



We're [US and China] two big, powerful countries, and there are always going to be issues that we disagree on.

Marco Rubio
US Secretary of State

YOUR RIGHT
TO KNOW

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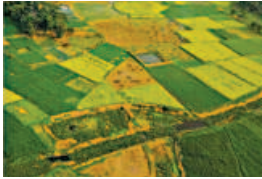
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Our disaster, their management

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Political risks threaten to hurt reforms

Says World Bank report; Trump tariffs, political tensions and weak banks cloud outlook as economy slows

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh faces a convergence of political volatility and global trade headwinds that could derail its reform agenda and obstruct recovery from an economic slowdown, the World Bank has said in a new assessment.

The report, "Bangladesh: Strengthening Governance and Institutional Resilience", was published in support of a \$500 million development credit approved by the global lender in June on some conditions.

It committed another \$500 million tied to the interim government's

WB OBSERVATIONS

- ➔ Growth may rise, depending on political stability, investment
- ➔ 'Vested interest groups' could resist reforms in areas like public procurement, banking regulation
- ➔ Strong consumption growth, stable global market may help ease price pressures

commitment to fast-track reforms ahead of the next general election.

But the report published in early July flagged "high" political and governance risks, saying that "escalating political tensions in the lead-up to the elections could derail the reforms".

The warning came just days before the Trump administration imposed a sweeping 35 percent US tariff on all Bangladeshi exports, a move widely seen as collateral damage from America's escalating trade war with China.

"The risk of disruption in global trade is high," the World Bank said, citing "trade tensions between major economies and further escalation of tariff rates" as a key downside risk. It estimates that a 5 percentage point decline in exports could shave 1.3 percentage points off real GDP growth and deplete foreign reserves by \$1.7 billion.

The economy is already reeling from a collapse in investment and weakening external demand. Real GDP growth fell to 3.97 percent in the fiscal year ending June 2025, down from 4.22 percent the year before, the slowest pace in more than a decade. Private sector credit growth has also plunged to 6.8 percent year on year in February 2025, which the report calls "its slowest pace in 30 years". The rate, however, rose slightly to 7.17 percent in May.

A modest rebound is projected by the World Bank, with GDP growth expected to rise to 4.9 percent in FY26 and 5.7 percent in FY27, conditional on renewed political stability and recovery in investment.

Inflation surged between July 2024 and April 2025, averaging 10.3 percent. The World Bank attributes this spike to a mix of supply chain disruptions, high energy prices, a weakening taka, and the lingering effects of major floods and political unrest.

The Bangladesh Bank responded by tightening policy, raising the benchmark interest rate to 10 percent. But the report notes that the impact was blunted by "unsterilised liquidity support to fragile banks".

That also undermines efforts to contain inflation. Price pressures are projected to ease in the coming years, with inflation forecast to decline to 7.7 percent in FY26 and 5.8 percent in FY27, assuming strong consumption growth and more stable global prices.

In June, inflation eased to 8.48 percent, the lowest level in nearly three years, offering some relief to consumers.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



From Karwan Bazar to Farmgate, graffiti painted on metro rail pillars depict stories, highlighting the mass uprising and atrocities that occurred under the previous Awami League regime. The initiative, led by the Ministry of Local Government, is being executed by the Dhaka North City Corporation. The photo was taken yesterday on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

KILLING OF TRADER IN OLD DHAKA

'How could they kill a man so brutally?'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"How could they kill a man so brutally?"

Lucky Akter, wife of Lal Chand, alias Sohag, 39, kept asking this one question as her voice shook with grief.

"They've orphaned my two children... I want all of them to be hanged."

On Wednesday, Sohag was dragged from his Old Dhaka shop in broad daylight and beaten to death near the gate of Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital.

His body was crushed with large chunks of concrete. Later, his battered and broken body was left on the street as onlookers watched in horror.

Police and family members said a long-standing feud over control of the scrap trade and territorial dominance in Old Dhaka's Mitford area led to the brutal daylight murder.

Scrap trade refers to collecting, buying, and selling junk items — typically metal, plastic, paper, and other discarded or recyclable goods.

