

"I want to see safety for the people of Gaza. They've gone through hell."

US President DONALD TRUMP on Gaza ceasefire

The Daily Star

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Life-saving care hampered in 25 govt hospitals

ICUs inoperative or partially functional in these facilities

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Intensive Care Units at 25 public hospitals across the country have remained non-functional or partially operational over the last few months largely due to a manpower crisis, depriving many critically ill patients of life-saving care.

These ICUs with a total of 240 beds were set up in 22 districts between 2020 and last year under the Covid-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness (ERPP) Project, largely funded by the World Bank.

Seventy-four government hospitals in 42 districts have a total of 1,372 ICU beds, meaning 22 districts still don't have any ICU facilities, as per the latest DGHS data.

Over 1,000 staffers, including medical officers and technicians, were recruited to operate the units. However, their contracts expired in December last year, and the government neither reappointed them nor made any replacements.

This has strained the ICU facilities at other government hospitals, particularly at the district level, making it extremely difficult for many to access critical care. Besides, private hospitals charge exorbitant fees for ICU services, rendering them unaffordable to most patients.

A recent rise in Covid-19 cases has heightened concerns over access to critical care. If the situation worsens, the demand for ICU services is likely to increase further.

According to the latest DGHS data, 74 government hospitals in 42 districts have a total of 1,372 ICU beds, meaning 22 districts still don't have any ICU facilities. Besides, of these beds, 758 (55 percent) are concentrated in 22 Dhaka-based hospitals.

Under the project taken up in 2020, 10-bed ICUs were set up at 13 public hospitals in Cumilla, Noakhali, Gopalganj, Feni, Munshiganj,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Chattogram city's first-ever centralised sewage project aims to modernise sanitation, prevent water pollution, and benefit thousands of port city dwellers. The project, with its physical work beginning in January 2022, has experienced significant delays and cost overruns. Its initial phase is now slated for completion in June next year. The photo was taken recently in the city's Halishahar area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

BANGLADESH'S BANKING SECTOR REFORMS

ADB to provide \$1b in budget support

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The Asian Development Bank plans to provide \$1 billion in budget support to advance Bangladesh's banking sector reforms, contingent on 25 conditions including the creation of a financial stability fund for banks facing capital shortfalls.

The funds will be released in two phases -- \$500 million in the current fiscal year and the remaining \$500 million in the next, according to a recent ADB report.

This follows last month's approval of a separate \$500 million allocation, granted after the government and the Bangladesh Bank undertook initial reform measures.

The reforms were launched in response to the deteriorating financial health of several banks weakened by irregularities and scams during the Awami League government's tenure.

Among the conditions for the \$1 billion package, the ADB has asked the central bank to complete asset quality reviews (AQRs) of stressed banks to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

◆ \$500m to be disbursed this fiscal year, the rest in next fiscal year

◆ 25 conditions including creation of a stability fund to recapitalise distressed banks

◆ Central bank will formulate detailed strategies utilising these funds

Some reforms needed for fair election

Says Jamaat chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday condemned mob attacks, saying that these incidents have created such an environment that is not conducive to election.

"For a fair election, some fundamental reforms must be implemented," he said while addressing the party's divisional rally at Rangpur Zilla School ground.

Referring to the recent attack on Patgram Police Station in Lalmonirhat, he said, "It's not just Patgram. A group has turned entire Bangladesh into Patgram."

A mob attacked the police station and snatched away two convicts from custody on Wednesday night.

"Open any newspaper or turn on a television channel, you'll see mob attacks taking place somewhere in the country," Shafiqur said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Rice, veggies, fish get pricier

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of daily essentials such as rice, vegetables, and fish have gone up in the capital, causing concern among consumers, especially those with limited income.

Many shoppers say the rise in prices after Eid has made it harder to manage household expenses.

Over the past four weeks, different types of rice have become costlier by Tk 3 to Tk 6 per kg.

Abdur Rahman, who runs a small roadside hotel, came to Karwan Bazar from Agargaon to buy daily kitchen items.

"After Eid, the price of all vegetables went up by around Tk 10 per kg," he said.

"Potatoes are more expensive now. If the government does not monitor the market properly, prices may rise even more. It's becoming a burden on my family," he added.

The price of Sonali chicken has dropped slightly. It now costs Tk 300 to Tk 320 per kg, down from Tk 330 a few weeks ago. However, the price of broiler chicken has stayed the same.

During visits to markets in Karwan

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

NEWS ANALYSIS

Can Bangladesh retain its foothold in US market?

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

As Bangladesh races against a July 9 deadline to secure a lower tariff regime with the United States, the stakes could not be higher. Without a breakthrough in ongoing negotiations, the tariff on Bangladeshi garment exports could skyrocket to 53 percent from the current 16 percent. And in that case, Bangladesh risks surrendering its hard-won foothold in the world's largest apparel market.

The US is Bangladesh's single largest export destination, with annual shipments exceeding \$8 billion -- over 95 percent of which are garments. Despite facing a relatively high tariff of 16 percent, Bangladesh has maintained its position as the third-largest garment exporter to the US, trailing only China and Vietnam.

"Bangladesh's competitiveness in the US market is depending on the new tariff rate," said Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). "Let us wait and see as the negotiation is still underway."

Despite these headwinds, Bangladesh's apparel sector has held its ground, powered by low prices, high compliance standards, and competitive labour costs. Yet that may not be enough in a dramatically shifting trade environment. The Trump administration



Bangladesh's competitiveness in the US market is depending on the new tariff rate. Let us wait and see as the negotiation is still underway.

MAHMUD HASAN KHAN BABU, president of BGMEA

has just concluded a deal with Vietnam that fixes a 20 percent tariff on Vietnamese garment exports to the US, in exchange for zero-duty access for American goods into Vietnam. Transshipment of Chinese goods through Vietnam, meanwhile, would incur a 40 percent tariff -- still 13 percentage points below what Bangladesh might face if talks falter.

"If Bangladesh cannot strike a better deal and it maintains the reciprocal tariff at 37 percent, it will be challenging," said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID). "But it also depends on how other countries, such as India, are negotiating their own deals."

Vietnam's deal may be attractive on paper, but it's unlikely to fully displace Bangladesh's role. "Vietnam alone cannot supply all the required demand for garments to the US -- they simply don't have the capacity," said Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, executive president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA). "Bangladesh remains a globally strong garment supplier and a long-time trusted sourcing destination for US retailers."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



THE JULY THAT ROCKED BANGLADESH

JULY 5, 2024

Nationwide protests persist despite holiday

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

Even on a holiday, the quota reform protests show no sign of slowing.

Students across Bangladesh take to the streets, block roads, form human chains, and voice their rejection of the reinstated quota system in government jobs.

What began as student anger has now grown into a nationwide movement, with teachers, political groups, and ordinary citizens extending their support.

In Chattogram, students of Chittagong University gather at Shaheed Minar and later block the Sholoshohor road from 4:00pm, halting traffic for nearly an hour and a half. They chant slogans demanding an end to discrimination and call for the complete abolition of the quota system.

In Dinajpur, braving rain, students of Hajee Mohammad

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



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Who cares for our aging parents?

RBR

I once watched a documentary series featuring abandoned widows of the Hindu sect seeking refuge in Varanasi, India. A video clip from the series shows a woman in her late seventies saying, “I find it ironic that a mother can take care of 10 children, but 10 of them cannot take care of one mother.”

This realisation resonated strongly with me. She listlessly uttered the most tragic truth of her life and casually put the spotlight on the need for a recognised care economy in city lives. At this point in time, I am looking for one for my own loved ones.

This is a familiar and common story for us, who now need to take care of the person who helped raise us. The roles are reversed and our aging parents are now like our own children.

Health issues leading to fatal catastrophes, unnoticed or misunderstood mental health changes, and becoming financially dependent on us, their children, plague their minds. These are the unkindest dependencies to adjust to.

You do not realise when your mother's grip on your hand slips and you hold her hand instead. This shift is very crucial. I strongly believe if you cannot commit yourself to this responsibility, then you find a better



PHOTO: STAR

solution to aid you in taking care of your ailing parents.

In Dhaka, there are plenty of caregiver services and agencies catering to this urgency to provide trusted, trained professionals and systematic plans tailored to your needs.

Enterprises such as Life Nursing Care; DHCL - Nursing Services & Home Care Services for Elderly & Patients; No Chinta Limited; AYAT Care and Maisha Care Ltd started to acknowledge the growing need for certified home caregiver support systems, particularly for the elderly when you cannot manage time to

monitor their everyday medical routines.

“Services like feeding, bathing, diaper changing, medication management, dressing, toileting, maintaining their hygiene, keeping them happy with an engaging activity, but most importantly respecting their dignity is something these organisations offer. They also have 24-hour services, and respite care services, which means when you tire out, they take on your caregiving duties. The permutation and combination are such that they provide comprehensive support that is suitable for your unique requirements,” says Rahima Begum, a busy homemaker, who availed such

services in Dhaka.

“I need such a trusted professional caregiver or companion for my loved ones. Someone who would watch old Uttam Kumar movies with them or take them out for a walk in the park, and on a serious note, call for doctors when any emergencies arise or administer the SOS drug when I am not around,” says Imtiaz Ali, who is an event planner and has erratic working hours.

There are many of us like Rahima and Imtiaz. We need caregiving assistance for our mothers who need palliative care, for fathers who fell in a bathroom and broke their back, for mothers-in-law who require tube feeding, or for cases where the mother is active and exuberant, but one does not have time to sit with her for chats over tea; all these situations, small or big, are harsh realities for us.

In my opinion, there is no harm in hiring professionals to care for the aging when you cannot give your 100 percent. In Dhaka, working couples prefer a nuclear family structure. The reasons can be either they do not live in the same cities as their parents, or live separately to not crowd their parent's homes. But at the end of the day, they feel guilty for not being able to give their parents quality time.

Thus, all paid and unpaid activities that provide care and support to children, the elderly, and those with disabilities make up the crucial care economy that is booming in Dhaka. And if we ignore the minor changes in them, if we do not give full attention to major issues, then we pay a high price for our indifference.

CU teacher's promotion suspended in face of student protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong University authorities yesterday suspended the promotion process of a Sanskrit professor in the face of a student protest on campus.

Dr Kushal Baran Chakraborty, an assistant professor at the Sanskrit department, was being considered for a promotion to the post of associate professor.

As part of the process, he was supposed to be interviewed by a university board at the vice chancellor's office at 3:00pm yesterday.

Before the scheduled meeting, a group of students, opposing his promotion, locked the main entrance of the administrative building.

They alleged that the teacher was an accused in an attempted murder case and an accomplice of the previous fascist regime.

Ashiqur Rahman, a leader of the Students Against Discrimination, claimed that they were protesting the administration's decision to

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Fear grips Cumilla village after mob kills 3

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A day after a mob killed three members of a family in Karaibari of Cumilla's Muradnagar, accusing them of being involved in drug trading, the village yesterday took a deserted look.

Locals said most male residents have fled, fearing arrest. Most of the shops in the village also remained shut.

An auto-rickshaw driver said, “I did not get any passengers today. Men have fled the village, and even women are staying inside their homes.”

A local youth Moshir Rahman told this correspondent that most adult males have left the village, and a sense of fear is prevailing in the area after the killings.

Acknowledging the situation, Mahfuzur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bangrabazar Police Station, said police had to bring a gravedigger from Muradnagar Sadar to bury the victims.

Additional police forces have been deployed in the area, said law enforcers.

Talking to The Daily Star, at least two people

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Drone shot down near Iraqi airport hosting US troops

AFP, Arbil

A drone was intercepted late on Thursday near Arbil airport, which houses US-led anti-jihadist coalition troops in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, Kurdish security forces said.

“At 21:58 (1858 GMT) an explosive-packed drone was downed near Arbil International Airport, without causing casualties or damage,” said the counterterrorism services of the Kurdistan region.

Arbil airport, which includes a military base of the international anti-jihadist coalition, was a frequent target in previous years for rocket and drone attacks.

A US defence official told AFP “we are aware of an explosion from a UAV that occurred outside of the airbase in Arbil”, adding that the “incident is under investigation”.

“All US personnel are accounted for and there were no injuries or damage to the base or US assets in the area,” he said.

Rice, veggies, fish get pricier

FROM PAGE 1

Bazar, Farmgate, Mirpur-11, Shewrapara, and Mohammadpur Krishi Market, similar prices were found.

Muhammad Sumon, manager of a boiler house in Karwan Bazar, said, “After Eid, the price of Sonali chicken went up by Tk 50–60 per kg. But now it has come down by Tk 10 per kg.”

He said broiler chicken still sells for Tk 150 to Tk 170 per kg, and local chicken remains at Tk 580 to Tk 600 per kg.

Fish prices have also gone up, said Shukkur Ali, a fish trader in Karwan Bazar.

“Hilsa now costs Tk 2,400 to Tk 2,500 per kg, which is Tk 100 more than last week.”

Shrimp prices range between Tk 800 and Tk 1,200 per kg. Before Eid, it was Tk 700 to Tk 1,200 per kg. Other fish like Rohu, Katla, Sperata aor, small local fish, and Pangas have increased by Tk 20 to Tk 50 per kg after Eid.

Vegetable prices have remained high after Eid. Potatoes now sell at Tk 25 per kg, up from Tk 20 before Eid. Local onion prices remain the same at Tk 55 to Tk 60 per kg.

Vegetables like yardlong beans, ridge gourds, bitter melons, pointed gourds, okra, and brinjals are selling for Tk 40 to Tk 80 per kg. These are Tk 10 to Tk 20 higher than usual, and the prices are not dropping.

The price of eggs has slightly decreased. A dozen eggs now cost between Tk 110 and Tk 130, down from Tk 115 to Tk 130 last week.

ADB to provide \$1b in budget support

FROM PAGE 1

identify impaired assets and ensure regulatory and provisioning compliance.

The central bank will also submit the Ordinance for the Bankruptcy (Amendment) Act, 2024, for approval to strengthen the insolvency process.

It will finalise the framework of a financial stability fund for emergency recapitalisation of banks that breach capital adequacy requirements. The BB will ensure its implementation, while the finance ministry will provide the agreed initial corpus to operationalise the stability fund.

“Bangladesh Bank is currently assessing the required amount to create the stability fund,” said an official with knowledge of the matter.

According to finance ministry officials, the government has already earmarked an allocation for the stability fund in the current fiscal year's budget.

The ADB, alongside the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, is supporting Bangladesh's banking sector reforms. Among them, the ADB is one of the lead development partners helping

advance critical changes to strengthen the country's financial sector.

“Key reforms supported by ADB include the completion of comprehensive asset quality reviews (AQRs) of key banks,” the ADB report said, noting the reviews were funded through its technical assistance.

As of May, AQRs for six systemically important banks had been completed. The reviews applied standardised templates and methodologies to ensure consistency across institutions. “ADB's work in completing AQRs will serve as a diagnostic foundation for correctly sequenced, evidence-based reforms on recapitalisation, resolution planning, and broader financial stability reforms leading to improved governance, increased market confidence and a more resilient banking sector in the next five years,” the report added.

In a major consolidation effort, the BB has initiated the merger of five Islamic banks into a single entity following AQRs conducted by global audit firms. Reviews are also underway for 11 other stressed banks.

The legislative measures under the ADB's loan programme include

submitting the Ordinance for the Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Act, 2024, to strengthen legal recourse against dishonoured cheques and failed loan recoveries. The BB will also propose the Ordinance for the Money Loan Court (Amendment) Act, 2003 to improve loan recovery processes.

Additionally, the BB will issue an executive order to establish asset management companies responsible for managing and recovering troubled loan assets. The government is expected to operationalise these companies as part of efforts to resolve non-performing assets.

The ADB anticipates that these reforms will lead to a more stable banking sector, improving access to finance – especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

“An improved and stable banking system with strong governance and gradual adherence to international norms will be able to channel funds to the desired segments of the economy, including SMEs,” the report said.

“A stronger banking system will be conducive to enable higher access to finance to the private sector of the country,” it added.

Life-saving care hampered

FROM PAGE 1

Narayanganj, Sherpur, Tangail, Jashore, Sunamganj, Chuadanga, Bagerhat and Madaripur.

Similar ICUs were also established in Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in Dhaka, and nine medical colleges in Khulna, Dinajpur, Barishal, Sylhet, Faridpur, Tangail, Manikganj, Bogura and Cumilla.

Moreover, five-bed ICUs were set up at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Dhaka and Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in Chattogram.

The Daily Star spoke with the authorities at 11 of the hospitals and found that at least four couldn't launch ICU services due to a manpower shortage and other infrastructural problems. They are 250-bed Jashore General Hospital, Manikganj Medical College Hospital, Tangail Medical College Hospital and Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

Six of the hospitals are providing ICU services partially. They are Gopalganj General Hospital; Noakhali General Hospital; Cumilla General Hospital; Cumilla Medical College Hospital; Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal; and the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Dhaka.

“We somehow have kept the ICU functional... But it's not functioning properly,” said Jibitesh Biswas, superintendent of Gopalganj General Hospital.

In January this year, Munshiganj General Hospital suspended its ICU services due to a manpower crisis.

“We now refer patients requiring life-saving care to hospitals in Dhaka,” Ahammed Kabir, superintendent of the hospital, told this correspondent.

DGHS and project officials said the ICUs at 14 other hospitals were also non-functional or partially operational.

THE ERPP PROJECT

The government launched the project in April, 2020, a month after Covid-19 hit the country, with an allocation of Tk 1,127.51 crore to prop up the country's health system in response to the pandemic.

Following a revision in January, 2021, the cost of the project, largely funded by the WB, rose to Tk 6,786.58 crore as several components were incorporated into it. However, the cost was revised down to Tk 6,386.64 crore after another revision in July, 2023.

The government initially hired 393 health workers under the project. Later, the workforce was expanded to 1,154, including medical officers, nurses, and technologists.

As their job contracts expired in December last year, Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) officials verbally requested them to continue working, assuring that salaries would be paid later – a request many complied with, according to DGHS sources.

However, in late May, DGHS officials asked them to discontinue their services.

Seeking anonymity, a DGHS official said that though disruption in ICU services began in January, some hospitals kept providing life-saving

care by deputing staff from their existing workforce. Besides, a number of health workers employed under the project continued to perform their duties.

UNCERTAINTY OVER IMPLEMENTATION

Several components of the project remain incomplete as the WB declined to extend the contract period, according to DGHS and project officials.

Under the project, the government was supposed to set up 10-bed ICUs at 33 more district hospitals; paediatric ICUs at 16 medical college hospitals; obstetric ICUs for critically ill pregnant women at 15 medical college hospitals; 10-bed ICUs at two specialised hospitals and one-stop emergency service centres at 21 medical college hospitals.

It also includes other components such as installation of microbiology laboratories at 19 medical college hospitals; establishment or expansion of liquid medical oxygen systems at 30 hospitals; and setting up of medical waste treatment plants at 20 hospitals and medical screening facilities at airports and seaports.

While construction of the facilities is nearing completion, uncertainty persists regarding the purchase of equipment and recruitment of manpower, said the officials.

The health authorities had earlier sought to complete the pending work under three “operational plans” of the proposed Fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), and absorb the health workers hired for the project into those plans.

However, the interim government scrapped the proposed 5th HPNSP and decided to absorb the health programmes into regular ones to improve coordination and strengthen infrastructure.

In the first week of June, the health ministry held a meeting to discuss two options: announce completion of the project without finishing the remaining work or initiate a new project to complete the pending work.

“No final decision has been made regarding the project,” a DGHS official told this newspaper on June 28, seeking anonymity.

The project authorities have been asked to assess how much money and time are needed to complete the remaining work, added the official.

Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said the ICUs were built during an emergency period, and many of those remained unutilised afterwards.

He said the government plans to introduce a cluster system under which the ICU at one hospital will be designated to serve patients from two to three neighbouring districts, as it may not be feasible to deploy adequate manpower to all ICUs.

“In each cluster, the ICU of a selected hospital will be made fully functional. Ambulance services will link it to one or two hospitals in adjacent districts, from where patients requiring intensive care will be transported to the designated facility,” he told The Daily Star.

Pension Scheme also continues across 39 public universities nationwide.

Meanwhile, progressive political alliance Gonotontro Moncho holds a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka, where its leaders accuse the government of trying to

protests are genuine and not politically manipulated. “We support the students' movement. We support the teachers' movement. We stand with every movement of the people of this country,” he says. He warns that the government is deploying goon squads and helmet gangs to



FILE PHOTO

A group of students from Khulna University formed a human chain in the city on July 5, 2024, protesting the reinstatement of quota system in government recruitment.

crush these movements through repression. Jonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Gonosonghoti Andolon, declares, “The government has entered a death game. It is killing people, abducting dissenters, and destroying the country, yet it refuses to relinquish power.”

