subjects of empire, but as carriers of a humanist legacy deeper and older than any imposed state ideology.

In my ongoing work, *How Architecture in Bangladesh Became Metaphysically Modern*, I argue that this building marks the first real postcolonial reorientation of space in our context. It didn’t just import modernism from the West. It translated it into a local metaphysics, a way of being that was simultaneously forward-looking and deeply grounded. It answered Muzharul Islam’s timeless question, “How do we enter the 21st century?” A question that, as Kazi Khaleed Ashraf observes, carries within it a quiet hesitation: what must we take with us? What must we abandon? What memories, what shadows, what principles still matter?

Today, too often, we associate liberation only with war, politics, and slogans. But the fine arts institute reminds us that liberation also happens in silence, in shadow, in slow-burning wisdom. It teaches us that architecture is not passive. It can fight, it can remember, it can restore. Before we picked up rifles, we built this. Before our maps changed, our minds had already begun to transform.

So perhaps it’s time we ask: what other revolutions have we forgotten? What other sacred beginnings have we walked past without knowing? The Institute of Fine Arts does not demand to be remembered. It simply stands as proof that space can speak, and sometimes, silence is the loudest revolt of all.