A day after the murder, police arrested two suspects, Mahmudul



Sohag

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Protests erupt on campuses

Students demand punishment for culprits, end to extortion; 4 held so far; Jubo Dal, Chhatra Dal expel 4

STAR REPORT

Protests were held on campuses and in some districts last night demanding swift trial and exemplary punishment for those involved in the brutal murder of Lal Chand, alias Sohag, in Old Dhaka's Mitford area.

Sohag was hit with large chunks of concrete and beaten to death on Wednesday in broad daylight for allegedly refusing to pay extortion money.

Allegations run rife that Jubo Dal men were involved with the killing. As the video of the killing went viral, student organisations brought out processions at Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Jagannath University, Jahangirnagar University, and Rajshahi University.

Several DU-based student organisations, including Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, and Islami Chhatra Andolon Bangladesh, brought out processions at DU around 10:00pm.

Speakers at the rallies blamed the BNP for its "failure to control its leaders and activists," accusing them of getting involved in internal clashes over extortion money and territorial dominance.

Bangladesh Jatiyotabadi Chhatra Dal also brought out a procession at DU demanding punishment of the culprits.

Speaking at a rally, Chhatra Dal President Ganesh Chandra Roy said, "We strongly condemn the way Sohag was murdered. We demand that the perpetrators be brought to justice immediately."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Washington, Dhaka try to iron out key tariff issues

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The second round of tariff negotiations between Bangladesh and the United States ended yesterday in Washington, DC, with both sides reviewing and debating key proposals.

The three-day talks resumed Wednesday, with delegates from both governments discussing a wide range of trade, labour, and investment matters.

The discussion was friendly and Bangladesh can expect a positive outcome from the negotiation, said an official familiar with the negotiation.

Both sides agreed on most of the issues discussed during the meeting, the official also said.

Now the US officials will send the key aspects of the meetings to the high-ups of the Trump administration for their decision on the tariff rate on Bangladesh.

On the second day of negotiations on Thursday, the US suggested

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Despite a slight improvement in the flood situation, parts of Feni remain submerged. The photo was taken yesterday in the district's Sonagazi upazila.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Crops on 78,000 hectares of land under water

Torrential rains devastate coastal farmlands

STAR REPORT

Heavy rains have inundated vast stretches of farmland across 21 districts in Barishal, Khulna, Chattogram and Dhaka divisions, leaving thousands of farmers devastated as crops and fish enclosures were washed away over the past week.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), weeklong torrential rains initially submerged 1.36 lakh hectares of cropland, including Aush paddy, Aman seedbeds, and seasonal vegetables, as of July 8.

The affected area decreased to 78,173 hectares by yesterday evening.

Md Jamal Uddin, additional director of monitoring and implementation at the DAE's field service wing, said temporary waterlogging has occurred in the 21 districts due to very heavy rainfall across the country.

He said crops including Aush paddy, Aman seedbeds, bona Aman, jute, vegetables, fruit orchards, betel leaf, watermelon, and others have been submerged.

The affected districts include Cumilla, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Feni, Lakshmipur, Khagrachari, Pabna, Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Narail, Barishal, Pirojpur, Jhalokathi, Patuakhali, Barguna, Bhola, and Shariatpur.

With the reduction in rainfall, water levels are gradually receding, and the submerged areas are declining, Jamal said. A final assessment of the damage to the crops will

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

MY DHAKA

Dhaka's everyday MIRACLE WORKERS

RBR

Let's put the spotlight on the city's odd-jobbers and handymen -- people who take care of our household disasters. A jammed kitchen sink overflowing, a leaking water pipe, or a sudden power surge causing a blackout -- these domestic emergencies can arise at any time, and the person managing the home must act immediately.

In Dhaka, it is usually the lady of the house who takes charge. Managing a home and family is a demanding task that often goes unrecognised. She must always have a reliable support system to rely on during such emergencies.

On a lighter note, when hiring a home manager, the top criterion should be their ability to troubleshoot quickly and efficiently within the city's residential maze.

The woman running the show at home is rarely appreciated for her exceptional troubleshooting skills or recognised for her quick thinking -- whether it's replacing a circuit breaker fuse or restocking midnight snacks for the family. Her home cannot function without her support system: the fishmonger, the poultryman, the



PHOTO: STAR

vegetable vendor, or the local grocer. But the stars of her team are the plumber and the electrician, and the commander is undoubtedly her chauffeur.