Saki affirms that the student

suppress protests on campuses, but insists that these tactics cannot defeat the collective uprising.

As the day ends, it is clear that the July uprising is spreading its roots deeper into the country's political landscape – transforming into a broader movement for democracy, accountability, and fairness.

Wrongdoers within party will not be spared: Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any party member found involved in wrongdoing will face action, said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday.

"Anyone who does something wrong, illegal, violent, or harmful in the name of the party will not be spared," he said at a press briefing at the BNP central office in Dhaka's Nayapaltan.

"This country must not fall into the hands of thugs. Some are involved in unethical activities, disturbing people, and creating fear using the party's name. We have not excused them, and we won't," Rizvi added.

The BNP leader said they have already taken steps against 4,000-5,000

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

PSC REFORM

Job seekers block road, 'clash' with police

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of job seekers blocked the Shabbagh intersection yesterday evening, demanding reforms to the Public Service Commission and a review of the final result of the 44th BCS.

Under the banner of "PSC Reform Movement," the protesters also staged a sit-in at the intersection, bringing traffic to a standstill.

During the time, police tried to disperse the demonstrators, leading to a brief clash, they said.

"We were heading to the Raju Sculpture when police suddenly pushed us from behind, which triggered the clash," said Salehin Sion, a former BUET student and one of the protesters.

Later, demonstrators moved to the base of the Raju Sculpture and announced a nonstop sit-in there until their demands were met.

Contacted, Shabbagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge Khalid Monsur said police had only intervened to clear the intersection, as the blockade had caused traffic congestion.

"No clash took place at Shabbagh. The protesters attacked us instead,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Cop attends Jamaat event, sparks controversy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An official from Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Lalbagh Zone recently attended a political programme organised by Jamaat-e-Islami while in uniform and made political remarks.

The official, Shah Alam, assistant commissioner (patrol-Lalbagh), attended the programme organised by Jamaat's Dhaka 7 unit on Thursday at Salimullah Muslim Orphanage, where food was distributed among orphans to mark the first anniversary of the July uprising.

Hafiz Haji Enayet Ullah, Jamaat's nominated candidate for Dhaka-7 and a former FBCCI director, attended the event as special guest.

In his speech, AC Shah Alam said, "The previous fascist government sold out the entire country. You all know about this. I don't

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Construction materials and machinery owned by Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited are kept at Anowara Park in Farmgate. In September, all of it will be removed, and the site will finally be handed over to Dhaka North City Corporation to begin building a new public park. Initially, there were plans to construct a station plaza on the land; however, following public pushback, the decision was made to restore the area as a park.

The forgotten boys of Mirpur

A decade on, families await justice for killing of three teenagers

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

For a decade now, 54-year-old house help Jyotsna Robi Das has been seeking justice for the killing of her son.

But her pleas went unheard -- until recently, when hopes revived following the fall of the Awami League-led government on August 5 last year.

Jyotsna's son was one of three teenage boys shot dead in the capital's Mirpur in February 2015. They were suspected of being arsonists linked to the then-main opposition, BNP.

According to the victims' families, the killers had ties to the then-ruling Awami League, which is why police failed to identify any perpetrators and eventually submitted a final report without making any arrests.

"For justice, I went to the police and then the court. Still, I got nothing," said Jyotsna, mother of Sumon, one of the victims, while talking to The Daily Star.

Holding a portrait of her son's body, she broke down in tears.

"How could they shoot so many bullets at such a little boy?" she said. "When I visited the spot, bullet shells were scattered across the narrow alley."

"Whenever I walk on the roads, the image of his lifeless body flashes before my eyes," added Jyotsna, who now supports her family working as a house help. "No one in our area can say my son was a bad person."

"I want the highest punishment for the killers. This is the only demand. I hope the



PHOTO: STAR

From left, Jyotsna Robi Das, 54, cries holding her son's photo while Halima Khatun, 65, mourns her grandson. The photos were taken recently.

current government will take steps to bring them to justice."

Another victim, Robin, was raised by his grandmother Halima Khatun, 65, after his mother abandoned him as a baby.

"Due to our hardship, my grandson couldn't go to school. He started working as a leguna helper...", she said. "I am still waiting for justice."

The families urged the government to reinvestigate the case.

Contacted on May 11, Muhammad Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, "It's an old incident. I don't know anything about it," but added, "Police will look into the matter again."

THE INCIDENT

Around 7:00pm on February 22, 2015, a group of local Jubo League men caught

Sumon, Robin, and Jewel -- aged between 14 and 15 -- near Krishibid Bhaban on Begum Rokeya Sarani, suspecting they were planning to firebomb public transport.

They took the boys to a dark alley in West Kazipara's Baishbari area and tortured them after tying up their hands, according to two traders who run businesses near the scene.

Several hours later, police recovered their bullet-riddled bodies from an alleyway, said several locals.

Various newspapers at that time, citing autopsy reports, reported that the boys had at least 56 bullet wounds.

CASES FILED

The next day, Sub-Inspector Masud Parvez of Mirpur Model Police Station filed a murder case against 100-150 unidentified individuals. The victims' ages were recorded as 19 and 20 in the case statement.

In May 2017, police submitted the final

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

DENGUE SURGE

Women fatality high despite fewer cases

HELEMUL ALAM

As dengue cases continue to surge, the total number of reported infections this year has reached 11,660, with 6,887 of them being male.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 45 dengue patients have died this year as of yesterday -- 24 males and 21 females. Although more men have died, the percentage of deaths is higher among female patients compared to their total infection numbers.

Experts say the higher number of male infections is mainly due to increased mobility

Gender-based health neglect plays a major role. Patriarchal norms often delay women's access to medical care. In many cases, families take women to the hospital only when it's already too late.

Dr HM Nazmul Ahsan
Associate Professor, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital



for work, which makes them more exposed to mosquito bites in various locations.

DGHS data shows that 59.3 percent of infections are male and 40.7 percent female. Among the total deaths, 53.3 percent are male and 46.7 percent female.

Experts also point out that late hospitalisation, malnutrition, compromised immunity, and social stigma have historically led to higher female mortality in dengue cases. Despite slightly fewer female deaths this year, their fatality rate remains disproportionately high.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman explained

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Biodiversity entangled in deadly mesh

Widespread use of China Duari nets disrupts life across JU's wetlands

SAKIB AHMED

The rampant use of fine-meshed fishing nets, locally known as China Duari nets, in the swamps and waterbodies within and around Jahangirnagar University (JU) is posing a serious threat to the area's aquatic biodiversity.

These non-biodegradable nets, ranging from a few feet to over 15 metres in length and costing between Tk 900 and Tk 14,000, are typically deployed from mid-May to October in narrow canals, wetlands, and crop fields. Due to their extremely fine mesh, they not only trap fish but also entangle unintended species such as snakes, juvenile fish, and birds, harming the fragile local ecosystem.

Although not officially banned in Bangladesh, the nets violate the Protection and Conservation of Fish Rules, 1985, which prohibits mesh sizes smaller than 4.5 cm.

Despite their environmental impact, China Duari nets remain widely available and are used by local residents and even university staff.

During a recent visit, this correspondent observed the nets being used in several waterbodies, including Sindhuria Lake, Mirrtek Lake (about 5 km from

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Fine-meshed fishing nets, locally known as China Duari nets, are seen in the swamps and waterbodies on the campus of Jahangirnagar University. Their widespread use poses a serious threat to the area's aquatic biodiversity. The extremely fine mesh not only traps fish but also entangles unintended species such as snakes, juvenile fish, and birds -- harming the fragile local ecosystem. Although the Protection and Conservation of Fish Rules, 1985, prohibit mesh sizes smaller than 4.5cm, China Duari nets have not been specifically banned, allowing their continued use in some areas.

PHOTO: STAR



Arrested workers used to send money to IS

Says Malaysian police chief

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Bangladeshi workers arrested in Malaysia on charges of involvement in terrorism were sending money to the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria and Bangladesh, Malaysian police chief Khalid Ismail has claimed.

In a televised press conference, Inspector-General of Police Mohd Khalid Ismail said authorities had detained 36 Bangladesh nationals in several operations since April, all of whom had come to Malaysia to work in factories or in sectors like construction and services.

The network recruited members by targeting other Bangladeshi workers, and used social media and online messaging platforms to spread radical and extremist ideologies,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Water hyacinths and garbage choke a section of the Gulshan-Banani Lake, tarnishing the natural beauty of the waterbody and highlighting the urgent need for better conservation efforts. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BHOLA MUNICIPALITY

Key roads lie dilapidated



SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

A significant number of roads within Bhola municipality, including several vital ones, are in a dilapidated state, causing immense suffering to locals.

A visit to different areas across the municipality, including the Bhola District Court area, in front of the DC and SP offices, Muslimpara, Westernpara, and in front of the municipality office, revealed that many roads are now largely impassable. Potholes and persistent waterlogging have made daily commutes extremely difficult, especially during monsoon.

Residents have demanded urgent repairs to the roads to alleviate their suffering. Municipality authorities, however, claimed that some repair works have already been initiated while the tendering process is ongoing for others.

Locals said although certain repair works have recently started, the overall condition of the roads has yet to improve.

"The roads are in such dire condition that I have to spend more on repairing my rickshaw every month than what I earn, due to the damages caused to the vehicle," said Sohel, a rickshaw puller. Several other rickshaw and auto rickshaw drivers echoed him.

According to municipal data, Bhola has a total of 261 kilometres of road network, including 170 kilometres of

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

KALURGHAT-CHAKTAI EMBANKMENT, ROAD

8 years on, project still incomplete

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Initiated in 2017, the 8.5-kilometre road and embankment project between Kalurghat Bridge and Chaktai Canal in Chattogram remains incomplete after eight years.

The project has undergone two revisions, several deadline extensions, and a significant increase in cost. Its last deadline expired in June this year, and the implementing agency, Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), has requested another one-year extension.

The project aims to improve connectivity by building a four-lane alternative road and reduce waterlogging in the area through the embankment. However, as it remains unfinished, traffic congestion and drainage problems continue, causing hardship to residents.

The project includes laying 193,000 square metres of road pavement and 1,470 square metres of rigid pavement, constructing six bus bays, three pedestrian overpasses, 353 metres of connecting roads, 9,165 metres of New Jersey barriers, and 15,057 square metres of walkways.

Additional facilities include seven pump houses, seven electrical sub-stations, 1,084 LED streetlights, and 12 water pumps to support infrastructure and drainage systems.

A recent visit to the site behind Kolpolok Residential Area revealed that 10 out of 12 regulators have been constructed, but a large

portion of the road from Kolpolok to Kalurghat remains under construction. The road is being built by Spectra Engineers Limited.

According to project documents, work began in July 2017 and was initially scheduled for completion by June 2020 at a cost of Tk 2,275.52 crore.

The project was revised twice, increasing the cost to Tk 2,779.39 crore, with the deadline extended

and have been facing challenges, so delays are inevitable."

Rajib Das, project director, said, "Around 82 percent of the work is complete. We hope to open the road for vehicular movement by June next year."

Urban planning experts argue that the delays stem not only from land acquisition issues but also from CDA's poor planning and project management.



three times to June 2025.

Now, CDA is seeking an extension until June 2026, without any further cost increase.

Officials attributed the delay to land acquisition complications.

Kazi Hasan Bin Shams, chief engineer of CDA, said, "To implement the project, we had to acquire around 170 acres of land

"Lack of proper study before taking on the project has caused delay and raised costs. The government should identify those responsible for starting the project without adequate planning and take action," said Md Delwar Hossain Mazumdar, urban planner and executive member of the Forum for Planned Chattogram.

Fayzul finds success in mushroom farming



MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

With a quiet determination and a vision rooted in both necessity and inspiration, Fayzul Gani, a young law student from Karuatoli village in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila, has carved out an unlikely path to success – through mushrooms.

Burdened by unemployment and the weight of providing for his family, Fayzul sought help from the Akhaura Upazila Agriculture Office in December 2024. He expressed his interest in mushroom farming, a field that few around him knew much about. His sincerity did not go unnoticed.

The officials, recognising his potential, facilitated his enrolment at the Mushroom Development Institute in Savar.

There, Fayzul underwent hands-on training, learning how to prepare PDA media – Potato Dextrose Agar – a common microbiological growth medium crucial to mushroom cultivation. He was also trained in producing pure and mother cultures, and commercial spawn production.

Returning home, he established a farm – Bari Mushroom Corner. Backed by the agriculture department, which provided essential infrastructure such as a cultivation shed, spawn production room, inoculation chamber, 12 racks, a van, and other tools, Fayzul was ready to begin.

When this correspondent visited the farm recently, a peaceful scene unfolded. Papaya trees

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

STORMING AK AZAD'S HOUSE

Complaint filed with police station

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A written complaint was filed with Kotwali Police Station yesterday, accusing 16 BNP activists and 25-30 unidentified persons of storming Ha-Meem Group Managing Director AK Azad's residence in Faridpur town's Jheeluli on Thursday.

Md Ahaduzzaman, duty officer of the police station, confirmed receiving the complaint filed by Md Rafizul Khan, 40, land officer of Ha-Meem Group.

Faridpur Metropolitan BNP member-secretary Golam Mostafa was made the prime accused in the complaint.

It said a group of "miscreants" forcibly entered the house premises after threatening to kill the security guard. Once inside, they created chaos and hurled explosives.

At that time, Mostafa and his supporters threatened to set fire to Azad's house.

Superintendent of Police Md MA Jalil said appropriate legal action will be taken following investigation.

Contacted, Golam Mostafa denied the allegations, saying they had gone to the house after learning that the Awami League was holding a "secret meeting" there.

STATUTORY NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1099 OF 2025
IN THE MATTER OF: Grand Heritage Limited, represented by its Managing Director, Mr. Md. Saiful Islam, Petitioner
-VERSUS-
The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies and Firms & others, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka -1215. Respondent
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 12 read with section 13 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Company Bench Hon'ble High Court Division, of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh for confirmation and permission to amend the objective clause of Memorandum of Association of the petitioner Company namely, **Grand Heritage Limited**. Upon preliminary hearing, on 30.06.2025 his Lordship Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel presiding over the Company Bench has admitted the application and pleased to direct to publish notice in the newspapers and also directed to submit compliance on or before 3rd August, 2025. Any one desirous of opposing the said application may do so before the Hon'ble High Court either personally or through Advocate. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of nominal fees.
Mohammad Golam Kibria FCS, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh GK CHAMBRERS, 218, Syed Nazrul Islam Saroni, Tropicana Tower (9th Floor), Suite # 9A, Purana Paltan, Dhaka. Mobile: 01707-429282

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বাংলাদেশ অভ্যন্তরীণ নৌপরিবহন কর্তৃপক্ষ
১৪১-১৪৩, মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-১০০০।

ঘাট/পয়েন্ট ইজারা/লাইসেন্সের টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ অভ্যন্তরীণ নৌপরিবহন কর্তৃপক্ষ (বিআইডব্লিউটিএ)-এর ঢাকা নদী বন্দরের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন নিম্নবর্ণিত ঘাট/পয়েন্ট ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের ১৬-০৭-২০২৫ তারিখ হতে ৩০-০৬-২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত ৩৫০ দিনের জন্য ইজারা প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে আপাতী ১৩-০৭-২০২৫ তারিখ ১ম দফা টেন্ডার অনুষ্ঠিত হবে:	ঘাট/পয়েন্টের নাম
নদী বন্দরের নাম	
ঢাকা	কর্ণপাড়া-কোতা খাল হয়ে চলাচলকারী নৌযান সমূহ হতে টোল আদায় এবং নৌপথে পরিবাহিত মালামালের বারিং চার্জ, শুল্ক আদায় ও লেবার হাভলিং ঘাট/পয়েন্ট

২। টেন্ডার সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় তথ্যাদি/নিয়মাবলী টেন্ডার সিডিউলে উল্লেখ আছে। তাছাড়া বিআইডব্লিউটিএ'র বন্দর ও পরিবহন বিভাগ, ঢাকা দপ্তর এবং ঢাকা নদী বন্দরের বন্দর নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্মকর্তার দপ্তর হতেও তথ্যাদি জানা যাবে।

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মুদ্রাপরিচালক
বন্দর ও পরিবহন বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
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GD-1531

DMTCL to hand over Women fatality high despite

FROM PAGE 3
playground and park in the DNCC area. One design is already prepared, and we are waiting for another before finalising."

A large portion of Anowara Park has been used to store construction materials and for operational purposes related to DMTCL's metro rail project since construction began at the Farmgate end in late 2018.

The Agargaon-Motijheel section of the country's first metro rail (MRT-6) was opened to the public on November 4, 2023.

Urban planners have urged that the site be preserved as a park, given the city's acute shortage of open spaces, especially in the congested Farmgate area.

Adil Mohammad Khan, current president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said DMTCL initially planned to build a station plaza on the site but backed off following protests from

environmentalists and urban planners. "Despite this, they seem unwilling to relinquish control of the site," he added.

According to Adil, around 50 percent of the park's space has already been lost to the metro rail and elevated expressway projects.

"But the remaining area must be made available to the public as a park," he said.

He said while the city has many areas for commercial activity, what it lacks are parks, open spaces, and playgrounds.

"A park or playground beside a metro rail station is ideal, offering a breathing space in a congested area like Farmgate. The design should reflect this need," he said.

"Farmgate is where most people in Dhaka will get on and off the metro rail. So, a public breathing space is essential here. City dwellers will not accept anything other than a park at this location," Adil said.

FROM PAGE 3
that the risk of infection depends on a person's movement. Males are more mobile due to work, so they are more exposed and become the main victims of dengue, he said. Infections can occur anywhere a person travels.

He added that travel during the recent long vacation may have contributed to the rise in cases. The risk of death depends on a person's immunity and whether it is a first-time infection. First-time cases are usually less severe, but second or third-time infections carry a higher risk of fatality.

Rahman stressed the need for a detailed study to identify the main causes behind the surge. He said each patient's infection history and occupation should be examined to determine the likely source of exposure. If a housewife is infected, it suggests the vector is present at home. But if a working woman is infected, she may have

been exposed in many places, which requires deeper investigation.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar raised similar concerns. In previous years, males had more infections but fewer deaths. This year, males dominate both infection and death statistics, he said.

The slight drop in female fatalities can be attributed to better hospital management and timely treatment, he added. Last year's awareness campaigns, which focused on the risks faced by women, may also have helped reduce female deaths.

Regarding the high number of male cases, Bashar said that as the outbreak spreads outside Dhaka, working men – especially those who travel or work outdoors – are more likely to be infected. Their high mobility increases their chances of being bitten by mosquitoes.

Dr HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy

Medical College Hospital, highlighted the added vulnerabilities faced by women, especially pregnant women and those with conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Female patients are particularly vulnerable. If they contract dengue during menstruation or pregnancy, they require special medical care. Delayed treatment can lead to dengue shock syndrome, which is often fatal, he said.

Severe symptoms include abdominal pain, breathing difficulties, vomiting, and bleeding from the gums or nose. If these symptoms are not addressed within 24 hours, the risk of developing dengue shock syndrome increases significantly, Dr Ahsan warned.

He also pointed out that gender-based health neglect plays a major role. Patriarchal norms often delay women's access to medical care. In many cases, families take women to the hospital only when it is already too late, he added.

AFGHAN BORDER Pak army kills 30 militants Accuses India of backing them

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's army said yesterday it had killed 30 militants attempting to cross the border from Afghanistan over the last three days, after a suicide attack killed 16 soldiers in the same region.

The militants belonged to the Pakistan Taliban or its affiliated groups, the military said in a statement accusing archfoe India of backing them.

"The security forces demonstrated exceptional professionalism, vigilance preparedness, and prevented a potential catastrophe," it said.

"A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered," the statement added. The killings took place in the border district of North Waziristan, where last week a faction of Pakistan Taliban claimed a suicide blast on military.



This handout photograph, taken and released yesterday by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, shows an elderly couple crossing a street as smoke rises in the background at the site of a strike following a mass Russian drone and missile attack on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

PHOTO: AFP

China helped Pakistan with 'live inputs' Says Indian Army deputy chief on Indo-Pak conflict

REUTERS, New Delhi

China gave Islamabad "live inputs" on key Indian positions during Pakistan's conflict with its neighbour in May, the deputy chief of India's army said yesterday, calling for urgent upgrades to the country's air defence systems.

India fought two adversaries during the conflict, with Pakistan being the "front face" while China provided "all possible support", Lt General Rahul Singh said at an event in New Delhi.