She must also have contacts at hand from the diagnostic centre for home sample collection, assistants who can secure urgent doctor appointments, service help agents, refrigerator workshops, lift operators, and grocers. These odd-jobbers and service providers are her unsung heroes, ensuring her family's infrastructure runs smoothly and without interruption.

Multitasking is second nature to women, whether they are working professionals or homemakers. Even in meetings or on work tours, she remains connected to home management, able to handle emergencies remotely thanks to her trusted network of handymen on speed dial.

My own favourites list includes Quddus, the carpenter; Rezaul, the painter; Ramzan, the electrician; Soheli, the plumber; and Mostafa, the upholstery tailor. But top honours go to Bacchu and Chan Miah -- my fishmonger and poulterer. I must also mention Mizan, my vegetable vendor, a sweet boy in his twenties, who

never forgets to call when he finds my favourites like helencha shak, amra, hog plums, or chalta -- the elephant's apple.

Even when busy elsewhere, I'm never off-duty when it comes to home management. Like me, most people managing a home are always on-call. We have no days off -- nor do our assistants and aides. This team becomes like family, offering personalised service: the fishmonger who calls with the best catch for Friday's lunch, the chauffeur who checks if the pharmacy has restocked the prescription, ensures the maths tutor is on time, and in true emergencies, even steps in to do the supermarket or bank run.

Anyone running a family knows the value of this SOS list that comes to the rescue in unforeseen situations. If women are the modern-day goddesses of domestic balance, then the handymen on their speed dial are the miracle workers. For the man of the house, these are often tasks beneath his concern -- after all, he is the breadwinner and his time is too valuable. But the woman, who earns the butter to go with that bread, also ensures the toaster is fixed when broken -- if you know what I mean.

Our home management networks streamline crises and chores alike, making life smoother and more efficient. It's about time this trusted group of handymen gets the appreciation they deserve.

10 more pushed in thru M'singh border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

India's Border Security Force (BSF) allegedly pushed in 10 more people into Bangladesh through Nalitabari upazila in Sherpur early yesterday.

They include two men, four women, and four children from Satkhira district.

They were pushed in by the BSF through the Ramchandrakura border area of Sherpur's Nalitabari upazila around 5:30am, according to Lt Col Mahadi Hassan, commanding officer (CO) of BGB-39 Battalion in Mymensingh.

Quoting the victims, the CO said they went to India two years ago and were engaged in household work. Recently they were caught by Indian police as they had no proper documents and were pushed in through the Nalitabari border, added the official.

After being handed over to Nalitabari Police Station this morning, their family members received them in the evening, said Md Sohel Rana, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Pak court suspends order seeking YouTube ban on govt critics

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday suspended an order seeking to ban the YouTube channels of more than two dozen critics of the government including former Prime Minister Imran Khan, a defence lawyer said.

Alphabet-owned GOOGLO YouTube this week told 27 content creators that it could block their channels - including those of journalists and Khan and his opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf - if they failed to comply with a judicial magistrate court order seeking to ban them.

A regional communication manager for YouTube did not respond to a Reuters request for a comment.

The judicial magistrate court in Islamabad had said it was seeking the ban after the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency criticised the channels in a June 2 report for "sharing highly intimidating, provocative and derogatory contents against state institutions and officials of the state of Pakistan."

Protests erupt

FROM PAGE 1

Chhatra Federation President Saikat Arif said, "Since Hasina's fall, BNP leaders have been fighting among themselves over business control, leading to murders. BNP thinks expulsion is enough, but we demand they face trial."

Chhatra Odhikar Parishad President Bin Yamin Mollah said, "Students are protesting Sohag's killing today just as they did during the Awami League's time. BNP must bring these extortionists to justice."

Around 11:00pm, BUET students brought out a torch procession and gathered at Raju Sculpture.

They placed a five-point demand, including swift and impartial trial of Sohag's murder, arrest of all the accused, action against extortion rackets, an end to misuse of political identity to shelter criminals, and greater transparency and accountability at all levels.

JnU students took out a procession around 9:30pm. During a brief rally following the procession, the protesters denounced the ongoing violence and extortion "perpetrated by activists of the BNP and its affiliated bodies, including Jubo Dal".

Abdul Alim Arif, general secretary of JnU unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir, said, "We urge the interim government to take immediate steps to bring the perpetrators of this brutality to justice. Those who receive a share of the extorted money must also be held accountable."

JU students took out a procession from Bot Tola area around 10:00pm and marched around the campus before concluding with a brief rally at the starting point.

Students at Rajshahi University also held a protest rally at the university's Zoha Chatterjee at 7:30pm.

Similar protests were held in Gazipur, Narasingdi, and Barishal.

Meanwhile, the Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, the youth wing of BNP, yesterday expelled two of its leaders, Rojib Ali Pintu and Saba Karim Laki, over their alleged involvement in the murder.

Pintu, former assistant secretary for climate affairs of the Jubo Dal central executive committee, and Laki, joint convener of Dhaka South Jubo Dal, have been expelled from the party, including their primary memberships, following a case filed by the victim's family, said the party in a statement yesterday.

Chhatra Dal also expelled two of its members -- former leader Mahmudul Hasan Mohin and Chawkbazar Thana member secretary Apu Das.

So far, four people have been arrested in connection to the murder.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir expressed grave concern and condole over the killing.

"Terrorism and barbarism have no connection with the principles, ideals, and politics of our organisation. No matter who the culprit is, his place can never be above the law and justice," he said in a statement. Fakhrul demanded that the government immediately ensure a neutral and credible investigation into the incident.

In a separate statement, the party's standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said despite taking action over the Mitford incident, blaming the BNP for isolated incidents is a form of "dirty politics".

"This is nothing but malicious political manoeuvring," he added.

Political risks threaten to hurt reforms

FROM PAGE 1

VESTED INTERESTS

Despite relatively low debt levels providing some fiscal cushion, the report flags serious structural concerns. It said that "vested interest groups" could resist reforms in politically sensitive areas such as public procurement and banking regulation.

"There is uncertainty regarding whether the proposed ordinance will be approved once Parliament is formed after the elections... Nevertheless, the risks remain high," read the WB report.

It also points to long-standing weaknesses in the financial sector, warning that "resolution of undercapitalised and non-viable banks could require a bailout for recapitalisation".

REFORMS

The World Bank expects a series of outcomes from its \$500 million loan programme after Bangladesh fulfilled nine key conditions tied to transparency, governance, and institutional reform.

No holiday from resistance

FROM PAGE 1

government would be compelled to act if disruptions continued.

In Dhaka, then Metropolitan Police Commissioner Habibur Rahman also warned that any attempt to disrupt law and order would not be tolerated. "There is an obligation to obey the court's order. If anyone tries to break the law, it will not be tolerated," he said.

The students remained resolute, declaring that their demonstrations would continue until the government formed a commission to reform the quota system and enacted legislation accordingly. Across various universities and colleges, they held demonstrations, marches, and rallies, signalling the growing strength of the movement.

At Jagannath University, students marched from the Faculty of Arts building, weaving through the main roads, passing Bahadur Shah Park and Kabi Nazrul College, before returning to campus.

Meanwhile, at Jahangirnagar University, students held a torchlight procession that culminated in a rally at the Shaheed Minar.

In at least 15 locations outside Dhaka, students took to the streets. In Debendra College, Manikganj, protesters alleged that Chhatra League activists obstructed their march.

At Rajshahi University, students blocked the Dhaka-Rajshahi railway line, joined by students from RUET and Rajshahi Medical College.

In Chattogram, students and jobseekers from various institutions, including Chittagong University,

To improve governance and risk management, new regulations have been introduced -- though implementation, the Bank notes, will be critical.

To align with international standards, Bangladesh Bank has mandated greater transparency and oversight. Banks must now identify their ultimate beneficial owners, tighten controls on related-party lending, and improve classification of non-performing loans.

By June 2027, all banks are expected to fully comply with these disclosure requirements -- a significant leap from a baseline of zero compliance as of November 2024. In addition, asset quality reviews must be completed for at least 60 percent of banks.

A key reform, enacted through ordinance on May 12, formally separates tax policy formulation from tax administration. This aims to professionalise policymaking, improve revenue collection, and reduce political influence over enforcement. By June 2027, all

tax exemptions must be disclosed annually and receive parliamentary approval for bringing transparency to what were once opaque, ad hoc decisions.