"When the DGMO (director general of military operations) level talks were going on, Pakistan ... said that we know that your such and such important vector is primed and it is ready for action ... he was getting live inputs from China," he said. Singh did not elaborate on how India knew about the live inputs from China.

PASSAGE OF POLICY BILL BY US CONGRESS Trump extends his political power

REUTERS, Washington

As US President Donald Trump worked to pass his signature spending bill, he blended charm and threats, bestowed gifts and belloved frustration to bend Congress to his will.

In the end, after days of intense behind-the-scenes pressure from the White House, Congress proved no match for a president at the peak of his power.

Trump secured the biggest legislative victory of his second term in office on Thursday when the House of Representatives passed his sweeping tax cut and spending bill, sending it to the Republican president for his signature by his dictated deadline of yesterday's Independence Day holiday.

The measure will give Trump billions of dollars and new legal avenues to press forward with his domestic agenda, ramping up migrant deportations and cutting taxes while rolling back health benefits and food assistance.

One-by-one, major US institutions from the Supreme Court, law firms, universities, media

The measure will give Trump new legal avenues to press forward with his domestic agenda, including ramping up migrant deportations and cutting taxes.

Marco Rubio.

In acceding to Trump's wishes, Republican lawmakers pushed past their non-partisan budget office and Senate parliamentarian, mega-donor Elon Musk, bond market fears about US debt and their personal doubts about whether the bill's benefit cuts could shorten their constituents' lives or their own political futures.

Nonpartisan forecasters say the legislation will add \$3.4 trillion to the nation's \$36.2 trillion in debt, a prediction many Republicans contend overlooks future economic growth from business tax cuts.

The bill isn't popular with many Americans: 49 percent oppose the legislation, while only 29 percent favour it, according to recent polling by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center. Pew said majorities expressed concern that the legislation would raise the budget deficit and hurt lower-income people while benefiting the wealthy.

The White House disputed the polling data, insisting that internal polls across the country had found great support for many specific provisions of the law.

US lifted some export curbs Says China, warns against 'blackmail'

AFP, Beijing

China said yesterday that the US has eased certain export restrictions in line with a "hard-won" framework reached at talks last month, warning against "blackmail and coercion".

"Currently, both teams are working quickly to implement the results outlined in the London framework", China's commerce ministry said in a statement, referring to the June meetings.

Beijing is now "reviewing applications for export licences of controlled items that meet the requirements", it said.

"The US side is also taking corresponding actions and has lifted a series of restrictive measures against China, the details of which have been communicated to the Chinese side," it added.

The world's two top economies agreed to an outline of a deal to walk back from brink of staggering tariffs at last month's London meetings.

Escaped lion attacks woman, children in Pakistan street

AFP, Lahore

An escaped pet lion chased a woman and two children down a busy street in Pakistan's Lahore, police said yesterday, with dramatic footage showing the big cat leaping a wall before pouncing on them.

CCTV footage released by the police showed the lion jumping the barrier around its home and pursuing a woman carrying her shopping on Thursday night.

The lion jumped on her back, knocking her to the ground, the footage showed. A police report quoted the father as saying the lion then turned to his five-year-old and seven-year-old children, and clawed their arms and faces.

All three were taken to hospital but were not in a critical condition. The owners who ran out of the house were "amused to see their lion attack" the passersby, the father added in the report. Police said yesterday they had arrested three men.

"The suspects fled from the spot, taking the lion with them. They were arrested within 12 hours of the incident," the office of the Deputy Inspector General Operations in Lahore told AFP.

The lion, an 11-month-old male, has been confiscated by police and sent to a wildlife park.

Officials at the facility said that the animal appears to be in good health.

Swiss Alps hits annual glacier tipping point weeks early



AFP, Geneva

The snow and ice accumulated in the Swiss Alps over the winter has already melted away, a monitoring service said yesterday, marking the second earliest arrival of a tipping point known as "glacier loss day".

All further melting between now and October will see the size of Switzerland's glaciers shrink, said Glacier Monitoring in Switzerland (GLAMOS).

The tipping point is usually reached in August and its early arrival is another hammer blow for the Alpine nation's 1,400 glaciers, which have been shrinking at an alarming rate.

"Glacier Loss Day is reached in Switzerland," GLAMOS chief Matthias Huss wrote on X, explaining that winter snowfall had been low and June had been the second warmest on record.

"From now on all melt that occurs on glaciers until October is unsustainable," said Huss. He pointed out that the only time on record that the tipping point had arrived earlier had been "the record-shattering year 2022" when it came on June 26.

3 of a family FROM PAGE 12

children has filed a case at Jhikargacha Police Station," he added.

Jashimuddin, 22, a resident of Mathbari village in the same upazila, has been named the lone accused in the case. Police said efforts are underway to arrest him, he added.

Speaking to reporters, the daughter alleged that Jashimuddin had been harassing and threatening her for a long time. She demanded justice.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-6 Jashore Company Commander Squadron Leader Md Russell said a Rab team is also working to arrest the accused.

Man held for leading assault FROM PAGE 12

According to Rab, a few days after the arbitration, the victim's mother borrowed Tk 50,000 from Fazor Ali. On the night of June 26, when the woman's parents were not at home, Fazor allegedly entered her room around 11:30pm under the pretext of collecting loan interest and raped her, it added.

Shortly after, a group of 8 to 10 people stormed into the room, breaking down the door. They physically assaulted both Fazor and the woman, stripped her and took her videos. Shah Poran shared the clip on social media, Rab said.

The Rab official claimed that the assault was premeditated. The attackers had followed Fazor and laid

in wait to launch an assault.

The following day, June 27, the victim filed two cases -- one under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 and another under the Pornography Control Act, 2012.

Police later arrested Fazor and three others.

After the incident garnered widespread attention, Shah Poran and several other accused went into hiding.

At yesterday's press briefing, the Rab official said that during primary interrogation, Shah Poran admitted to his crimes.

Preparations are underway to hand him over to Muradnagar Police Station, he added.

Pakistan building collapse kills 6 AFP, Karachi

A five-storey building collapse in Pakistan yesterday killed at least six people and left six injured, police said, with rescuers searching through the rubble for trapped victims.

The incident happened shortly after 10:00 am (0500 GMT) in the impoverished Lyari neighbourhood of Karachi, which was once plagued by gang violence and considered one of the most dangerous areas in Pakistan.

Shankar Kamho, 30, a resident of the building who was out at the time, said there were around 20 families living inside.

"I got a call from my wife saying the building was cracking and I told her to get out immediately," he told AFP at the scene.

"She went to warn the neighbours, but one woman told her 'this building will stand for at least 10 more years'. Still, my wife took our daughter and left. About 20 minutes later, the building collapsed."

A senior local police official, Arif Aziz, told AFP that six dead bodies have been retrieved and six wounded people rescued.

Up to 100 people had been living in the building, he added.

Saad Edhi, of the Edhi welfare foundation that is part of the rescue operation, told AFP there could be "at least eight to 10 more people still trapped", describing it as a "worn out building".

He also put the death toll at six.

Nearby residents rushed to save their neighbours before rescuers took over to remove the rubble, along with at least five excavators.

The heavy machinery struggled to access the narrow alleys, and police baton-charged residents to clear the way.

Govt denies rights abuse in arrest of Rupa, Shakil

FROM PAGE 12

The UN independent experts' letter to Bangladesh expressed serious concerns about reports that more than 140 journalists, including Rupa and Shakil, have been accused of charges related to the killings of protesters during the July uprising.

They sought the legal basis for the journalists' arrest and asked how it aligns with Bangladesh's international obligations.

They also urged the government to follow international human rights standards on freedom of expression, due process and fair trial.

The government said the journalist couple, formerly employed by Ekattor TV, were dismissed by their employer on August 8, 2024 -- the same day the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus took office. There was no complaint against them at the time of their dismissal.

On August 21, 2024, the brother of a man killed during the uprising filed a murder case at Uttara (East) Police Station against several individuals, including Rupa and Shakil, under sections 302, 114, and 109 of the Penal Code. These are cognisable offences, it said.

They were arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport under Section 54 of the CrPC, which allows arrest without warrant in such cases.

The couple was produced before a magistrate within 24 hours on August 22 in line with the law. The court granted nine days of police remand in two phases.

Their bail petition, submitted on August 31, was denied based on the gravity of the allegations. "The allegation that they were arbitrarily

arrested or arbitrarily detained is therefore completely unfounded," the government said.

Shakil is held at Kashimpur High-Security Central Jail, and Rupa at Kashimpur Women's Central Jail. Both are receiving facilities under the Jail Code and UN Mandela Rules, including access to lawyers, family visits, and medical care, said the government.

Rupa was briefly moved to a different building for security reasons in November 2024, not to a condemned cell. Her phone call privileges were temporarily revoked that month after she "misbehaved with the prison staff," following due process, it said.

A separate complaint was filed before the International Crimes Tribunal in December 2024, accusing them of aiding crimes against humanity during the uprising. The ICT is assessing whether there is sufficient prima facie evidence. The accused will enjoy full legal rights, including appeal, it added.

The government, in its reply, reaffirmed its commitment to fair trial. It said that the case is sub-judice and courts alone will determine on their bail or release.

On June 11, both were granted parole to attend Rupa's mother's funeral and returned to prison afterwards.

The government said it had also repealed the repressive Cyber Security Act and drafted new legislation. A Media Commission has submitted reform proposals, and the government is now building political consensus around them.

Russia hits Kyiv FROM PAGE 12

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said on Telegram that fourteen of the injured were hospitalised.

Ukraine's state-owned railway Ukrzaliznytsia, the country's largest carrier, said on Telegram that the attack on Kyiv forced them to divert a number of passenger trains, causing delays.

Damage was recorded on both sides of the wide Dnipro River bisecting the city and falling drone debris set a medical facility on fire in the leafy Holosiivskiy district, Klitschko said.

Ukraine's Air Force said that it destroyed 478 of the air weapons Russia launched overnight. However, air strikes were recorded in eight locations across the country with nine missiles and 63 drones, it added.

Russian air strikes on Kyiv have intensified in recent weeks and included some of the deadliest assaults of the war on the city of three million people.

NCP slams border killings

FROM PAGE 12

"They [Hindus in Bangladesh] have repeatedly been victims of land grabbing, and have not received any justice. In this new Bangladesh, we want all of us to have opportunities and benefits together as Bangladeshi citizens based on justice and harmony."

Nahid at the rally demanded the announcement of a July declaration by the months of July and August.

"We are fighting for the July declaration of uprising -- for fundamental reforms, justice for the July genocide, and a new constitution," he said.

"The July declaration must be issued within July-August, and it should be constitutionally grounded. Thousands have shed blood and sacrificed their lives for this cause. The future Bangladesh will be built

on the aspirations and sacrifices of these people," he added.

Nahid said NCP is expanding its activities across the country and urged people to choose youth leadership.

After Juma prayers at Thakurgaon Model Mosque, NCP leader Hasnat Abdullah told reporters, "This march across the country is aimed at organisational expansion, seeking justice for martyrs and injured activists, and pushing for reforms."

He added, "We want elections, but with conditions. Just as we demand a timely election, we also demand reforms and justice."

Earlier in the morning, Nahid addressed a brief rally in Fakirganj Bazar of Atwari upazila in Panchagarh, following the inauguration of the NCP's Atwari upazila unit's office.

Mob violence continues apace

We must send an undiluted message against mob activities

Cumilla's Muradnagar upazila has been lately in the news for the heinous treatment of a woman who was tortured, raped, and then filmed while disrobed—turning the incident, as a commentator of this daily claimed, into “a permanent sentence of shame and exposure” for the victim. Muradnagar is again in the news, this time for a gruesome act of mob violence that left three members of a family dead and another critically injured on Thursday. The Muradnagar connection here is but coincidental. What's notable is the persistence of these two most disturbing criminal trends of our time despite widespread protests and firm pledges of action. Mob violence, in particular, seems to have become unstoppable.

Over the last week, six people were reportedly killed in mob violence. According to an estimate by the Human Rights Support Society, a whopping 143 people died over the 10 months since the August 5 political changeover. Much has been made of the underlying causes behind the rise in mob violence during this time, especially how it is being fuelled by misinformation, social tensions, or political motives, as again exemplified by a mob that attacked a police station in Lalmonirhat on Wednesday and snatched away two convicts. The failure of the justice system and law enforcement is also largely to blame. Mob violence is a classic example of how crimes, if left unchecked, only engender more crimes. Despite this clarity, we are no closer to a solution than we were before. This is partly because of our inability to send a clear, undiluted message against this type of criminality.

Late last month, Tarique Rahman, BNP's acting chairman, condemned mob violence, calling it “an enemy of humanity.” But there have been allegations of involvement of grassroots BNP leaders and activists in many mob activities. In the Lalmonirhat case, the OC of the attacked police station blamed the local unit of BNP and its affiliated organisations. The National Citizen Party (NCP), meanwhile, has come under scrutiny for its alleged involvement in multiple incidents. Most recently, its leaders and activists were linked to a violent confrontation at Patiya police station, which led to the OC's withdrawal. While NCP leaders have attempted to distance the party from mob activities—claiming that these are expressions of public outrage after years of repression—the fact remains that political parties have failed to send an unequivocal message supported by consistent action and internal accountability. In some cases, their silence, denial, or selective condemnation has only emboldened such acts, including by party members.

Even the interim government, while repeatedly assuring us that no mob activities would be tolerated, has frequently fallen short of backing those assurances with swift and firm action, raising concerns about implicit tolerance and even quiet complicity in some cases. This trend must be reversed. We all must come together and rise against this violent tide that can derail our journey back to democracy.

Gas crisis deserves priority attention

Our industrial and economic future depends on it

The news of the government's failure to provide gas connections to over 1,000 industries—despite more than 400 applicants having completed all formalities, including payment of the required fees—is indeed concerning. Among them is a factory established by Lantabur Group at the cost of Tk 700 crore. The company received its demand note for the connection as early as November 2022. Once operational, the facility was expected to employ around 1,500 people. Yet, despite construction being completed six months ago, it remains non-operational due to the lack of gas supply. In the meantime, the company has already begun repaying bank loans despite not having generated any revenue from it.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case. The 400 applicants currently awaiting connections include both new and expanded factories, as well as those seeking an increase in gas supply. A further 600 factories have applied for connections but have yet to receive any assurance of approval. This clearly demonstrates the extent to which industrial and economic growth is being held back by the ongoing gas connection crisis.

Industrialists have been sounding the alarm on this issue for years. However, the Awami League government, during its tenure, was heavily reluctant to invest in domestic gas exploration even though expert assessments indicated considerable potential. Instead, it placed excessive reliance on imports. With global gas prices having fluctuated drastically in recent years, this dependency has, unsurprisingly, proven costly. Consequently, industries have suffered and continue to do so.

The Awami League government also burdened the energy sector with massive debt through corruption and poor governance—debt that the interim government is now having to repay. But this has significantly reduced its financial flexibility. Although it has rightly prioritised domestic gas extraction, the benefits of such efforts will take time to materialise. That said, while it may be risky for the government to take on added financial pressure to rapidly boost gas supply, it should seriously consider it simply to stimulate industrial activity and accelerate economic recovery in the short term.

At present, the country supplies around 2,800-2,900 million cubic feet (mmcf) of gas per day, against a demand of 3,800 mmcf. And just over 1,200 mmcf is allocated to the industrial sector. To provide all promised connections, an additional 100 mmcf will be required. We urge the authorities to explore all viable options for acquiring this additional supply. Furthermore, the entrenched corruption in the energy sector—including credible allegations that some suppliers demand bribes in exchange for gas connections—must be thoroughly investigated and eradicated.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Israel's Law of Return passed

On this day in 1950, passed by the Knesset, the Law of Return granted Jews the freedom to immigrate to Israel and receive immediate citizenship.



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SELIM RAIHAN

Bangladesh is at the crossroads where economic reform is no longer an option, but a requirement. There have been several structural flaws in key sectors, i.e. taxation, the financial sector, management of public spending, trade policy, and investment rules. These flaws have held the country back from maintaining high economic growth and building a resilient economy. Reform shortfalls in these sectors still undermine Bangladesh's ability to cope with domestic economic challenges as well as with external shocks. A reform-oriented and vision-driven development strategy is, therefore, needed to rectify inefficiencies in institutions, obsolete rules and regulations, policy discrepancies, and weak enforcement prevailing in these sectors.

The call for reform has been more aggressively voiced in the face of erosion of domestic macroeconomic fundamentals, i.e. insufficient reserves, widening fiscal gaps, inflation pressures, and exchange rate volatility. These have been compounded by a volatile global economy in the face of increased geopolitical tensions, tightening global financial conditions, and unstable global demand. Against this context, Bangladesh's aspiration to graduate smoothly from the LDC status and to achieve upper middle income status calls for not only additional public investment and social spending, but even more significant structural and institutional changes that will trigger productivity, improve competitiveness, and drive quality investment.

Significantly, the most strident calls for reform have usually originated outside the state machinery. Think tanks, segments of the business community—especially those looking beyond short-term rent-seeking—and international development partners have consistently raised the imperative for reform. Through policy advocacy, policy analysis, and technical assistance, these actors have been able to show that reform is not only needed but achievable. Even under the past regime, through the 6th, 7th, and 9th Five-Year Plans, the

then-ruling political elite officially recognised reform imperatives and made ambitious commitments. But those commitments were largely on paper, as tangible progress in their implementation was a mirage.

The principal obstacles to reform in Bangladesh have been manifested



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

through anti-reform coalitions among political and business elites and elements within the bureaucracy. Rent-seeking opportunities are institutionally embedded in public institutions, and many in the nexus of political and business elites and bureaucrats see reform as a threat to their privileges. As a result, reforms that would interrupt these vicious cycles of rent-seeking—i.e. tax policy reform, streamlining public expenditure, banking sector overhauls or regulatory reform—face either quiet dilution or outright policy paralysis.

It is also important to note that leading political elites in Bangladesh avoid deep reforms because they threaten the rent-seeking networks and power structures that sustain

their dominance. Some of the political parties themselves lack internal democratic practices, making them resistant to transparency and institutional checks. As a result, they opt for incremental, uncoordinated changes that preserve control while projecting an image of change, without challenging the underlying status quo. Regrettably, though it was expected that there would be major reform initiatives under the current interim government, guided by the reports of the white paper committee and the task force, unfortunately, attempts so far have remained either incremental or ineffective due to poor design or internal resistance.

What, then, needs to be done? First, reforms need to be initially

array of actors, i.e. new segments of the business community, civil society, the media, and local institutions, who can exert demand-side pressure and lend legitimacy to reform efforts.

Fourth, strong reform-minded leadership from the state is needed. Reform-minded officials who can coordinate across bureaucratic silos, mobilise internal supporters, and sustain policy attention over time are key to building and sustaining momentum.

Fifth, development partners must act as facilitators by fostering policy innovation and capacity and by providing incentives for reform through financial and technical support.

Finally, deeper economic reforms in Bangladesh are unlikely to succeed

politically smart, sequenced in a manner that builds momentum and credibility but not necessarily giving rise to overwhelming opposition. It may mean beginning in areas where there is some elite consensus or where it can register some early successes seen by the public.

Second, design for reform should be context-dependent and achievable, not overambitious or too technocratic, but consonant with the country's political reality and administrative capacity. It is important to identify areas where a “big bang” approach is necessary due to the long-standing reform deadlocks, and where a gradual approach would be more appropriate.

Third, reform coalitions need to be expanded by mobilising a greater

without reforming political institutions and improving the nature of politics itself. A more accountable, transparent, and participatory political system is essential to overcome resistance, align incentives, and build the broad-based consensus needed for sustained structural change.

Reform in Bangladesh has often faltered not for lack of ideas but due to the misalignment of political incentives. Overcoming this will require more than technical fixes; we need a reconfiguration of the political and institutional conditions under which reforms are designed and implemented. Only then can the country transition from ad hoc policy adjustments to a robust and resilient economic transformation.

Time to end the harmful practice of child domestic work



Laila Khondkar is an international development worker.

LAILA KHONDKAR

While the Asia-Pacific region has seen a sharp overall decline in child labour, Bangladesh's progress tells a more complex story, based on a report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF on June 11. There has been a significant reduction in hazardous child labour in Bangladesh—from 3.2 percent in 2013 to 2.7 percent in 2022, affecting approximately 10.7 lakh children. However, the overall proportion of working children aged 5-17 years has slightly increased, from 8.7 percent to 8.9 percent during the same period. The rate of child labour involving harmful forms of work remained relatively stable, rising marginally from 4.3 percent in 2013 to 4.4 percent in 2022. These figures suggest that despite notable achievements over the past two decades—particularly in expanding school enrolment—Bangladesh is not on track to eliminate child labour by 2025.