Public investment management has also come under reform. The planning ministry now requires all project appraisal documents, including climate and environmental risk disclosures, to be published online. A feedback mechanism has been introduced, allowing citizens to comment on planned investments. The goal is for 100 percent of such documents to be made publicly accessible by June 2027.

In line with these reforms, the government is also expected to ensure full audit coverage of public revenues, and make public at least 60 percent of contracts awarded through open tender. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics is to release new datasets each year under a fixed calendar, while 3.5 million poverty profiles are to be added to the national social registry.



With her fist raised high, a protester joined hundreds chanting slogans demanding quota reform during an hour-long demonstration at Dhaka's Shahbagh intersection on the afternoon of July 12, 2024.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

marched from Sholashahar railway station through the city.

Students at Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur held a protest rally on campus but were reportedly stopped by police from moving onto the main road.

At Comilla University, students marched from the main gate to the university's entrance, while at Comilla Victoria College, students issued an ultimatum demanding the arrest of those responsible for an earlier attack.

Protests and human chains also took place at Ananda Mohan College, Narayanganj College, Mymensingh College, Bangladesh Agricultural

University, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University. Students at Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Islamic University in Kushtia, and in Syedpur, Nilphamari also joined the nationwide movement.

In Bogura, general students held a demonstration march from Satmatha Square, while protests were also reported in Majdee, Noakhali, involving students from various educational institutions.

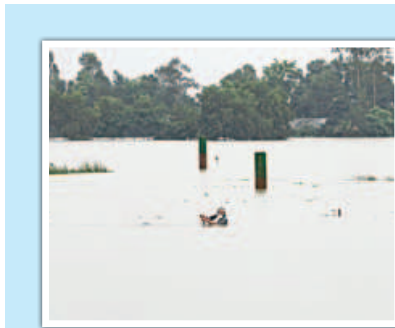
Across the country, the call for quota reform resonated louder, as students vowed to press on until their demands were met.

Crops on 78,000 hectares

FROM PAGE 1

be possible once the water fully drains in the coming days.

Among the affected areas are 44,662 hectares of Aush, 14,393 hectares of transplanted Aman, 135 hectares of jute, 9,673 hectares of vegetables, 114 hectares of bananas, 293 hectares of papaya, 387 hectares of betel leaf, 297 hectares of broadcast Aman, 104 hectares of chilli, and 281 hectares of summer watermelons.



I cultivated Aus paddy on three acres of land with a loan from the bank. I also prepared 30kg of paddy seedbeds there. All of it has been submerged

Abdus Shahid
A farmer from Feni

Many fish enclosures, especially in Noakhali and Khulna, have also been washed away, said local fish farmers and officials.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said an active monsoon and a low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal are causing heavy rainfall in the coastal regions, which is expected to continue for another three to five days -- deepening farmers' worries. The downpour has already pushed up vegetable prices in local markets.

"I cultivated Aush paddy on three acres of land with a bank loan. I also prepared 30kg of paddy seedbeds there. All of it has been submerged by the rain in the last few days," said Abdus Shahid, a farmer from Fazilpur village in Sadar upazila. "I had hoped to harvest this paddy, keep some for my family, and sell the rest to repay the loan. But the rain has washed away all my dreams. I am now helpless."

Abul Kashem of Mukimpur village said his one and a half acres of Aush paddy, 100 sacks of ginger, a papaya orchard, and 30 decimals of Aman seedbeds are under four to five feet of water.

At New Market, Natun Bazar, Puran Bazar, and Kalatala Bazar in Patuakhali town yesterday, prices of most vegetables increased by Tk 10-20 per kg compared to last week. Green chilli prices more than doubled from Tk 120-150 per kg last week to Tk 320-350.

Green papaya was being sold at Tk 30 per kg, bottle gourd Tk 60-70, coriander leaves Tk 200, sweet pumpkin Tk 30, brinjal Tk 90-100, cucumber Tk 30-35, carrots Tk 100-150, bitter gourd Tk 60-65, and snake gourd Tk 35-40.

Saiful Islam, a vegetable seller in Pirojpur town, said, "You'll have to pay Tk 50-70 for any variety of

vegetable. Supplies from Bagerhat and Khulna have dropped, pushing prices up."

In the same area, fish farmer Mannan Sheikh said, "There is too much water in the canals. The sluice gate in Orjakhali is closed, and the embankment built at Badhal Bazar for dredging the Bishkhali river has worsened the flooding."

Rampal upazila in Bagerhat district has also been hit hard. "I had

fries in my seven-bigha enclosure. The sudden rise in water washed everything away. Recovering from this loss will be extremely difficult," said shrimp farmer Abu Huraira from Chakshree village.

Harunur Rashid, another shrimp farmer, said, "The embankments of all the ponds have broken due to incessant rain. I've lost over Tk 5 lakh. I can't afford to buy fries and start again."

Md Badiuzzaman, Khulna district fisheries officer, said the full extent of damage is still being assessed. However, several shrimp enclosures in Paikgachha upazila have been flooded. According to farmers, fish worth nearly Tk 4 crore have been lost.

Asked about livestock damages, officials from the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) said so far, 16 unions across eight districts -- Barishal, Bhola, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Patuakhali, Barguna, Feni, and Lakshmipur -- have reported damage to around 4,900 cows and buffaloes, and 992 goats and sheep.

Md Abu Sufiun, DLS director general, said approximately 25,342 poultry farms have also been significantly affected. "About 30,000 ducks, chickens, and cows have already been vaccinated," he added. The total estimated livestock loss stands at Tk 98 crore so far, though it is still a preliminary figure.

The FFWC bulletin noted that the water levels of the Muhuri and Selonia rivers in Feni are now flowing below the danger level. Meanwhile, the water of the Teesta, Dharla, Surma, Kushiyara, Ganges-Padma, and Brahmaputra-Jamuna are rising but still below the danger mark.

The forecast warns of further moderate to heavy rain in the next three to five days, which could worsen the flood situation.



Tania helps her three-year-old son Rafi drink saline as he lies on bed at Mugda Medical College Hospital. Rafi, who had been suffering from a fever for five days, was admitted four days ago after his condition deteriorated. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Dhaka sees fewer dengue cases, but more deaths

Experts urge strengthening district-level response, primary healthcare system

HELEMUL ALAM

Though most dengue cases are being reported from outside Dhaka, the majority of deaths are occurring within the capital.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), a total of 14,069 patients were hospitalised as of yesterday morning, with 11,014 of them from outside Dhaka.

The Barishal division alone has recorded 5,957 cases, while Barguna district – currently the country's hotspot – has reported 3,587 cases.

However, DGHS data shows that out of the 54 reported deaths, 28 occurred in Dhaka city, with 22 in areas under the Dhaka South City Corporation.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said many critically ill patients are referred from local hospitals outside Dhaka to major hospitals in the city.

"When these patients arrive, their

condition is often already critical," he said. "They get infected outside the capital but die in Dhaka hospitals, which may explain the higher number of deaths reported in the city."

- **14,069 cases reported this year; 11,014 outside Dhaka**
- **Barguna current hotspot with 3,587 cases**
- **28 out of 54 deaths occurred in the capital**
- **Delayed referrals causing higher fatality rates**

He pointed to the time delay as a major factor. "When a patient travels from Barishal or other distant districts, it can take five to six hours to reach a Dhaka hospital and another hour for admission.

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243 govt officials accused in graft cases since Aug 5

Surge in cases follows fall of AL, shows data from ACC report

ACC ACTIVITIES AUGUST 2024 TO JUNE 2025



Investigations – 768
Total Cases – 399
Chargesheets – 321
Asset statement – 223
Cases Completed – 9

ACCUSED BY PROFESSION

Govt Employees – 343
Businessmen – 114
Politicians – 92

DIPAN NANDY

In the 11 months since the uprising on August 5, the Anti-Corruption Commission has filed a total of 399 cases, averaging about 36.27 cases per month. These cases named 1,264 individuals as accused, including 243 government employees, accounting for 27.13 percent of the total.

The data was disclosed in a recent statistical report published by the ACC.

The commission began taking more visible action following the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year and the assumption of power by an interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus three days later.