Child labour harms children's education, violates their rights, and limits their opportunities for a better future. It also puts them at risk of physical and mental harm. Poverty and poor access to quality education are major reasons behind child labour.

According to the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (amended in

2018), the minimum legal age for employment is 14. Children between 12 and 14 may only engage in “light work” that does not hinder their education or development. However, the law fails to clearly define what constitutes “light work.” Most working children remain in informal employment. They often work long hours in poor conditions. The situation of child domestic workers is the worst.

The government has declared 43 types of work as hazardous for children—jobs that threaten their physical and mental development. Currently, 10.7 lakh children are engaged in hazardous work. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern over Bangladeshi children working in welding, transportation, manufacturing, tobacco and battery factories. Child domestic labour is not on this hazardous work list, despite the obvious risks.

According to a March 2024 report by Bangladeshi Oivabashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA), about 80 percent of the permanent domestic helpers are minor girl children. These children are denied access to education, healthcare, recreation, and protection. They perform almost every household chore—cleaning floors,

washing dishes and clothes, cooking, and caring for younger children—often in exchange for basic food and shelter. Many are locked inside the house when employers leave for work, living in practical confinement.

Living far from their families in unfamiliar environments, child domestic workers are frequently subjected to physical, emotional, and even sexual abuse. A 2024 survey by Action for Social Development on child domestic workers in Dhaka revealed that nearly 50 percent experience some form of abuse, and 31.45 percent suffer from excessive workloads. Among those abused, 18.47 percent reported physical injury, 8.23 percent were beaten, 20.74 percent were verbally abused, and 1.7 percent experienced sexual abuse. If these conditions do not qualify domestic labour as “hazardous,” then what does? All forms of child labour carry inherent risks, but the hidden and isolated nature of domestic work makes children even more vulnerable.

The Labour Act must clearly define “light work” and stipulate penalties for violations. Most importantly, employing children as domestic workers must be categorised as hazardous work.

The issue of removing children from hazardous jobs can be addressed through several strategies: improving household income, enrolling children in school and vocational training, and raising awareness among parents and employers about the harms of child labour. If children must work in limited, non-hazardous settings, then they should be supported through training that builds skills for a better future. Meaningful progress in eliminating child labour will require coordinated

efforts from communities, employers, trade unions, civil society, NGOs, and the media.

Bangladesh has launched numerous national plans to eliminate child labour, but weak implementation and lack of political will have hindered meaningful progress. This must change.

We often accept child labour due to poverty while simultaneously celebrating our country's economic progress—this contradiction is telling. There are examples from other countries where child labour has been eliminated even in the face of extreme poverty, simply because society deemed it unacceptable.

In Bangladesh, most people consider child domestic labour normal. Many believe they are “helping” a poor child by offering food and shelter in exchange for work. But if someone genuinely wants to help, they should support the child's family financially so the child can stay in school. Exploiting a child's labour under the guise of charity is nothing more than opportunism.

We are shocked when we think of practices like slavery or the burning of women with their dead husbands (*satidaha*), which once had social acceptance. Shouldn't we be disturbed by the practices that exist today—where one child plays or attends school while another, the same age, labours in their household? Is this not a modern form of slavery?

As we speak of reform and progress in society, we must confront the deeply rooted and dehumanising acceptance of child domestic labour. It's time we recognised this practice for what it is: an inhumane tradition that has no place in a just society.

We cannot let violence silence our daughters



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND
Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at the University of Dhaka.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Earlier this year, we got united for a fleeting moment for an extraordinary reason: the tragic rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl shattered our complacency and forced us out onto the streets. Our collective anger found sympathetic ears in the government and its allies, who joined our rallies and assured us that justice would be delivered promptly, going beyond hollow promises.

The girl was laid to rest. The authorities made several arrests. The apolitical nature of the crime allowed people to come together. In retrospect, we can now view the impressive promise of swift trials as a crisis management strategy. If we had exposed, analysed, and addressed some of the hidden issues of patriarchy, the child's family would have received justice.

In the past, numerous rape incidents connected to power dynamics occurred. One might have expected that after the revolutionary change last year, there would be some relief. Instead, we were alarmed by the sudden rise of moral policing that started viewing women in public as an anathema. Alongside news of public beatings and humiliation of women, a series of leaked videos, audio clips, and testimonies of gender-based violence have emerged. The façade of patriarchy has begun to crumble as more incidents of sexual violence are reported. Some of the instances came from within certain party circles, bringing déjà vu into currency. Men with connections, standing, and power are caught on record harassing women, boasting of sexual conquests through leaked videos, and manipulating the legal system. Every time another news story of rape or harassment comes to the surface, we are compelled to contemplate the innumerable others whose agony remains unseen. Some

of them suffered in silence or compromised. Take the instance of a celebrity marrying the woman who had accused him of raping her—at the jail gate—last month.

The problem of sexual abuse is not new. And it is not unique to Bangladesh either. But somehow, its spiral into normalisation has taken on dangerous new forms. A man who allegedly owed the victim's brother some money assaulted and even allegedly raped a woman while visiting their paternal home in Muradnagar, Cumilla. A recorded clip of it was later released on social media. Instead of condemning rape as a crime, there were attempts to politicise it. The political affiliation, the girl's estranged status, and minority identity dominated the discourse more than anything else. By the time the High Court ordered the video to be removed, the damage was done.

We have developed a knack for justifying or normalising sexual violence. We know how to explain such violence by referring to a girl's clothing (even if a girl in a burqa or an eight-year-old child can fall prey to male lust); or her desire to join friends for a social outing or an excursion; or her audacity to speak her mind or mix freely with boys; or her family's alleged political alignment; or her fate of being born into the wrong sect in a largely homogenous society. Every day, women face trials both in private and in public. The sociocultural court sweeps aside their defence, and the verdict is essentially predetermined.

These justifications reflect entrenched cultural norms that predate any government and require long-term social re-education. We have heard endless talk shows and read equally endless op-eds, so we know that legal reforms alone can't uproot moral justifications. It doesn't help to know that rape is more than a

lustful act. In our patriarchal culture, rape is a tool of retribution or symbolic domination. Our Biranganas, the rape victims of 1971, are living testimony of such a culture.

Last week, fate offered a rare blow to our patriarchal ego. An HSC examinee in Barishal narrowly escaped an attempted rape when an unexpected group intervened during the assault. Members of the local hijra community acted with courage and moral clarity, which

international matches, but we try to control them the moment they are back in their localities.

What is perhaps more insidious than the acts themselves is the language that now surrounds them. The lexicon of liberation has deliberately opted for expletives. Once censored or spoken in private, the Bangla forms of sexual slurs have now become an indiscriminate part of daily lingo. They

of replacing and articulating one kind of tyranny with another. The oppression of noise obscures the voices of genuine victims. And those cries are everywhere.

Revolution is fiery, but it does not have to be rage only. Revolution must embrace empathy. The courage that we have seen in our youth transcended the need for cameras to gain widespread recognition. As a society seeking civility and democratic norms, we



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

many of us lack. They saved the girl who was crying for help, rescued her father whom the perpetrators had attacked in his own house, nabbed the main assailant, and handed him over to the police.

Deep down, we know we are failing to protect our own female citizens. We grudgingly approve of our "Indigenous" or "rural" girls playing and winning for us in

supposedly symbolise raw anger and youthful rebellion, or the rejection of hypocrisy. But let us not forget: words matter, and they have their consequences.

When the language of revolution echoes the act of assault, we need to be wary. What exactly are we revolting against when we characterise every ideological adversary in terms of sexual violence? We are in danger

must try to respond to every scream with equal attention. The tendency to use race, religion, or party affiliation as a controlling mechanism impacting the rights of women can never be healthy for any society.

This is not the freedom that our rebels of both 1971 and 2024 envisioned. Freedom now must not let our daughters be silenced, violated, or die.

Bangladesh's secret elixir



BEYOND THE DUGOUT
Raiyan Binte Rafiq
is a sports columnist for The Daily Star. She works in Sports Media in the UK and manages recruitment at Next Level Sports Management.

RAIYAN BINTE RAFIQ

nation's fabric. Ritu Porna Chakma, whose efforts propelled Bangladesh to qualification, embodies this resilience and promise.

Ritu has now become an indispensable pillar of the starting line-up and the very foundation of the team's recent successes. Her decisive goal in the 2024 SAFF Women's Championship secured

for granted nor lets them sway her rhythm.

There is an ineffable quality in witnessing her on the field, stirring a quiet hope that one day she will grace bigger leagues and grander stages. It is a destiny her talent demands, a vision shared wholeheartedly by the national team coach, Peter Butler. Butler himself faced immense

Ritu has now become an indispensable pillar of the starting line-up and the very foundation of the team's recent successes. Her decisive goal in the 2024 SAFF Women's Championship secured the title for the second time—a feat that, for those who have followed her journey, comes as no surprise. Watching her play is a distinct kind of joy: so confident, so composed, with a radiant smile that never fades.

There has never been any doubt that the youth of Bangladesh are built differently. They have bled for liberation, risen to crush authoritarianism, and stood firm as the voice of the nation. Their fire has always been the country's backbone. And that same fire burns on the sporting field. We have seen young men thrive under pressure on global stages; now, it's the women. In qualifying for their first ever AFC Women's Asian Cup, Bangladesh found its gold not in experience, but in the youth.

The team that embarked on this qualification journey carries an astonishing average age of just 21.4 years. With most players barely beyond their twenty-first year, their youth is both striking and inspiring. In 2022, India held the record for the youngest squad, averaging 23.13 years. Bangladesh is now poised to eclipse this milestone should the same youthful ensemble journey to Australia in 2026.

Though they are the lowest ranked team ever to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup, this should not be seen as a deterrent. Rather, it stands as a powerful motivation, a testament to the spirit and potential of the team that refuses to be defined by rankings, choosing instead to rise above expectations through courage and resolve.

There is beauty deeply woven into their story. At a time when the nation grapples with questions of



This Bangladesh team stands as a vital testament to the power of equality, integration, and harmony—foundations essential for any country's flourishing.

FILE PHOTO: AFC

identity, sectarian divides, and social fragmentation, this team stands as a vital testament to the power of equality, integration, and harmony—foundations essential for any country's flourishing. Many among these players hail from communities that are often marginalised and face disproportionately steep challenges to thrive within the

the title for the second time—a feat that, for those who have followed her journey, comes as no surprise. Watching her play is a distinct kind of joy: so confident, so composed, with a radiant smile that never fades. She is a player who savours the grandest occasions and flourishes under pressure, a rare presence who neither takes these moments

pressure to prove why the football federation's unwavering support was justified, especially as several key members of the national team recently voiced their dissent against his strict policies and rigorous training regime. The situation grew tense, amplified by media scrutiny and public debate, leading to those players being excluded from further

participation. This opening paved the way for younger talents, eager to seize their moment and demonstrate their abilities. The outcome was rewarding: with a swift, dynamic style and attacking flair, a new identity began to shape within the team.

This shift also signals a new dawn within the Bangladesh Football Federation itself. With fresh leadership taking the helm, it appears that Bangladesh football is finally receiving the attention it has long deserved. A thorough overhaul of the top executive ranks has placed those with ambition and vision firmly in charge. Among them is Fahad Karim, one of the rare figures who has actively championed improvements for the women's team.

A few years ago, Karim embarked on an ambitious venture to launch the Women's Super League (WSL) in Bangladesh. The WSL held immense promise, featuring dedicated branding for women's football, the inclusion of foreign players, and recruitment of international talents to elevate its profile. Yet, Karim soon encountered a hesitancy and a lack of committed belief from investors—individuals unable to grasp the visionary blueprint he laid out.

Now, with qualification achieved and a new milestone reached, I find myself pondering whether this will shift the future perception of our female athletes. Their passion, commitment and calibre are unmistakable, yet the absence of a well-organised domestic league remains a glaring gap. For sustained growth and the cultivation of consistent, replicable excellence, the establishment of a full-time league is imperative, one that will unlock even greater opportunities and nurture continuous development.

This qualification stands as a monumental achievement for a nation still striving to carve its place on the global stage. By March 2026, these players will embark on a journey to Australia, stepping onto pitches that hosted the World Cup merely two years prior. They will walk the same corridors that have been graced by icons like Alexia Putellas, Aitana Bonmati, and Sam Kerr. There lies the possibility of facing World Cup semi-finalists Australia, a team boasting multiple Champions League winners.

Predicting the outcome might seem straightforward on paper, yet victory is not the ultimate aim. The true objective is growth: forging the next steps, cultivating a mindset that affirms we belong among the sport's grandest arenas.

For a long time, I have wondered if I would ever witness Bangladesh step onto the global arena. Now, that moment feels closer than ever, ushered in by young athletes, barely out of adolescence, yet bearing a remarkable sense of responsibility and pride in their emblem.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Envelope part
- 5 Throws in
- 9 Hawaiian greeting
- 10 Palette stuff
- 12 Farmer, at times
- 13 Game show host
- 14 Fine-tunes
- 16 Fleming who created 007
- 17 Tear asunder
- 18 Polite word
- 21 Peculiar
- 22 Misdeeds
- 23 Playing area
- 24 Work week's finish
- 26 Sheep sound
- 29 "Jeopardy!"

DOWN

- 30 Bears' lairs
- 31 Evergreen shrub
- 32 Makes orations
- 34 Trims
- 37 Trig topic
- 38 Approves
- 39 Small body of land
- 40 Gush forth
- 41 Sediment
- 1 Moved smoothly
- 2 Cheap
- 3 In the lead
- 4 Urban oasis
- 5 Gorilla, for one
- 6 Beavers' creation

- 7 Chopping into cubes
- 8 Moves furtively
- 9 Houston player
- 11 Some bills
- 15 Runs in the nude
- 19 Sacred
- 20 What's more
- 22 Broad
- 23 Little lie
- 24 Has a cow
- 25 Fix, as a bandage
- 26 Darwin's ship
- 27 Foot joints
- 28 Useful skill
- 29 Keyboard goof
- 30 Thick
- 33 Bucket
- 35 Retina setting
- 36 Compass pt.



7-3

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

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PUJA CRUISES

to fame

After securing a spot in the top 10 of *Lux Superstar* in 2018, Puja Agnes Cruze chose patience over haste when it came to making her silver screen debut. Now, years later, her moment arrived with *Esha Murder*, where she plays the titular role, a role that not only marks her cinematic breakthrough but also fulfilled a dream she has cherished since childhood.

SHARMIN JOYA

In an exclusive interview and photoshoot with The Daily Star, the emerging actress opened up about the long road to her debut and the dreams that guided her throughout.

"I used to watch *Lux Superstar* since I was a little girl," Puja recalled with a smile. "Back then, I would imagine myself on that stage and tell myself, 'One day, I'll be there.'"

Her dream first took shape during the iconic season that crowned Zakia Bari Mamo as the winner, with Azmeri Haque Badhan and Bindu as runners-up. "Interestingly, it was that ignited my passion. Who knew that years later, I would be sharing the screen with Badhan *apu*! Life really has its beautiful ways of coming full circle."

Her journey into the spotlight was anything but easy. "I participated in 2018, as that year felt like the right time to step forward, to take a chance on the dream I'd been carrying for so long. I was named the 'Most Confident' during my run, and that title meant the world to me," she shared.

Without any connections in the media industry, Puja had to carve her own path from scratch. "I didn't have friends or family in the field, nor did I even know how to approach people who could offer me opportunities," she admitted. "But I believed that with persistence and the right project, the right time would come. *Lux Superstar* became that launching pad — a platform that set me on the right track." *Esha Murder* not only gave her a strong character to portray but also the platform to truly begin her journey in the world of cinema.

She took lessons in music at Kabi Kazi Nazrul Academy for eight years, and her mother taught her dancing since childhood. If she were ever asked what she wanted to become, she would repeatedly respond, "Nothing else but an artiste."

Puja, who also made a mark as a ramp model, explained why she took her time before stepping into films. "After *Lux Superstar*, I was regularly walking in ramp shows and staying active in the fashion scene," she shared. "During that time, I did receive several offers for acting — but I'll admit, it was mostly me who turned them down. None of the roles felt right. I was waiting for something that would truly give me the confidence to take that first step into cinema. That said, there was also an invisible barrier — no one had really seen how I acted, so many were hesitant to take a chance on me. And to be honest, our industry still lacks a proper audition system where newcomers like myself can prove themselves and get opportunities based on merit."

The journey to her first film took shape only after a long wait for the right role, one she could truly connect with. "The story behind joining *Esha Murder* still feels like it was destined," Puja admitted. "After years of waiting and not finding a role I felt confident enough to portray, I finally decided to take a break and pursue my Master's degree abroad. But just then, as if by fate, Sunny *bhai* approached me with this project. I gave the audition, and luck was on my side. I was cast as Esha — a character that has now become my identity to the audience."

Although they didn't share much screen time in *Esha Murder*, Puja gradually formed a heartfelt bond with Badhan during the shoot. "Badhan *apu*'s character in the story enters after Esha is already murdered, so our connection didn't grow from working in scenes together," Puja explained. "It actually developed off-screen — on set, and especially during the promotions for the film, when we spent time talking and sharing memorable moments."

Having proved herself with *Esha Murder*, Puja is now eager to take on more diverse roles that allow her to grow as an actor. "I'm open to commercial films that include action or dance," she said. "But what I truly look for are stories that challenge me and justify my talent. I want to work more frequently now, and my full focus is on films!"



PHOTOS:
SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT
IN DHAKA



Exhibition: 'Lipika'

July 3-9 | 3pm-9pm

Alliance Française de Dhaka,
Dhanmondi



International Mime Festival

July 5-7 | 11am-11:59pm

TSC Auditorium, Dhaka University



Concert: 'Lalchey Bikel Belay'

July 11 | 6:30pm- 9:30 pm

Jatra Biroti, Banani

1-MINUTE REVIEW

'KPOP DEMON HUNTERS'

An ode to identity and unity

KPop Demon Hunters is a vibrant, feel-good celebration of music, friendship, and finding strength in who you are. Blending the glitz of K-pop with fantasy action, this animated gem from Sony Pictures Animation follows three fierce girl group idols who moonlight as demon slayers — using the power of fan love to protect the world.

With its bold, manhwa-inspired animation and charmingly over-the-top visuals, the film bursts with

personality. Whether it's heart-shaped pupils, adorable animal sidekicks, or bubble tea-fuelled spa scenes, every moment feels lovingly crafted.

At its core, the story is about embracing identity, especially for Rumi, whose mixed heritage becomes her hidden strength. The romance between Rumi and the



misunderstood demon Jinu adds a sweet twist, and the message about unity and compassion shines through.

Its catchy soundtrack and heartfelt performances are more than just a fun ride in *KPop Demon Hunters*; they create a joyful, empowering experience that reminds us of the magic in music, friendship, and staying true to ourselves.

WHAT'S PLAYING

'SAPPHIRE'

by Ed Sheeran

Ed Sheeran shimmers in sonic blue on *Sapphire*, an effervescent track that blends his pop sensibilities with the percussive and melodic textures of Indian classical music. Featuring vocals and sitar by Arijit Singh, the track captures the feeling of dancing forever with someone whose presence lights up the room — just like the precious gem it's named after.

The music video, shot across India during Sheeran's tour, captures the cultural richness of

the country as the British singer-songwriter wanders through bustling markets, serene beaches, and vibrant cityscapes — often accompanied by local youth and Singh himself.

Since its June 5 release, *Sapphire* has amassed over 62 million Spotify streams, peaking at No 29 on the platform's Global Top 50. It also clocked 74 million views on YouTube, with India contributing to nearly half of its Spotify plays.



Touted as Sheeran's favourite track from his upcoming album *Play*, the single marks a defining shift from his mathematics-themed past to a more global, joyous soundscape.

With its beats and cross-cultural flair, *Sapphire* is being hailed as one of the most unforgettable tracks of the summer.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
The Sandman



Prime Video
Ballard



Hulu
Such Brave Girls



Apple TV+
The Wild Ones



HBO Max
Back to the Frontier



STYLE STATEMENT

Brad Pitt

Brad Pitt exuded timeless elegance at the London premiere of *FI: The Movie*, effortlessly embodying his signature brand of understated cool. He stepped out in a deep forest green double-breasted suit by Anderson & Sheppard, complete with wide peak lapels and a boxy silhouette that hinted at vintage glamour. The subtly textured fabric added depth to the ensemble, while a silky ascot scarf, casually tucked beneath the collar, introduced a dash of romantic sophistication. The result is a masterclass in modern menswear with a nostalgic twist — pure Brad Pitt.