During the initial three months after the political shift, the ACC was still headed by Moinuddin Abdullah, who had been appointed during the AL's tenure. Following his resignation, along with the rest of the commission, on October 29, a new commission led by Dr Abdul Momen assumed office about a month and a half later.

Speaking on the matter, Md Akhtar Hossain, director general (prevention) of the ACC, said, "We are prioritising

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Push for influence-free police force stalls

Home ministry drops proposal of an independent commission from action plan for now

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The formation of an independent police commission now appears highly unlikely under the current government, as the home ministry has excluded the proposal from its action plan for the coming year.

The Police Reform Commission submitted its report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on January 15, recommending the formation of a neutral and independent police commission. It also suggested seeking expert opinions on whether the commission should be a statutory or constitutional body.

Following a decision by the Advisory Council on March 13, the Cabinet Division forwarded the recommendations to the home ministry, requesting an action plan.

The ministry then formed a committee, which outlined an implementation plan. It noted that while some reforms could be implemented within six months to a year, others would take longer.

The ministry informed the Cabinet Division that a timeline for establishing the commission could only be set after consultations with the ministries of law, finance, and public administration.

Asked about the matter, Joint Secretary Rebeka Khan, also member secretary of the committee, said reforms involving multiple ministries or complex

legal and financial implications have been placed in the long-term implementation plan.

The chief adviser has already announced that the next general election will be held in February or April next year. Even if the election takes place in June, instead of earlier, the current government will have a limited time to form such a commission through an ordinance, making it unlikely, experts say.

Asked why the Police Reform Commission's proposals were not shared with political parties for

recommendations as "vague and useless", saying it did not clearly state whether a commission should be established.

However, a public survey conducted online by the reform panel found that 58.9% of 14,389 respondents supported the formation of an independent police commission.

Experts stress that such a commission has become essential to free the police from political influence and ensure accountability.

Calls for police reforms have



Police officials and experts fear that without political consensus, future governments may eventually avoid implementing such reforms to maintain control over the force.

broader discussion, Prof Ali Riaz, vice chair of National Consensus Commission, said political consensus is not required to implement these recommendations.

He said the current government will implement short-term recommendations, leaving the rest for the next government.

Asked whether any political government would establish an independent police commission, Riaz criticised the reform panel's

intensified after the July uprising, which left over 1,400 people dead – many in police shootings. At least 44 police personnel were also killed.

Meanwhile, public trust in the police has also declined over the years, especially due to alleged abuse of power by officials during the previous government's term, including arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Dhaka to work with KL to probe terrorism charges

Says foreign adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, now in Kuala Lumpur, on Friday expressed concerns over the arrests of Bangladeshi nationals on charges of terrorism.

He said the Bangladesh government will work with Malaysia to investigate allegations of militancy against Bangladeshi nationals who were arrested recently by the Malaysian Police.

The issues were discussed during a bilateral meeting with Malaysian Foreign Minister Haji Mohamad Bin Haji Hasan held in Kuala Lumpur on the sidelines of 32nd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) ministerial meeting.

Hossain reiterated the firm stand of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Rizvi slams move to make July Charter a core principle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday termed the call to include the July Charter in the fundamental principles of the Constitution as "misleading".

"BNP has already accepted many points from the July Charter. But why must it be incorporated into the fundamental principles of the Constitution?" he said.

He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a prayer mat distribution programme in front of BNP's Nayapaltan Central office organised by Zia Parishad.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8



A graffiti tribute to slain bloggers, painted on a metro rail pillar (P-464) at Karwan Bazar as part of a Dhaka North City Corporation's initiative marking one-year of the July uprising, has been removed by unidentified individuals. In its place, a new graffiti stating there is no place for atheists in the country was painted. *Left*, the photo taken on July 8 and *right*, the photo taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Another 'gas explosion' burns five of a family

Recurring incidents raise alarms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gas explosion injured five members of a family in Dhaka's Sutrapur early yesterday, just a day after a similar incident claimed two lives in Jatrabari, raising concerns over household gas safety and public awareness.

The latest blast occurred around 1:30am on the ground floor of a five-storey building in Kagojitola, family sources said.

The injured are Ripon, 40, a rickshaw-van puller; his wife Chandni, 