Justice Ansar Ali's death anniv today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 30th death anniversary of Justice Muhammad Ansar Ali.



On July 5, 1995, Justice Muhammad Ansar Ali, a renowned lawyer and experienced judge of Bangladesh Supreme Court, passed away while on duty.

On his 30th death anniversary, Qurankhwani and a doa mahfil will be held at his village home in Naogaon district and also at Banani graveyard in Dhaka.

All are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Arrested

FROM PAGE 4

Khalid said, citing police intelligence.

Among those detained, five have been charged with being part of a terrorist organisation, while 15 will be deported. Another 16 remain in police custody pending further investigation, with further arrests expected, Mohd Khalid said.

A total of between 100 and 150 people are suspected to be involved in the network, he said.

"We will deport those with minimal involvement back to their home country, while those with greater involvement will be charged under Malaysian laws," he said.

Key roads lie

FROM PAGE 4

paved roads, 16 kilometres of semi-paved roads, and 76 kilometres of brick-paved roads. At present, around 65 kilometres of roads are in poor condition due to prolonged lack of repairs.

Contacted, Md Mizanur Rahman, incumbent administrator of the municipality, said, "The previous mayor left the municipality's fund nearly exhausted. We are working to repair all the damaged roads in phases. Repair works have already been initiated for several roads."



Workers plant Aman seeds in the Lakutia area of Barishal Sadar under the supervision of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation. A worker can earn around Tk 700 for an eight-hour workday, from 8:00am to 3:00pm. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

BARISHAL HOSPITAL

Overcrowded medicine ward puts patients at risk

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Patients and their families have alleged severe mismanagement, overcrowding, and poor healthcare services at the medicine ward of Barishal's Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH), which is currently operating out of a cramped five-storey building not originally designed to serve patients.

Harunur Rashid from Jurakathi village in Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila brought a stroke patient to SBMCH on Monday. By Tuesday afternoon, he had yet to secure a bed for the critically ill patient, who was instead placed on the second floor of the makeshift medicine ward.

Another attendant, Abdur Razzak from Mehendiganj, said he had been desperately searching for a bed for two days without success.

"The elevators rarely work, and the number of patients is overwhelming. The bathrooms are filthy, and the entire ward feels like a garbage dump," he said.

Although the ward has a capacity of 300, it currently houses between 700 and 800 patients on a daily basis, several patients and hospital staff said.

The overcrowding has resulted in a serious decline in healthcare standards, with many patients receiving little to no medical attention, they alleged.

On June 30, family members of several patients formed a human chain in front of the hospital, demanding the medicine ward be relocated to the hospital's main building.

They claimed the ward's current



location is unsafe and unfit to handle such a large volume of patients.

According to hospital sources, the ward currently accommodates patients suffering from dengue, kidney ailments, abdominal pain, and a variety of other conditions.

Initially set up in 2022 to treat Covid-19 patients temporarily, the five-storey building was later converted into the medicine ward.

However, it lacks the necessary infrastructure and environmental standards for patient care.

"The building was originally intended for administrative use, operation theatres, and storage," said a hospital official.

Hospital Director Brig Gen AKM Mashiul Munir said while some improvements have been made, including adding new windows, the ward remains ill-suited for patient care.

"This building was never meant for housing patients. Around half of the hospital's total patients are currently in this ward. It lacks natural light and airflow, making it an unhealthy environment," he said.

He said the issue will be placed before the hospital's academic council and governing committee to explore possible solutions.

According to the Divisional Health Office, 442 dengue patients were admitted across Barishal division in the last 24 hours, of whom 79 are currently being treated at SBMCH.

Hospital sources confirmed that at least 700 patients including all dengue patients are being treated in the medicine ward, further straining the already overwhelmed facility.

Fayzul finds

FROM PAGE 4

swayed gently in the courtyard, ducks paddled in a nearby pond, and inside the mushroom shed, neat rows of white-brown mushrooms sat in packages on racks, a testament to precision and care.

"I heard about the health benefits of mushroom from some relatives who live abroad, and it inspired me to chase this initiative. Now it has blossomed into a thriving business," said Fayzul.

"At first, some people mocked me, but now those very individuals come to witness and inquire about my success," he smiled.

Today, his farm houses nearly 1,000 spawn bags and produces three to four kilogrammes of mushrooms daily. He sells them wholesale at Tk 300 per kg. The enterprise has also created jobs -- six to seven local men and women now work with him.

"It gives me immense satisfaction to know that my initiative is being able to help others around me," he added.

Looking ahead, Fayzul plans to scale up. "I expect to increase the farm's mushroom production to 10 to 12 kg per day in the coming winter, as cooler temperatures are ideal for mushroom cultivation," he said.

His journey has already begun to inspire others. Aralat Hossain, a local youth, said he too plans to learn mushroom farming and follow in Fayzul's footsteps.

Parul Begum, acting chairman of the local union parishad, commended Fayzul's efforts. "Through young entrepreneurs like Fayzul Gani, sustainable mushroom farming is becoming popular," she said.

Mosammat Tania Tabassum, upazila agriculture officer in Akhaura, said, "The government's mushroom expansion project is ready to support promising and dedicated young agro-entrepreneurs like Fayzul Gani. His success should inspire other unemployed youth to pursue similar productive ventures," she said.

Some reforms needed

FROM PAGE 1

"People and properties are being subjected to mob violence. People are now killing their own party men over personal interest," he said.

"Mob culture" is not a recent phenomenon in the country, the Jamaat chief said, adding that it has been there since 1972.

"Jamaat does not support mob culture. It goes against the rule of law," he said.

Outlining his vision of governance, he said, "We want to build Bangladesh in the spirit of the Charter of Madinah. We want a Shariah-based governance system where justice and humanity will be the cornerstone."

The Jamaat chief also issued a warning against authoritarianism. "The people have already toppled a fascist regime. They will not allow another one to rise."

Pointing to the condition of women, he said, "Today, women have neither dignity nor security. If we come to power, they will have both. Our ultimate goal is to establish a humane Bangladesh."

Coming down heavily on

the past regime, Shafiqur said, "Awami League is a group devoid of political etiquette. Their downfall was the result of their misdeeds. If others fail to learn from this, they will meet an even worse fate."

"This is our message to those dreaming of elections like the ones during the Awami League's regime: we will turn your dream into a nightmare. No administrative coup will be allowed to take place," the Jamaat ameer said.

"Our fight will continue as long as fascism exists," he said.

Calling for unity, the Jamaat chief urged the youth to take the lead. "We want to move forward with people from all communities and faiths. We don't believe in the division of majority and minority."

"We reject those who have used the minority narrative as a cover to loot. Every person born in this land has equal rights. We don't want to be rulers, but public servants."

Several top central and local leaders of Jamaat also spoke at the rally attended by its leaders and activists from all eight districts of the Rangpur division.

CU teacher's

FROM PAGE 2

arrange a promotion board for Dr Kushal despite there being allegations against him.

"When we attempted to meet the vice chancellor, we were told that we could not enter without Dr Kushal's permission. This alone raised serious concerns. It proves that the current administration does not believe in the ideals of the July movement."

After around three hours, the agitating students withdrew the protest when the administration announced that the promotion board for Dr Kushal was suspended.

Fear grips Cumilla

FROM PAGE 2

said, on Thursday, an announcement was made from the loudspeaker of the local mosque, instigating the attack.

"The announcement urged people to evict the drug den from the area," said Moshir.

Abdul Wahab, another villager, claimed the same.

No case was filed and no arrest was made until the filing of this report at 9:00pm yesterday.

However, the OC said the victims' family members were preparing to file one.

Cumilla Medical College Hospital sources said the bodies of the victims were handed over to the family members after autopsies.

Job seekers block

FROM PAGE 3

injuring three to four policemen," the OC said.

The protesters are demanding an increase in the number of posts in the 44th BCS; publication of written and viva marks alongside the final results; an

opportunity to revise cadre choices before final results are announced;

cancellation or revision of the Non-Cadre Regulations 2023 to ensure jobs for all vva-qualified candidates; and a ban on recommending the same candidate twice for the same cadre.

Wrongdoers

FROM PAGE 3

leaders and activists from different wings of the party for involvement in criminal groups or dishonest acts. "As soon as we found out, we took action right away," he said, stressing that the party leadership is firmly following a zero-tolerance policy.

"Anyone who uses violence -- whether inside the party or with others -- will face punishment. Since August 5, we have responded quickly to such cases," he added.

Demanding fair elections as soon as possible, Rizvi said, "Only a free and fair election can show how much support the BNP really has."

The forgotten boys of Mirpur

FROM PAGE 3

report saying it was indeed a murder, but no suspects could be identified.

One of the families, losing faith in the investigation, filed another murder case with a Dhaka court in December 2015, hoping the court would be able to deliver justice. But it was "summarily dismissed" in April 2018, as per the court records.

Sub Inspector Md Rafiquzzaman Mia of the Detective Branch, who investigated the case, wrote in his May 2017 final report, "The names and addresses of the perpetrators could not be identified, and the chances of locating and arresting them in the near

future are very slim."

The court accepted the report but said the police would reopen the case and press charges if suspects were identified.

According to the final report, the victims were caught in a shooting by their own group while targeting a chasing mob. They were then allegedly beaten by the mob before police rescued them and took them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where they later died.

The report claimed that a group of 10 miscreants, including the victims, opened fire on locals as they were being chased during an attempted arson attack on vehicles using petrol and cocktail bombs amid a

hartial called by the BNP led 20-party alliance. The police report labelled the boys as "mischievous bombers".

However, several media outlets, quoting eyewitnesses, said no mob beating occurred around the area that day.

Meanwhile, family members and locals claimed the boys occasionally attended political programmes but insisted they had no criminal history.

Police initially told the media the boys were critically injured in a mob beating and died early on February 23 at DMCH. The case filed by police, however, stated that three "unidentified arsonists" were beaten and shot dead by a mob.

Biodiversity entangled in deadly

FROM PAGE 3

campus), Dairy Farm, Bishmile Lake, and other surrounding low-lying wetlands.

Auritro Sattar, an environmental science student at JU and a wildlife photographer who has extensively researched the issue, shared alarming findings.

His surveys recorded 25 China Duari nets in the Gerua-Sindhuria area between September and December 2023. By August 2024, the number had risen to 45.

"A significant number of snakes -- including Painted Keelbacks, Smooth-scaled Water Snakes, Checkered Keelbacks, and even Monocled Cobras -- were found fatally trapped," said Auritro. "The fine mesh tears their bodies as they try to escape, causing a slow, painful death."

Thousands of snakes die this way, especially during the monsoon when water levels fluctuate.

He also noted that the nets endanger different fish species by capturing fish hatchlings and juveniles, disrupting breeding cycles and population recovery. Fish-eating birds like pond herons and kingfishers have also been found fatally entangled.

The impact on migratory birds has been no less severe. "In 2023, I documented the first-ever sighting of an Eastern Water Rail in Savar, but it never returned later. Illegal fishing practices like these are driving migratory birds away from our wetlands," Auritro said.

Some locals, however, defended the use of these nets. A fisherman from Sindhuria, speaking anonymously, said, "These nets can catch fish of all sizes

and are easy to use. My catch has increased significantly since I started using this."

Several JU staff members were also seen using these nets within campus lakes.

Contacted, Abul Kashem, deputy registrar of JU's estate branch, acknowledged the issue. "Some of the university lakes are leased for fish farming, and some leaseholders are using China Duari nets. Since this poses a serious ecological threat, we plan to issue a notice instructing them to stop," he said.

Prof Amir Hossain Bhuiyan of Environmental Science Department at JU said, "Our aquatic habitats are deteriorating rapidly due to the widespread use of these nets. Without immediate action, the biodiversity and ecological balance of the JU campus will be irreversibly damaged," he warned.

Can Bangladesh retain its foothold

FROM PAGE 1

MORE THAN JUST TRADE

Bangladesh, unlike Vietnam, has been negotiating under a multilateral framework, seeking lower duties on the basis of WTO's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principles. But the US appears to prefer bilateral deals that mix trade policy with broader strategic alignment.

"The tariff negotiations aren't solely about trade," Razzaque noted. "Geopolitical considerations are also part of the equation."

"The US import volume will decline if the tariff rate increases," Razzaque

added, cautioning that the consequences of inaction would be felt on both sides.

If the worst-case scenario materialises and the tariff hits 53 percent, Bangladeshi suppliers -- many of whom send 40-80 percent of their production to the US -- would find themselves in an unsustainable position. Margins are already razor-thin, and production costs are rising.

To survive, "garment suppliers must be more strategic in marketing and secure better prices from buyers," said Ehsan. "That's the only way to remain competitive in the current supply chain environment."

But pricing leverage is difficult to obtain without certainty. Importers are wary of taking long-term positions when the tariff regime is in flux.

US retailers, who bear the brunt of tariffs, may also pass on higher costs to consumers -- fueling inflation and dragging down demand.

To avoid this, Bangladesh must urgently pivot its strategy. That includes mobilising US-based lobby groups, engaging retailers and sourcing associations, and directly appealing to decision-makers in Washington. So far, offers to lift import duties on US cotton, LNG, aircraft, and other products have failed

to clinch a deal.

"Bangladesh has the capacity. What it now needs is a breakthrough," said Ehsan.

Without that breakthrough, the price of delay could be steep. Already, the apparel sector faces over \$1 billion in annual tariff payments at the current 16 percent rate. If the rate climbs to 53 percent, the blow could be far worse -- not only for exporters in Dhaka, but also for brands and consumers across the US.

In the end, as Razzaque put it, "It is still not clear what is going on or what may happen. But if the deal is not secured soon, both sides risk losing."

Cop attends Jamaat event

FROM PAGE 3

need to explain -- you've read it in the newspapers. Now the time has come for us to act."

"We want to elect those who are patriotic and dedicated to the country and people. That's why the youth, especially students, must work in their localities, increase the number of activists, reach out to honest people, and make them understand," he continued.

"As members of the police service, our duty is to serve the people -- those who are patriotic. We are not here for those who are pushing the country towards fascism. We are here for peace-loving people," he also said.

"I am assigned to this area. Stay connected with me -- I will do my best from my position. A new

opportunity has emerged through this revolution, allowing us to elect honest and capable individuals... We pray for the success of this programme," he added.

His remarks, captured in a video clip that went viral on social media, triggered a backlash, with many questioning the political neutrality of the police.

Some compared it to previous instances in which law enforcers under the then Awami League government were seen participating in political programmes.

Asked about the matter, AC Shah Alam claimed that the video clip circulating on social media did not include his full speech and only showed the part where he spoke about elections.

"I attended the programme because it was held at an orphanage. I spoke after they [Jamaat

leaders] insisted. At first I talked about the orphans and the food distribution, but that part wasn't included in the clip," he claimed.

"Only the segment where I spoke about electing honest people got shared, portraying the remark as political," he added.

Contacted, Jashim Uddin, deputy commissioner of DMP's Lalbagh Division, said they were aware of the incident and were looking into the matter.

PRAYER
TIMING

JULY 5

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-55 8-17
JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 7-00 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

FICTION

Box office nation

“200 million,” Vik cut in before the voice could finish. “For the entire Army. And 5% of the deal for you on top of that. In exchange, I get the copyright on the story and sequel rights. We’ll get a journalist to write a book about the operation by this summer and release the film based on that book next year.”

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

When Mr. Vik Roman looked at the time with flinching eyes, it was around 3:30 am. At this point, the entire industry knows that his days of late-night parties were past him. He’d been trying to detox himself since his wedding two years ago. It was his third one, but a friend had told him: *third time’s the charm*. For his father, though, it was the fifth time that worked—since that was the only one that lasted.

He was born on a film set—and not as a metaphor. Vik’s mother had been on the set of one of the films his father was producing, trying to debunk the rumours that her husband was having a fling with the lead actress. While peeking into the heroine’s green room, her water broke, and Roman was delivered right then and there—on the sets of the 1983 blockbuster, ‘Queen of Passion’. Thus, Vik becoming the future owner and CEO of the production house, Roman Studios, was written in the stars.

And even the haters would agree that Vik, albeit a product of nepotism, was one of the most capable producers in the industry. Even with his minuscule understanding of cinema as an art form (a trait he had inherited), he managed to turn Roman Studios into a multi-million-dollar company. Vik’s success lay in his ability to catch trends before anyone else and develop formulas for churning out box office blockbusters. He had sold everything that made money over the years: romance, remakes, biopics, family dramas, teenage angst, right-wing or left-wing propaganda, liberal propaganda, conservative propaganda—you name it. Roman Studios was a shop that sold everything to everyone.

And now, one of those commodities was waiting for him on the other end of the phone. A call that could potentially make him at least 500 million in the opening weekend at the worldwide box office; the holy grail for producers: patriotism.

“This better be important,” growled Mr. Roman.

“Mr. Roman, this is the Chief of Staff speaking,” the voice said.

“Yes, sir,” Vik coughed and cleared his throat. “How can I help?”

“Actually, I believe it is I who can help you this time around,” said the voice on the other end. “But it’s going to cost, of course.”

“Unfortunately, I can’t confirm any payment before hearing you out,” Vik replied with a smile. Years of dealing with people in uniform had taught him never to give them any room to breathe—you had to meet them as an equal.

“This is highly confidential,” the voice said. “So be very careful with this. We’re going to attack the neighbours across the river early this morning. Only five people, including you, me, the Prime Minister, and the Chief of Army Staff, know about it.”

With dilated pupils, Vik’s heart began thumping with excitement. He could already visualise crowds at the theatres, flags waving, sirens blaring, and the money pouring in. After the success of the first film, they would announce a sequel at the success party. And if the second film worked—with some inflated, manipulated box office numbers—it could even become a franchise. But Vik had to maintain composure and act as though the proposition only mildly interested him.

“You, me, the PM, and the Chief of Army—that makes four,” Vik replied. “Who’s the fifth?”

“Mr. Goldstein of Goldstein Brothers Pictures,” the voice replied. “I’m sorry, Mr. Roman. Despite our past transactions, I have to keep my options open. And might I remind you—Mr. Goldstein is very eager, and your offer will have to be quite hefty to match his.”

“Text the operation details to my co-producer. You have his number,” Vik said, clenching his fist in anger. “I’ll have to talk to him before I can confirm anything.”

15 minutes later, his co-producer, Arindam Bose, called. A Bengali and a Cornell graduate, Bose had the attention span to go through basic documentation and contracts—skills Roman severely lacked. Together, they made a deadly combo.

“Bose, shoot,” said Vik as he picked up.

“It’s a safe bet,” Bose replied, sipping his midnight coffee. “A covert air force operation—bombing the neighbours in revenge for their attacks—it’s the perfect story. We could take a few cues from *Top Gun* and churn out our own version.”

“But?” asked Vik. Years of working with Bose had taught him—there was always a *but*.

“But the operation’s being led by two female fighter pilots,” said Bose. “Apparently, they’re the best we’ve got.”

“There’s no way this is going to work in theatres with two heroines in a cockpit!” Vik shouted.

“Maybe we can cast one of the stars as the mission commander—someone handling everything from HQ,” Bose suggested. “Make him a veteran war hero behind the scenes—with more screen time, of course. Sideline the women, cast a few newcomers as the pilots so they don’t attract much attention.”

“No, Bose. It’s got to be the star entering enemy territory and risking his life!” Vik

snapped. “With all due respect to women, who’s going to pay a dime to watch them save the day? No—we have to do something.”

“Did you ever watch *I’m Not There*?” Bose asked. “Cate Blanchett plays Bob Dylan. If an actress can play a male character in a biopic, maybe we can get Vikram Khanna to cross-dress and play one of the pilots.”

Vik hung up in disgust and redialled the Chief of Staff. “You have to change the pilots, and we’ve got a deal.”

“Change the pilots? The operation’s in less than two hours,” the Chief said. “The planes are fuelled and the pilots have been briefed.”

“No one’s going to pay to watch female pilots on screen!” Vik shouted. “I respect that cinema’s not your field, but even you should realise how this won’t work at the box office.”

“I’m not going to change my pilots solely because of your—”

“200 million,” Vik cut in before the voice could finish. “For the entire Army. And 5% of the deal for you on top of that. In exchange, I get the copyright on the story and sequel rights. We’ll get a journalist to write a book about the operation by this summer and release the film based on that book next year.”

The amount silenced the Chief. Before he could think, Vik continued, “The pilots don’t matter anyway, sir—you know that. Even if the operation fails, the public will never know. By tomorrow evening, the media will have declared an all-out victory. The story stays the same, the celebrations stay the same—only the players change. I’ll personally talk to the pilots and compensate them handsomely.”

Changing the plan at the last moment cost Roman Studios some serious money—but it cost the Army even more. The replacement pilots, sent at the last minute, crashed in enemy territory with clear evidence of espionage. Over the following year, that one failed operation snowballed into a nuclear war between the two nations.

The movie *Operation Annihilation* created a tsunami at the box office. Right in the middle of the war, with nationalism on steroids, it broke every record. Exactly 14 months after the call that started it all, the Prime Minister was ready to drop the A-bomb on enemy territory. And right at midnight, as people on both sides of the border slept, the phone rang once more in the Roman household.

“Mr. Roman, I’ve got a proposition for the sequel to *Operation Annihilation*,” the voice said.

Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti is a writer and a fresh graduate of engineering.

POETRY

Even in hell, chanachur

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Because my wife gets motion sickness, we booked two seats in a non-AC compartment of the Sagardari Express to Jashore—one of many such compartments, each filled with the same dust and stories. When the train whistled, a dust haze rose inside, filling the cabin, turning everything white—not the white a man desires in a woman’s skin when choosing a partner for life. This was a choking white, a thick, post-apocalyptic veil that clung to the air, making it hard to see, harder to breathe. Then, cutting through the haze, a voice: “Chaaanaachurrrrr!” A seller, undeterred by the dust, his call sharp, almost absurd. I thought, *Who would eat here, where the air is a battlefield, where eyes sting and lungs rebel?* But I was wrong. Ten, fifteen packs—20 taka each—vanished into hands. And I realised: even in the line to hell, waiting for punishment, we’d still reach for chanachur. We’d still find comfort in the crunch of survival.

Md Mehedi Hasan teaches English at North Western University, Khulna. He occasionally contributes to Star Books and Literature.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

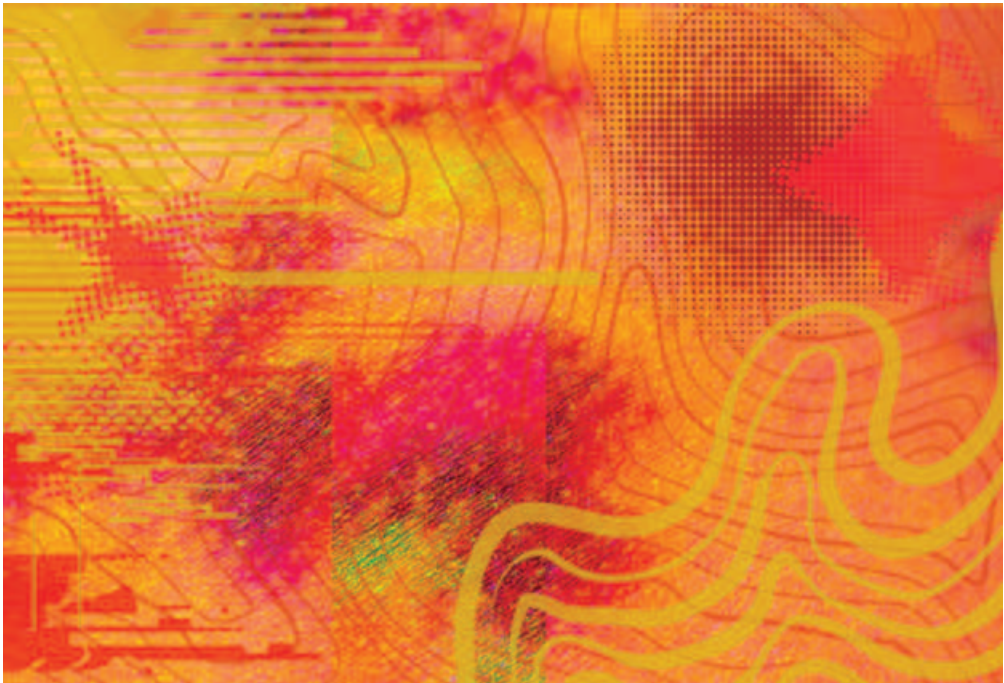


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

POETRY

Things I have had to forfeit and things I am unable to find

RAIAN ABEDIN

Patience, like moss, that grows on red soil. Conversations with friends, like inadequate breakfast. Lengths of borders, names of capitals. Birds, on asphalt, outlined by pink ribbons. Languages in which I am still waiting for you to show me the shapes of your bruised toes (let me water them). Ankle-deep pools where I was taught yelling could mean joy. Lights dimly flooding our faces. Falling while falling. Sleeping on the couch. Sleeping on the floor. In the car, sleeping, like a memory. My mother clutched onto me. Imagining cities. Uncertain fingers finding bruises against the light. Kerosene

lamps, my mother called them hariken batis, and the way they tended to make an island for a family. We were an island with compositions of bickering and yelling. Occasional bruises. Drawn out silences. The absurdity of growth. Of it all, really. The absurdity of memory, of clinging on to Sunday evenings, and to the sting of saltwater, first in your ear canals, then in your lungs. Sinking. I dreamt I was a flower deep in the ocean. The soil and the mycelium in their everlasting drape. Inside of me, my bones decalcify. I will become a reef, falling steady in the water. A joy, a lack of silence. We are all yelling together when the dream ends. I am back to where my ankles kiss the soil. A

chameleon looks at me and I look back. Both living, allowed to not forfeit, by the actions of holding on. Like that can be beautiful. Stay in touch. Tell me the next thing I will lose will be the last. And from my mouth will grow water lilies. If I am a garden, I will stand next to where my mother’s shadow falls. Made human by reaching out. Resting underneath. The sun in our pockets. The light whittling down. Childhood homes at dusk. Occasional bruises. Drawn out silences. And then the rest of the poem.

Raian Abedin is a poet, a student of Biochemistry, and a contributor to The Daily Star.



‘THE EAGLE’ IN BANGLADESH’S GOAL

To hopeful forwards chasing through balls with tunnel vision for goal, beware of ‘The Eagle’, Rupna Chakma. Perched in the middle of the Bangladesh goal, Rupna is always ready to deny the dreams of opponents’ glory before they even take flight with a bird’s eye view as precise as that of the sharp-eyed creature.



Not taking foot off the pedal as celebrations reserved

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite reducing the match against Turkmenistan to a dead rubber following a historic Asian Cup berth, Bangladesh are not taking their foot off the gas ahead of the last Group fixture of the qualifying campaign in Yangon today.

Peter Butler’s charges have defied heavy odds in the first two matches by thrashing much higher-ranked Bahrain 7-0 before getting the better of pre-tournament favourites Myanmar – the top-ranked side of the group at 55 – at their own backyard.

With qualification already in the bag, Bangladesh will now play Turkmenistan, the lowest-ranked side (141) in Group C, in the last group fixture at 6:30pm (Bangladesh time) at the Thuwunna Stadium.

Ritu Porna Chakma, who drove the team to the victory against Myanmar with two



wonder strikers, said the Asian Cup qualification was “a result of the hard work of the whole team”, and revealed that the team is staying focused till the end and reserving their plans of celebration.

“We didn’t celebrate at all (after learning about the qualification). We have one match left, and we have planned to celebrate after that match,” Ritu Porna said in a video message shared by the Bangladesh Football Federation.

Butler, who quietly orchestrated this historic achievement, is willing to show Turkmenistan the respect he believes they deserve.

“We have to remain professional to the end and stay focused. We have Turkmenistan and we shall show them the respect they deserve,” Butler told The Daily Star in a text exchange on Thursday.

Bangladesh women’s team (currently ranked 128th)

have never played against Turkmenistan, but they can be expected to show the same kind of composure and flair that they have mesmerised everyone with in the first two matches.

Goalkeeping coach Masud Ahmed Uzzal, meanwhile, informed that there were slight injury concerns for a few players and the head coach gave those players a chance to recover, while taking the rest through a practice session.

Young captain Afeida Khandaker said the team was in a jovial mood as they are eyeing much bigger prizes now, urging fans to continue supporting them

“We wish everyone continues supporting us the way they have done so far, so that we can do better in future. I want to see the team at the World Cup. Since now we have this opportunity, we will definitely try to make it count,” Afeida said.

Serve, set, match!

REUTERS, London

Talk about a man in a hurry – 10th seed Ben Shelton required just 55 seconds to finish off Australian Rinky Hijikata and reach the Wimbledon third round on Friday as he completed a 6-2 7-5 6-4 victory

The American was left frustrated the previous evening when the contest on Court Two was suspended because of fading light with Shelton about to serve for the match.

That did not sit well with the 22-year-old who was heard to shout “just one more game” to the umpire.

After a night to sleep on it, Shelton made no mistake when play resumed, serving three aces and an unreturned second serve to take his place in the last 32, with the crowd chanting, “One more game”.

The big-serving Shelton has enjoyed a consistent run in the Grand Slams, now having reached at least the third round in his last eight appearances, including a semi-final run in Australia at the beginning of the year.

Shelton will play Hungarian lucky loser Marton Fucsovics in the next round when victory would see him match his best result at Wimbledon having reached the last 16 this time last year.



No Shanto for SL T20Is

SPORTS REPORTER

Former skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was left out as Bangladesh announced a 16-member squad on Friday for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, starting on July 10.

Since he opted out of T20I captaincy, Bangladesh played two series in the UAE and Pakistan. The left-hander, struggling with his form in the format, was drafted in the squad for both series, but was picked for only one game (against UAE) while he was sidelined throughout the Pakistan series.

Opener Naim Sheikh was rewarded with a spot for his domestic form, and seamer Mohammad Saifuddin also made the cut as the Tigers also left out pacers Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud, and Khaled Ahmed.

Pacers Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman returned, and left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed was preferred instead of Tanvir Islam, who was part of the squad that played against Pakistan in May.

The second T20I is scheduled for July 13 in Kandy, and the final match will be on July 16 in Colombo.

SQUAD

Litton Das (Captain), Tanzid Tamim, Parvez Emon, Naim Sheikh, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Nasum Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mohammad Saifuddin.

Battered Tigers seek redemption

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh go into the second ODI against Sri Lanka on Saturday hoping to haul themselves up after suffering a calamitous batting collapse in the first ODI, knowing that only a win would keep the three-match series alive.

In the series opener, Bangladesh lost eight wickets in the space of 27 deliveries to see the match slip completely out of their hands, falling to a 77-run loss.

If Bangladesh are to stage a quick turnaround, the players must regain their confidence and come up with a definitive plan of action against Lankan spin.

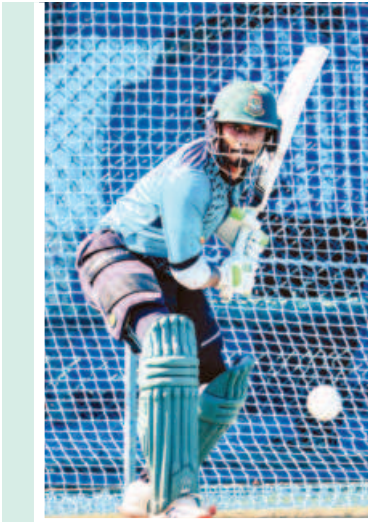
Advice on what the Bangladesh management need to do to help their players snap out of the previous defeat from an unlikely source – the head coach of the opposition side Sanath Jayasuriya.

“It [batting collapse] can happen to any team. As long as the management, the captain gives them the confidence, that’s the key to keep them from feeling under pressure,” Lankan legend in the pre-match press conference yesterday.

“Obviously they will feel down and it’s not easy to come out of it. But as long as you trust them, they will come out,” Jayasuriya added.

Bangladesh had made a promising start to their 245-run chase in the first ODI in Colombo, mostly owing to the 61-ball 62 from opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim.

Tanzid and Najmul Hossain Shanto had put together an impressive 71-run second wicket stand which ended abruptly when the latter got run out on 23 and soon after Tanzid was brilliantly caught at mid-off,



Bangladesh trail the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka 1-0 after losing the first ODI by 77 runs. Bangladesh have only once won a bilateral ODI series after losing the first game. It was back in 2015 when the Tigers bounced back in the final two matches to beat South Africa 2-1 at home.

Bangladesh have now lost 11 ODIs at a stretch at the R Premadasa Stadium, the venue for the first two ODIs.

after which panic consumed the side.

Judging by how Tanzid analysed his own performance in the first ODI, it seems the opener is yet to recover from the disappointment.

“I don’t think I played well because I couldn’t do what the side needed from me. If I could do what was needed, I would say I played well.”

Jayasuriya, meanwhile, spoke about how his players had faith in their abilities to stage a comeback even after Bangladesh had reached 96-1 after 16 overs.

“We wanted to keep things as tight as possible and it happened through that breakthrough from Milan [Rathnayake] getting the run out before Janith [Liyanage] took the catch to change the game. We kept putting pressure with our three spinners,” Jayasuriya said.

To add to the visitors challenges, they will be without head coach Phil Simmons in the second ODI who left for a scheduled doctor’s appointment in the UK.

Litton Das, Towhid Hridoy and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, all three right-handed middle-order batters failed to keep Wanindu Hasaranga and Kamindu Mendis in check. But as per Tanzid, the team has analysed a way past the Lankan spin threat.

“We had a long discussion and coach gave us some information. Those who get set in these kinds of wickets, need to finish the game... The left-handed batters should play more deliveries against Hasaranga since he isn’t as effective against left-handers as he is against right-handers. We hope to use this information in the next game.”

European giants set for high-stakes CWC showdowns

AGENCIES

FIFA Club World Cup quarterfinal fixtures on Saturday are set to witness heavyweight clashes as four of Europe’s elite sides go head-to-head in the US. Reigning Champions League winners PSG face German champions Bayern Munich in Charlotte, while Real Madrid meet Borussia Dortmund in New Jersey.

PSG arrive in red-hot form, having dispatched Lionel Messi’s Inter Miami 4-0 in the last 16. While their group-stage slip-up against Botafogo raised questions, the French champions quickly regained momentum.

This will be PSG’s 63rd match in all competitions going back to the start of the Ligue 1 season last August, and Luis Enrique is hoping for one last push from his exhausted players before they can enjoy a short summer break.

Bayern, meanwhile, reached this stage by overcoming Flamengo 4-2, thanks to a Harry Kane brace. The English striker continued his prolific season, scoring 41 goals in 50 appearances since last August. Vincent Kompany’s team have



netted 16 across four matches and may now feel they have a point to prove after falling short in the Champions League – Bayern lost in the last eight in Europe to an Inter

Milan team eventually humiliated 5-0 by PSG in final.

PSG eventually conquered Europe, but Bayern defeated the French side 1-0 in the league phase

of the Champions League back in November.

Real’s clash with Dortmund promises a compelling subplot of its own. Under new coach Xabi Alonso, Los Blancos squeezed past Juventus 1-0 thanks to a Gonzalo Garcia header from a pinpoint Trent Alexander-Arnold cross. The England international, signed from Liverpool, has adapted quickly in a right wing-back role and adds a new dimension to Madrid’s attack.

Dortmund, coached by Niko Kovac, reached this stage with a hard-fought 2-1 win over Monterrey but will miss Jobe Bellingham due to suspension. Their squad has evolved since losing 5-2 to Real in this season’s Champions League group stage after a loss in the 2024 final of the competition. French superstar Kylian Mbappe, returning from illness, could feature prominently against the Bundesliga side and may face his former club PSG in a potential semifinal.

With four European titans vying for global glory, Saturday’s quarterfinals are set to deliver drama, intensity, and high-stakes football.



Harry Brook and Jamie Smith turned things around for hosts England on Day 3 of their second Test against India at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Friday. Both Brook (140*) and Smith (157*) smashed brisk tons and stitched together a mammoth 271-run unbroken sixth-wicket stand – their highest for the wicket against India – to help the hosts recover from five for 84 to reach 355 for five at Tea in response to India’s first innings collection of 587 runs.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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NCP slams border killings, calls for July declaration

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday said the border areas of Thakurgaon are plagued by frequent killings.

"Killings in the bordering areas of Thakurgaon are a major problem. The Indian Border Security Force indiscriminately shoots and kills Bangladeshi citizens," he said while addressing a rally at the Old Bus Stand area of Thakurgaon town around 12:30pm.

"Recently, we have seen attempts to push Muslims living in India into Bangladesh by labelling them as illegal immigrants," he said.

"We want to warn that this is not Hasina's Bangladesh. This is the Bangladesh of students and people after the mass uprising. Bangladesh will run in the hands of pro-Bangladeshis. We will stop these border killings at all costs," he warned.

The rally was a part of the NCP's ongoing "July March to Rebuild the Country" campaign.

He said, "In the past, we have seen our Sanatan Hindu brothers being persecuted a lot, and their land being occupied. The Awami League has repeatedly claimed that they are a secular party, but they have never treated the followers of the Sanatan faith with justice.

Women and children weep during the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on the southern Gaza Strip the previous day, held outside Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

CUMILLA RAPE Man held for leading assault

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The younger brother of the main accused in the rape incident in Cumilla's Muradnagar has been arrested for allegedly inciting a mob to assault the victim and sharing a video of the attack on social media.

Shah Poran, 28, brother of Fazor Ali, was arrested in Cumilla on Thursday night, said Rab-11 Commanding Officer HM Sajjad Hossain at a press briefing at the Rab media centre in Dhaka yesterday.

According to Rab, Shah Poran filmed and shared the video of the woman being assaulted to take revenge on his elder brother Fazor Ali. Poran had reportedly been harbouring resentment since Fazor slapped him during a village arbitration to settle a dispute between the two brothers.

Rab said both brothers had long been harassing the woman.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

3 of a family injured in acid attack in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jashore

Three members of a family, including two children, have been injured in an acid attack at their home in Jashore's Jhikargacha.

The incident took place around 9:00pm on Thursday in the Godkhali area, police said. The victims are a woman and her two children -- a 20-year-old daughter and an 8-year-old son.

According to Jashore General Hospital's Medical Officer Dr Zubair Ahmed, the boy sustained burns on his legs and other parts of his body. His condition is critical.

His mother and sister also suffered burn injuries and are being kept under close observation, he added.

An additional Superintendent of Police Noor-e-Alam Siddique said an investigation has been launched.

"The father of the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Gaza's hospital 'one massive trauma ward'

Says WHO after influx of patients injured at food distribution sites; Israeli strikes kill 41 Palestinians

AGENCIES

Nasser hospital in Gaza is operating as "one massive trauma ward" due to an influx of patients injured at non-United Nations food distribution sites, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday.

"They've seen already for weeks, daily injuries ... and (the) majority coming from the so-called safe non-UN food distribution sites. The hospital is now operating as one massive trauma ward," Rik Peepkorn told reporters in Geneva.

On the ground in Gaza, intensified Israeli strikes killed at least 41 people, reports Al Jazeera online.

Civil defence official Mohammad al-Mughayyir said that seven people, including a child, were killed in an Israeli air strike on displaced people's tents near the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis.

Mughayyir said eight more people were killed in two other strikes on tent encampments on

- » Hamas holds consultations on ceasefire proposal
- » Trump expects Hamas decision in 24 hours
- » US president had spoken to KSA about expanding Abraham Accords

the coast of Khan Yunis, including one that killed two children early yesterday.

Israel's leaders have held firm to their aim of crushing Hamas, even as the Palestinian group said it was holding consultations with other Palestinian movements on the truce proposal.

The statement came ahead of a visit on Monday by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington, where President

Donald Trump is pushing for an end to the war.

Trump said yesterday it would probably be known in 24 hours whether the Hamas has agreed to accept what he has called a "final proposal" for the ceasefire in Gaza.

The president also said he had spoken to Saudi Arabia about expanding the Abraham Accords, the deal on normalisation of ties that his administration negotiated between Israel and some Gulf countries during his first term, reports Reuters.

"I want the people of Gaza to be safe more importantly," Trump told reporters when asked if he still wanted the US to take over the Palestinian territory as he announced in February. "I want to see safety for the people of Gaza. They've gone through hell."

Two previous ceasefires mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States have seen a temporary halt in fighting, coupled with the return of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

Govt denies rights abuse in arrest of Rupa, Shakil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government said the arrest of journalist couple Farzana Rupa and Shakil Ahmed did not violate provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

In a formal reply on July 2 to a joint communication dated March 7, 2025, from the UN Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression, judicial independence, and arbitrary detention, the government reiterated its commitment to respecting every individual's right to liberty and security under the ICCPR.

The reply noted that the couple were not imprisoned for their journalistic work against the incumbent government.

"They are imprisoned for their actions committed under the previous regime after being sued by individuals, not the government," said the response.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Roman bigfoot? UK archaeologists probe 'unusually large' shoes

AFP, London

A stash of "unusually large" 2,000-year-old shoes dug up at a Roman site in northern England has left archaeologists searching for an explanation, they told AFP on Thursday.

The 30cm+ (11.8in) long shoes -- equivalent to size 49 in Europe and size 15 in the US -- have been found by archaeologists from the Vindolanda Charity Trust in recent months.

The trust was established in 1970 to excavate, conserve, and share Roman remains at Vindolanda and Carvoran, both part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site in northern England.

The eight large shoes were discovered in a defensive ditch, often used by Romans as a rubbish dump, at the Magna Roman Fort in Northumberland.

Only a tiny fraction of shoes in Vindolanda's vast existing collection are of a similar size, whereas around a quarter of those from the Magna site are in this size range, according to Rachel Frame, a senior archaeologist on the project.

She called it "really unusual". "We're all now off trying to work out who might have been here," Frame told AFP.

She added they were eager to know "which regiments would have been stationed in Magda" and why exactly there are "so many large shoes at this site compared to others".

US slaps new sanctions on Iran's oil trade

Airspace reopened in Iran

AGENCIES

The US imposed sanctions on Thursday against a network that smuggles Iranian oil disguised as Iraqi oil and on a Hezbollah-controlled financial institution, the Treasury Department said.

A network of companies run by Iraqi-British national Salim Ahmed Said has been buying and shipping billions of dollars worth of Iranian oil disguised as, or blended with, Iraqi oil since at least 2020, the department said.

"Treasury will continue to target Tehran's revenue sources and intensify economic pressure to disrupt the regime's access to the financial resources that fuel its destabilizing activities," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said.

As dengue cases continue to surge, the dedicated ward at Mugda Medical College and Hospital almost reached full capacity yesterday. Hospital staff were trying their best to tend to the growing number of patients. Story on Page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Russia hits Kyiv with largest drone attack

23 hurt; Polish embassy among damaged buildings; Trump-Putin call yields no results

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia pummelled Kyiv with the largest drone attack of the war, injuring at least 23 people and damaging buildings across the capital only hours after US President Donald Trump spoke with Russia's Vladimir Putin, officials said yesterday.

Air raid sirens, the whine of kamikaze drones and booming detonations reverberated from early evening until dawn as Russia launched what Ukraine's Air Force said was a total of 539 drones and 11 missiles.

Residents huddled with families in underground metro stations for shelter. Acrid smoke hung over the city centre.

Trump said that the call with Putin on Thursday evening resulted in no progress at all on efforts to end the war, while the Kremlin reiterated that Moscow would keep pushing to solve the conflict's "root causes".

President Volodymyr Zelensky, who also spoke to Trump later yesterday, called the attack "deliberately massive and cynical."

During their talks, Trump and Zelensky discussed escalating Russian strikes on Ukraine and supply of air defence systems, Axios reports.

Kyiv officials said the Russian attack damaged about 40 apartment blocks, passenger railway infrastructure, five schools and kindergartens, cafes and many cars in six of Kyiv's 10 districts. Poland said the consular section of its embassy was damaged in central Kyiv, adding that staff were unharmed.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



LOTUS SILK

the fabric of the future

Bangladesh’s wetland wonder weaves a new path for sustainable fashion

In an era of climate urgency and demand for sustainable alternatives, Bangladesh’s innovation – a rare, biodegradable, and luxurious textile crafted from the pink lotus (Nelumbo nucifera) – could mark a turning point.

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Imagine if the next global fashion sensation did not emerge from Paris or Milan but quietly bloomed in a lotus pond in the wetlands of Bangladesh. It may sound unlikely, but Bangladesh has achieved something extraordinary – it has produced a new kind of textile called lotus silk. Soft, glossy, and eco-friendly, the fabric is made from the stems of pink lotus flowers that grow in water. In an era of climate urgency and demand for sustainable alternatives, Bangladesh’s innovation – a rare, biodegradable, and luxurious textile crafted from the pink lotus (Nelumbo nucifera) – could mark a turning point. To showcase its potential, a special six-yard-long scarf has already been produced from this lotus yarn. The scarf is currently kept at the office of the Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco in the capital, standing as a symbol of what Bangladesh’s wetlands and homegrown ingenuity can offer the world. Researchers and experts said for the first time, this special fabric is being made in the country and it could help

Bangladesh emerge as a leader in smart and green fashion. The breakthrough came through a research project titled “Study of Diversity and Conservation of Lotus from Bangladesh,” initiated in 2021 by Bengal Plants Research and Development (BPRD), with funding from the Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco. “This is not just a scientific innovation; it is a cultural renaissance in Bangladesh,” said Sikdar Abul Kashem Shamsuddin, chairman of BPRD and lead researcher of the project. “For generations, the lotus has been part of our heritage. Now it is also a part of our sustainable future.” Rakhal Hari Sarker, a supernumerary professor at the Department of Botany at Dhaka University, is the consultant for the project titled “Diversity, Uses, and Conservation of Lotus.” He said the lotus petiole has an incredible natural fine filament that can be transformed into high-value fibre with minimal intervention. “It’s organic, it’s durable and, above all, it’s ours,” he said. Researchers said the lotus flower has always been seen as a symbol of purity, but now it is offering something more – a clean, green solution to one of the world’s one of the most polluting industries: textiles. Lotus fibre cloth may seem like a new idea to many, but people in countries like Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam have long made this soft and strong cloth. Buddhist monks in Cambodia and Myanmar wore lotus fibre clothes as a symbol of peace and purity. The first lotus cloth was reportedly made in Myanmar by Daw Sa Oo. She picked a lotus flower from Inle Lake and noticed threads coming out of its stem, which gave her the idea to weave them into cloth. She later gifted the first lotus robe to a monk. Now, lotus fabric has become a growing business that helps rural women earn money while protecting nature. The transformation from flower to fabric is a careful and eco-friendly process. Lotus petioles (stems) are harvested from wetlands across Bangladesh without uprooting the plant, allowing it to regenerate quickly. Inside the stem are natural sticky threads that, when exposed to air, turn into fine filaments. These are gently hand-rolled, dried, and spun into thread using traditional spinning wheels, often made from bicycle parts. No chemicals, no fossil fuels, and no



In Faridpur’s Ronkail village, women are being trained to extract lotus threads.

PHOTO: COURTESY

pollutants are involved in the process. Even the leftover plant matter is reused as compost or cattle feed. Each metre of lotus silk requires thread from 40,000 stems. A full garment may need up to 120,000 stems. Extracting enough lotus silk for one scarf can take up to two months, and the final product can cost ten times as much as regular silk. In the village of Ronkail in Faridpur, rural women are now being trained to extract lotus threads, providing income and dignity. “Women who never thought they would be part of a global luxury industry are now expert artisans,” said Shamsuddin. The process of making lotus silk requires meticulous handwork and craftsmanship rooted in Bangladesh’s rich textile heritage. As demand grows, it could create sustainable jobs in wetland areas while preserving biodiversity by protecting lotus-filled wetlands from farming or industrial use. Uttam Rajbangshi, a supervisor from Ronkail village, said that from July to December, lotus grows in wetlands, and during this time, 16 people, mostly women, make yarn from the stems while four others collect the lotus. The yarn is then sent to the Bangladesh Handloom Board, where it is processed to make cloth and other useful products. Bangladesh’s wetlands, like beels,

haors, and rivers, are rich in plant and animal life, but they are under threat due to rapid urban growth. “Bangladesh’s beels, haors, and rivers are not just water bodies – they’re biodiversity hubs,” said Prof Sarker. “Lotus cultivation can actually help preserve these ecosystems while creating jobs.” The process of turning lotus stems into cloth is eco-friendly. It uses no water, fuel, or harmful chemicals, making it a zero-emission and chemical-free method, said researchers. Even the extra plant parts do not go to waste – they can be used as natural fertiliser or food for cows, making it part of a circular economy where nothing is wasted. “Each time we harvest, the plant regenerates stronger,” said Prof Sarker. “This is a model of how industry and ecology can work in harmony.” Lotus silk is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after eco-friendly fabrics in the world. Fashion houses in Italy, like Loro Piana, have already introduced jackets made from lotus silk that cost over \$5,000. In India, a company called Hero Fashion has created a special white shirt made from lotus fibre, which resists stains and is kind to nature. In Cambodia, Samatoa Lotus Textiles, a women-led business that won a Unesco award, has turned lotus

fibre into a top choice in global fashion. These examples show that Bangladesh could also become a leader in lotus silk if the right steps are taken. Prof Rakhal Hari Sarker said, “We have the land, the workers, and now the knowledge. If we invest in better research, training, and natural dyeing techniques, we can take lotus silk to the world.” The price of lotus silk is high, ranging from \$2,500 to \$4,000 per kilogramme. But with many wetlands full of lotus and skilled hands ready to work, Bangladesh has what it takes to enter the global market. Still, more needs to be done. Bangladesh must build strong systems for research, green production methods, and international promotion to attract fashion brands looking for sustainable materials, said experts. Researchers said lotus silk is made from a special natural material called cellulose found inside the stems, and the amount depends on the depth of the water. Prof Sarker said research can be carried out to improve the quality and quantity of cellulose in lotus petioles. Techniques of modern plant breeding, such as tissue culture and plant biotechnology, can be applied to increase fibre production. The entire process used in muslin production has also been applied to lotus fibre. Officials from the Bangladesh Handloom Board and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) have underscored its high potential. Ayub Ali, chief of planning and implementation at the Bangladesh Handloom Board, said, “The yarn obtained from lotus plants is extremely fine and strong – arguably even better than silk. One of the biggest advantages is that you can extract thread from a lotus plant up to four times a month without harming it.” “You don’t even need the flowers; the yarn can be extracted just from the petioles,” he added. “This is a completely natural fibre and there is tremendous potential for it in Bangladesh.” Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the BGMEA, said, “Bangladesh has an abundance of canals and wetlands, so this can be done without major investment. At present, all materials are imported from abroad. If we can source the raw materials locally, that would be fantastic.” He said Bangladesh holds strong potential to advance even further in the global ready-made garment sector.



To demonstrate its potential, a six-yard scarf has already been made from lotus yarn.



Lotus stems are harvested from wetlands without uprooting the plant.



Inside the stem are sticky threads that, once exposed to air, turn into fine filaments.



Threads are gently hand-rolled, dried, and spun into thread using spinning wheels.

KURUKH VOICES

The Oraons of Bangladesh



Oraon women dancing during their main festival, Karam Puja, in Godagari, Rajshahi.

Most Oraon children are deprived of modern education, entering the workforce at a young age to help support their families.

BABUL CHANDRA SUTRADHAR

Under the vast skies of northern Bangladesh, in the corners of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, and the hillier terrains of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, lives a vibrant community whose roots run deep into the soil and soul of the region—the Oraons.

The journey of the Oraons to Bengal began centuries ago, driven by the age-old human desire for better life and livelihood, security, and survival. Like many indigenous groups who sought refuge in the fertile plains of Bengal, such as Santals, Mahatos, Mundas, Rakhaines, Khasias, Tripura, the Oraons too found a home here, drawn by the natural generosity of the land

and its people.

A people called “Human”
Lexically, the name *Oraon*, or *Uraon* or *Urang*, translates simply to “human.” Their language, *Kurukh*, means “speaker,” and is what anthropologists identify as part of the Dravidian language family. Believed to have originated in the ancient Kankan region, modern-day Maharashtra and Karnataka, the Oraons migrated to the Barind region of Bangladesh during the Mughal period and began settling permanently.

Today, around 1,20,000 Oraons live in Bangladesh. Their population also stretches across the Indian states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and

West Bengal, and even as far as China and Myanmar.

Spiritual by nature

The Oraons are deeply spiritual, practising a nature-based faith that falls under the broader umbrella of *Sanatan Dharma*. They believe in reincarnation and perform sacred rituals for the welfare of departed souls. In more recent times, some members of the community have embraced Christianity, yet many continue to celebrate both Christian and traditional festivals in tandem.

The most revered celebration is Karam Puja, a festival of purity, protection, and prosperity symbolised by the Karam tree. Held during the full moon of Bhadra, the festival lasts three days and features vibrant processions, dance, and music. From the *Tasi* and *Ektara* to the *Mukhbanshi* and *Kartal*, the rhythmic beat of traditional instruments animates every celebration—be it a birth, wedding, or harvest ritual.

Like the Hindu caste system, the

Oraons are divided into clans—Lakda, Tirki, Ekka, Kujur, and others, each treated as an extended family unit. Marriages within the same clan are strictly prohibited.

Oraon society is patriarchal, much like mainstream Bengali society. However, women contribute significantly to both household and economic life, weaving clothes, making utensils, even crafting their own jewelry. Despite their hard work, gender inequality remains a concern, with men holding more prominent roles both socially and within the family.

Health practices also remain largely traditional. Modern medical treatment is often a last resort, with most relying on folk medicine passed down through generations.

Kurukh, their mother tongue, is still spoken but has no written script. Thus, the stories, songs, riddles, and proverbs are passed down orally.

Progress denied

During Bangladesh’s Liberation War in 1971, Oraons stood shoulder-to-

shoulder with Bengalis, fighting for freedom, justice, and equality. However, even five decades later, that dream of equality remains unfulfilled.

Despite their rich cultural heritage, the community faces pressing challenges. Most Oraon children are deprived of modern education, entering the workforce at a young age to help support their families.

A recent study conducted in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi district presents a stark reality. Among the Adivasi community, 70% work as day labourers, while only 2.6% have studied beyond the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) level. Additionally, 67.3% own no agricultural land, and 30.5% are without housing. In cases of land loss, 70.4% occur through the use of forged documents, while 29.6% result from forced grabbing.

Building a future

The road to change is neither short nor simple. But people like Sudhir Chandra Oraon, advisor to the Oraon social organisation *Dighri Raja Parishad*, are doing their part. As president of Gunigram High School’s management committee, Sudhir is vocal about what’s needed.

“Without effective access to government services, the impoverished Oraon community finds it difficult to progress. While the authorities must remain vigilant, we Oraons too must become aware of our rights—an awareness that can only be achieved through education,” he said.

As Bangladesh moves forward with its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it must ensure that indigenous communities like the Oraons are not left behind. Because the story of progress will remain incomplete as long as the voices that speak in *Kurukh* go unheard.

Babul Chandra Sutradhar is a human rights activist and a researcher.



Oraon men and women taking a break under a tree after working together in a paddy field in Godagari, Rajshahi.

PHOTOS: RIB

HEAT, HUNGER, AND HOMELESSNESS

How Dhaka’s stray animals are suffering in the climate crisis



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

AFRINA MOMOTAJ

As the climate crisis worsens, its effects in Bangladesh are becoming increasingly visible and destructive. However, amid the growing discussions about rising temperatures, flooding, and urban resilience, one vulnerable group remains largely overlooked: the stray animals of Dhaka.

Roaming the city’s alleys, streets, and marketplaces, thousands of stray dogs, cats, and other animals are increasingly exposed to the harsh effects of climate change. Unbearable heat, water shortages, and food scarcity have turned survival into a daily struggle for these silent victims of an urban environment that is becoming ever more hostile.

Urban Heat and Animal Suffering

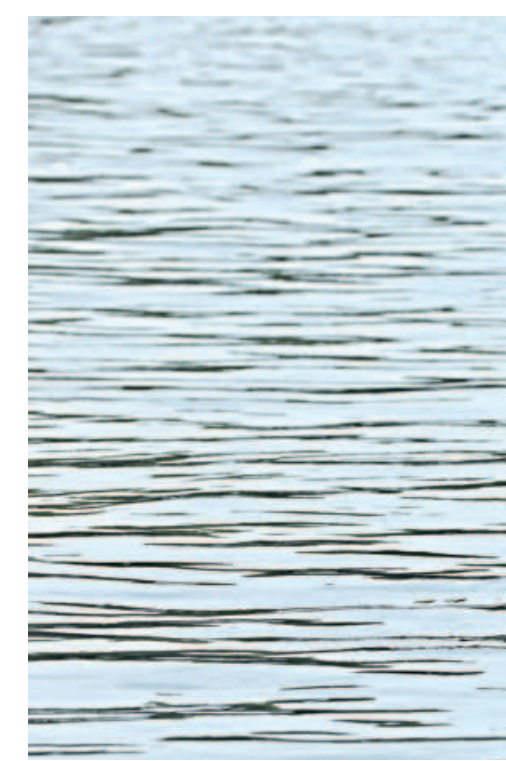
Over the past few years, Dhaka has experienced increasingly severe heatwaves, with temperatures soaring above 40°C, far beyond historical norms. This temperature rise, compounded by the city’s urban heat island effect, poses a serious threat to animals living on the streets without access to shade, clean water, or proper nourishment.

“Many of the animals we rescue show signs of heatstroke, severe dehydration, and skin infections caused by continuous exposure to hot pavements,” says Dr Nasima Jahan, a senior veterinarian with Obhoyaronno, a leading animal welfare organisation in Bangladesh. “Unlike humans, these animals have limited means to cool themselves, and when they’re malnourished, their tolerance is even lower.”

Increased thunderstorm activity, driven by shifting monsoon patterns, also triggers panic among animals. Loud noises and sudden downpours force them to flee their familiar territories, increasing their risk of injury or death in traffic.

Disappearing Resources in a Changing City

Urban expansion and climate change have combined to shrink the availability of resources that once helped sustain stray animals. Water sources, such as roadside puddles and drainage canals, often dry up during extreme heat. Similarly, food scraps from local eateries—once a primary source of nutrition—are now scarce due to improved waste management and economic hardship among vendors.



residents throw them away,” says Tamanna Rahman, a university student and animal welfare volunteer. “They think the animals bring disease, but these creatures are simply trying to survive in unbearable conditions.”

Heat-stressed and malnourished animals may become more aggressive or disoriented, further straining public tolerance and compassion.

Community Action and Climate-Resilient Solutions

Despite the challenges, there are hopeful signs of grassroots efforts that recognise the interconnectedness of animal welfare and urban climate adaptation. In several neighbourhoods—including Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, and Gulshan—youth-led groups and NGOs have set up hydration stations and feeding corners for stray animals. Local tea stall owners and shopkeepers are also being engaged to maintain water bowls during the hotter months.

“These initiatives show that even small actions can make a big difference,” says Rifat Mahmud, an organiser with Dhaka Paws, a local animal advocacy group. “Caring for animals doesn’t just help them—it also strengthens our community’s empathy and resilience.”

Urban expansion and climate change have combined to shrink the availability of resources that once helped sustain stray animals. Water sources, such as roadside puddles and drainage canals, often dry up during extreme heat.

Climate-resilient urban planning must begin to incorporate animal-friendly policies. This includes the provision of shaded spaces, the inclusion of veterinary services in emergency planning, and the implementation of humane birth control and vaccination programmes to ensure public safety without resorting to culling or poisoning.

The Need for Inclusive Climate Policy

While Bangladesh has made significant strides in climate adaptation and disaster preparedness, animals remain largely absent from national and municipal planning. The neglect of non-human species in climate policies risks undermining holistic resilience and public health.

“Stray animals are part of our urban ecosystem and deserve protection, especially in times of crisis,” says Sharmeen Khan, a legal advisor focusing on animal rights in South Asia. “They don’t contribute to carbon emissions or pollution, yet they suffer the consequences. Leaving them behind is not just unethical—it’s shortsighted.”

Shared Responsibility in a Warming World

In the heart of Dhaka, as temperatures continue to rise and green spaces disappear, the survival of stray animals grows increasingly precarious. Their suffering is a stark reminder that climate change is not just a human issue—it affects every living being that calls this planet home.

We must ask ourselves: can our fight against climate change be truly just and sustainable if we continue to ignore those who cannot speak for themselves?

A climate-resilient Dhaka must not only be smarter, cleaner, and greener—it must also be kinder.

Afrina Momotaj is an animal rescuer.





Police firing pellet guns at protesters in Chankharpul, Dhaka, on 5 August 2024.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



A protester critically injured by pellet gun fire.

PHOTO: STAR

THE HIDDEN LETHALITY OF PELLET GUNS

How Chhorra Guli Inflicts Social Death on Protesters

“Pellet victims are kept biologically alive but rendered socially dead. Unable to study, work, or participate, their prolonged survival becomes a condition of extended suffering. These are not collateral damage; they are calculated acts of repression. Maimed bodies in hospital beds, blindfolded eyes, shattered limbs—these become silent warnings to society: ‘This is what happens when you resist.’ And because these injuries are less visible than coffins and funerals, they often escape both national outrage and global condemnation.”

MD. ZARIF RAHMAN, ZEB SAJIDA SARAF, NUSRAT JAHAN NISU

The Quiet Horror of “Less-Lethal” Repression

Imagine a weapon so “magical” it allows a regime to crush dissent without creating martyrs. A device so surgically cruel that it disables without killing. It leaves no corpses, no funerals, no international headlines. Just silence, trauma, broken dreams, and ruined lives. For authoritarian regimes, this is more than just a tool; it’s a “eureka” weapon. In Bangladesh, that weapon has a familiar name: the pellet gun, or chhorra guli.

In the hands of the Awami League regime, chhorra guli became the state’s preferred instrument of repression. During the July–August 2024 mass uprising, it was deployed for a precise purpose: not to kill, but to maim. Marketed deceptively as “less-lethal,” these weapons blinded protesters, shredded limbs, and psychologically shattered an entire generation. The pellet gun doesn’t provoke martyrdom or backlash. Instead, it manufactures social death—physically broken, economically ruined, politically erased. No coffins, just crutches. No heroes, only trauma. It is violence with plausible deniability, repression dressed as “restraint.”

This is what makes the pellet gun so appealing to autocrats: it looks “humane” on paper but performs like a calibrated instrument of terror on the ground. It is a weapon that mutilates while masquerading as mercy.

This piece traces that contradiction. Through survivor testimonies, medical evidence, and political theory, we expose the “less-lethal” lie. The pellet gun is not just a tool for crowd control or riot management; it is a weapon of silence, suffering, and state-sanctioned amnesia.

Bodies That Survive, Lives That Don’t During the 2024 mass uprising, the Bangladesh government’s preferred weapon for crowd control was not tear gas or lathi charges; it was the pellet gun. Marketed as “less-lethal,” this weapon became a frontline tool in a campaign of deliberate mutilation carried out by law enforcement. According to the 2025 UN OHCHR fact-finding report, 736 civilians were treated for pellet-related eye injuries at the National Institute of Ophthalmology in Dhaka, with 504 requiring emergency surgery. In Sylhet, the Osmani Medical College Hospital handled 64 metal shot injuries, 36 of which were to the eyes. These were not warning shots or accidents. They were targeted acts to disable, terrify, and permanently incapacitate.

Sapran, a human rights think tank, conducted a study on the deployment and aftermath of pellet guns titled *Deadly in Disguise: The Use of Pellet Guns Against Civilians During the July–August 2024 Mass Uprising in Bangladesh*. Drawing on testimonies from survivors and frontline doctors, our findings expose a system designed

to produce suffering while avoiding accountability.

For example, Mainuddin, a father of three and the sole breadwinner of his family, shared:

“My eldest daughter is a 9th grader. I have two elderly parents who need me. But I’ve lost my job. My family now takes care of me, I’m bedridden, and we have no income. How do you think I’m doing mentally?”

One particularly harrowing case is that of 23-year-old Khokon Chandra Barman, shot in the face from very close range during the 5 August 2024 massacre outside the Jatrabari Police Station. His injuries completely obliterated his upper lip, nose, palate, and gums. The Health Ministry, under the Interim Government’s guidance,



A CT scan reveals the silent agony—like many other victims, Md Mijanur Rahman Badol still has gun pellets lodged in his face and skull.

COURTESY: MD MIJANUR RAHMAN BADOL

arranged for the initial phase of his advanced reconstructive surgery in Moscow last May. Khokon described his experience of seeing the Jatrabari police indiscriminately shoot civilians during a media interview:

“The police came out of the Jatrabari Station and fired at us like we were birds.” He added, “They didn’t fire to disperse us, they fired to destroy us.”

Khokon’s life will never be the same again. Today, he lives with profound disfigurement and permanent nerve damage—a living testament to the irreversible physical damage metal pellets can cause to the human body.

For others, the psychological damage is accompanied by intense survivor’s guilt. Sajjad, a high school student, mourned:

“It would’ve been better if I died... The doctors say maybe in three years I can lift a cup with this hand. But I can’t even hold anything now. What kind of life is this?”

The physical toll is severe. Many

victims underwent multiple surgeries, and in most cases, doctors were unable to remove all the pellets from their bodies. The remaining metal fragments became a permanent internal health hazard, causing chronic infections, nerve damage, or future health crises. One doctor described these fragments as “a permanent source of mental and physical suffering.”

Young people were disproportionately targeted. Doctors expressed alarm at treating victims as young as 10 or 12 years old. Female patients were reported to exhibit even greater psychological distress. Many suffered not only physical pain but also intense shame, isolation, and long-term trauma.

The story of Himel, a young protester from Tangail, is particularly disturbing. Shot from the second floor of a local police station while trying to secure the release of detained students, he now carries 300–400 pellets in his face and neck.

“I can no longer see with either eye,” he said. “All the pellets are still inside me.”

Another victim, Raisul Rahman Ratul, a college student, was shot after

and Achille Mbembe argue, the power of the modern state lies not only in its capacity to kill, but in choosing who suffers, for how long, and how silently.

Puar’s theory of the “right to maim” shows that states increasingly choose injury over execution. A dead protester can become a martyr, a rallying cry—but a blinded or paralysed student becomes a burden: forgotten, disempowered. Pellet guns produce precisely this kind of injury—one that incapacitates but does not inspire.

Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics sharpens this insight: pellet victims are kept biologically alive but rendered socially dead. Unable to study, work, or participate, their prolonged survival becomes a condition of extended suffering. These are not collateral damage; they are calculated acts of repression. Maimed bodies in hospital beds, blindfolded eyes, shattered limbs—these become silent warnings to society: “This is what happens when you resist.” And because these injuries are less visible than coffins and funerals, they often escape both national outrage and global condemnation.

However, Bangladesh is not the only



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Journalist Mehedi Hasan, killed by pellet gun fire on 18 July 2024.

Friday prayers in Azampur, Uttara. As he tried to talk to the police, he was grabbed and shot at point blank range in the abdomen. He underwent multiple surgeries, but only 45–50 pellets out of 250 could be removed. Fifty-five percent of his abdomen was surgically excised.

“My kidneys are damaged. I’m in pain all the time. I was supposed to take my HSC exams this year. Now I can’t even prepare.”

Abdullah, a high school student from Enayetpur, missed months of school due to pellet injuries. His mother shared:

“He was supposed to move to 9th grade, but he’s still in bed. Doctors say he might never walk again.”

Sajjad, another teenage victim from Natun Bazar, described: “This arm still hurts... I can’t even carry my school bag. My mum carries it for me now.”

These testimonies reflect a coordinated strategy to maim instead of kill, to neutralise protesters without creating martyrs.

One interviewed human rights activist emphasised that this is not merely a failure of law; it is the result of deliberate policy. Despite existing legal frameworks requiring proportionality and regulation in the use of force, pellet guns were deployed indiscriminately and without oversight.

This is why the state prefers pellet guns: they represent a politics of invisible cruelty. They are not merely weapons of law enforcement; they are instruments of authoritarian governance calibrated for modern optics. These testimonies lay bare what statistics and reports often obscure. Pellet guns are not “less-lethal.” They are intentionally crippling. They create a landscape of broken bodies, abandoned families, and silenced dissent.

Maiming as Governance Across the World: The Hidden Strategy Behind Pellet Guns

The use of pellet guns by authoritarian regimes is a deliberate strategy. This is violence rebranded, refined, and made palatable to a public conditioned to equate state brutality with death alone. As political theorists like Jasbir K. Puar

country where pellet guns have been used by the state to repress dissent. From authoritarian regimes to so-called “liberal democracies,” their deployment reveals a global pattern of state violence masked as “restraint.” In Indian-administered Kashmir, over 6,000 people were injured by pellet fire in July 2016 alone, many permanently blinded, including children and bystanders. Iran’s security forces deliberately targeted the faces of women and students during the 2022 “Women, Life, Freedom” protests. In Palestine and Lebanon, Israeli forces employed pellet-like projectiles to maim civilians, including health workers and children, under a strategy designed to disable resistance without mass death.

Chilean protests in 2019 left over 400 protesters with eye injuries; U.S. law enforcement used similar weapons during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, resulting in over 115 cases of severe trauma. From Bahrain to Egypt, pellet injuries have been met with impunity, not reform. These cases underscore a transnational logic: to harm without killing, suppress without scandal.

In this global matrix of repression, pellet guns thus serve a double purpose: they enforce control while minimising accountability. They do not reduce violence; they optimise it for deniability. And in doing so, they expose the cruel genius of modern authoritarianism: the ability to break bodies while claiming restraint.

Legal Contradictions and the Crisis of Conscience

The deployment of pellet guns during the 2024 mass uprising was not just a humanitarian catastrophe; rather, it was a legal and moral collapse. Although numerous domestic laws, constitutional safeguards, and international agreements are in place to regulate the use of force, the state ignored these protections and used force without accountability, disregarding the basic principles of lawful, proportionate, and responsible policing. Both national and international laws clearly state that force should only be used when absolutely

necessary, applied in a measured way, and only after all other options have been exhausted. Yet, for many protesters and bystanders, pellets were the first response. Victims, including children and passers-by, were shot at point-blank range without any warning, often in the face, chest, or abdomen. This conduct blatantly violated the right to life and protection from torture under the ICCPR (Articles 6 and 7), the Convention Against Torture, and also breached the standards outlined in Police Regulation Bengal 1943 (PRB 153C).

These were not isolated accidents. The injuries, blindness, amputations, and embedded shrapnel were systematic, widespread, and predictably catastrophic. As such, they are not mere excesses but evidence of premeditated, unlawful violence, in direct breach of the UN Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons (2020) and the domestic laws of Bangladesh.

The damage went far beyond physical wounds. Many young survivors were emotionally traumatised, yet the Hasina government offered no support. Financial burdens increased as some lost their jobs, others had to quit school, and many fell into heavy debt just to pay for their medical care. Despite causing this suffering, the regime provided no compensation, no medical assistance, and no help to rebuild their lives, failing both its responsibilities under international law and its constitutional duty to protect human dignity.

Healthcare professionals were placed in an ethical crisis. Moreover, numerous victims fled medical facilities to evade surveillance or retaliatory actions, thereby infringing upon Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which guarantees the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The obstruction of access to medical care and the intimidation of healthcare providers constitute violations of this right. Such actions further breach Article 3 (right to life, liberty, and security of person) and Article 5 (prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Concurrently, activists and journalists documenting these abuses were subjected to harassment, surveillance, and silencing tactics. The intent extended beyond inflicting physical harm to include the deliberate destruction of evidence.

The legal framework exists but has been hollowed out, bypassed, and weaponised. The result is a country where violence is normalised, law is ornamental, and justice remains out of reach for the wounded, the abandoned, and the silenced.

From Silence to Ban

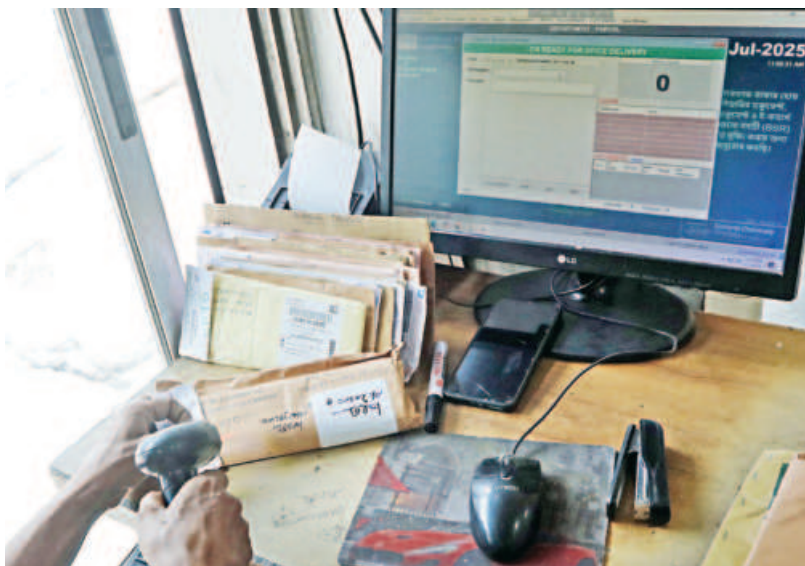
The use of pellet guns during the 2024 uprising was a deliberate authoritarian strategy to crush the people’s resistance without triggering the global outcry that mass killings might. These weapons may not always kill, but they kill futures, destroy bodies, silence movements, and normalise state violence. In defiance of international law and Bangladesh’s own constitutional commitments, pellet guns have been used to blind children, disable workers, and silence youth. This is not restraint, but calculated repression—violence masked as discipline.

We must reject the myth of “less-lethal.” There is nothing less harmful about a weapon that leaves people unable to walk, study, or see. Pellet guns are not tools of order; they are tools of institutionalised mutilation.

It is time to call pellet guns what they truly are: state-sanctioned weapons of maiming and fear. To allow their continued use is to accept repression as policy.

We must urgently, and unequivocally, demand a permanent ban on pellet guns in Bangladesh.

Md. Zarif Rahman is a member and student representative of the *Police Reform Commission* and currently serves as the research lead at **Sapran**, a human rights organisation. **Zeba Sajida Saraf** and **Nusrat Jahan Nisu** work as research assistants at **Sapran**.



How couriers are powering e-commerce, everyday life

From city centres to rural villages, about 700 private couriers form the country's logistics backbone

While Bangladesh's national logistics network still faces systemic gaps, especially in rural infrastructure, the private courier sector has emerged as a bright spot, creating jobs, supporting entrepreneurs, and connecting lives across geography

MD ABU TALHA SARKER

When Abdul Latif Akhand, an officer at Sirajganj agricultural extension department, wanted to send a heavy steel almirah to his newly-wed daughter in Mirpur, Dhaka, he wasn't sure where to start. The almirah wasn't just furniture -- it was a father's gift of care and permanence. But moving such a bulky item over 120 kilometres seemed a logistical headache.

The almirah, a gift symbolising permanence and protection, was no ordinary cabinet. Akhand discussed the issue repeatedly with colleagues and friends. A mini-truck was one idea. The bazar station's courier services were another.

"They'll pack and deliver it for you," a friend reassured him. Encouraged, Akhand visited the local courier hub. The process was smoother than expected. Affordable and efficient, the service handled everything from packaging to transport. As the truck pulled away with the almirah, he felt relief and pride: a father's gesture of love was on its way, across districts.

This everyday story mirrors a broader shift unfolding across Bangladesh: a quiet transformation in how goods move, powered by the country's fast-growing courier industry.

From personal gifts to heavy-duty construction materials, courier services are now a cornerstone of daily logistics. Sohail Hossain, a homeowner in Bagerhat, turned to Sundarban Courier Service after struggling to source WPC doors and tiles locally. Customised in Dhaka, the items were delicate and oversized.

"I couldn't have transported them on my own," he said. "Courier services made it all manageable -- and damage-free."

From agricultural districts to bustling metropolises, stories like these now abound. Courier services have become logistical lifelines.

According to the Courier Services Association of Bangladesh (CSAB), over 700 courier companies now operate across the country, though only 114 are licensed. The sector is structured into three main segments: international courier services, onboard

filings. Meanwhile, newer players such as RedX, Paperfly, Daily Courier, and Steadfast have grown out of online platforms, bypassing traditional retail altogether.

Courier services are no longer confined to letters and boxes. Today, they transport wedding gifts, electronics, fashion goods, food, pharmaceuticals, and even seasonal fruits like mangoes and jackfruits.

The evolution of Sundarban Courier Service (Pvt) Ltd exemplifies the sector's trajectory. Founded in 1983, when the country had only one air express service and minimal road options, Sundarban was launched to serve people on the ground.

"Our goal was to reach doorsteps -- something air services couldn't do," said Hafizur Rahman Pulok, vice-chairman of Sundarban Courier.

Starting with just two vans, the company now operates a fleet of 600 vehicles, managing over 700 branches and agent offices in all 64 districts. It employs nearly 10,000 people across driver, messenger, and administrative roles.

Sundarban Courier offers three service types -- normal, emergency, and special -- with further sub-services such as e-commerce and parcel. It also runs a dedicated "Mango Service" during summer, which has become a logistical feat in its own right.

"We recruited 60 extra staff this year just for seasonal fruit," Pulok said. Deliveries are handled by a separate fleet, with home drop-offs coordinated via phone.

Though Sundarban Courier has no official overseas branches, many foreign parcels are routed through its domestic network. "We've heard of outlets abroad using our name, but they're not formally connected to us," Pulok said.

In cases where an upazila lacks a physical branch, deliveries are coordinated via the nearest district hub or a vetted local agent.

PRICES, PROTOCOLS AND PROBLEMS

Pricing remains competitive. Document deliveries typically cost Tk 15-30, while parcel rates vary based



couriers stepped in."

Online platform Rokomari.com, now selling over 300,000 book titles and goods across 500 categories, relies on private partners for delivery outside Dhaka. "Inside the city, we manage our own operations," said Sadi Mahmud Hasan, the company's head of brand and strategy. "For the rest, we count on Sundarban, REDX, Pathao and Steadfast."

Retailers like TK Sport also rely on couriers to scale their sales. "We receive orders from every corner of the country," said proprietor Sabbir Reza. "The delivery system is smooth and reliable."

Courier use is no longer limited to businesses. Ferdouse Jannat, a student at Eden Mohila College -- Dhaka, used Sundarban Courier to send a wedding gift to Faridpur. Humayun Kabir, who works in Rangpur, mailed job-related documents via SA Paribahan. "If I missed the deadline, my brother would have lost an offer," he said.

Today's courier firms offer app-based booking, real-time parcel tracking, and GPRS-enabled route management -- features that were unthinkable even a decade ago.

By providing fast and reliable delivery and cash collection services to e-commerce platforms nationwide, local courier company Pathao has been making life easier for millions of consumers and hundreds of thousands of small online merchants for nearly a decade.

Fahim Ahmed, managing director and CEO of Pathao, said many Bangladeshi consumers, especially those living in smaller towns and rural areas, continue to face difficulties accessing quality products and recognised brands.

According to Ahmed, traditional courier services have largely fallen short of meeting the specific demands of online merchants, such as doorstep pick-up and delivery, handling returns, and managing cash collection and transfer.

"Pathao has enabled the growth of e-commerce through its reliable courier service," he said. "We provide a seamless logistics management solution to our customers, along with business productivity tools that can enhance their business."

Pathao runs 300 hubs, eight regional sorting centres, a centralised processing facility and a fleet of 200 vans, allowing it to deliver directly to doorsteps, even in outlying villages. The company has managed more than 250,000 orders each day, maintaining a delivery success rate of over 95 percent.

"We have also introduced innovative solutions such as InstaPay that enables our customers to get faster access to the cash collected from the recipients, and utilise their funds in growing their business," said the CEO.

While Bangladesh's national logistics network still faces systemic gaps, especially in rural infrastructure, the private courier sector has emerged as a bright spot, creating jobs, supporting entrepreneurs, and connecting lives across geography.

Whether it's a mango box in Rajshahi, a marriage gift in Dhaka, or a door shipment in Bagerhat, the courier boom is quietly delivering more than packages. It's delivering possibilities.

Yet, challenges persist. The CSAB has repeatedly flagged the proliferation of unlicensed operators as a threat, not just to fair business practice, but to public safety.

"These companies bypass taxes and evade regulatory checks," said Ahsan Habib Setu, CSAB's joint secretary. "Some may be used for drug trafficking or other illicit activities."

He called for stronger enforcement and tighter oversight. "We need a level playing field," he added.

DRIVING E-COMMERCE

Nowhere is the impact of courier services more visible than in the e-commerce space.

At lifestyle brand Kay Kraft, co-founder Khalid Mahmood Khan says delivery efficiency directly shapes customer trust. "Some courier companies started small but scaled up with the market," he said. "Their use of modern tech has taken the sector to new heights."

In many countries, public postal services enabled the e-commerce revolution. "That didn't happen here," Khan added. "Bangladesh Post Office couldn't deliver reliably. So private

of Home Affairs. Every item is screened before shipment.

Customer care is a growing focus. The company operates a 24/7 call centre with 46 agents and 40 active phone lines, as well as a central complaints unit called C4, based in Dilkusha in Dhaka. "If an issue arises, our team reaches out to the relevant branch immediately," Pulok said.

couriers, and domestic operators. Many firms specialise, some focusing solely on fragile packages or confidential documents.

Padma Courier, for instance, operates without a covered van fleet, instead catering exclusively to high-value documents like land deeds, ownership certificates, and corporate

on weight and bag type, ranging from Tk 100 for a 1kg yellow bag to Tk 200 for a 5kg blue one. A transparent Tk 130 polybag is used for e-commerce parcels to enable visual verification.

To ensure security and prevent illegal shipments, Sundarban complies with guidelines from the Department of Narcotics Control and the Ministry



PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS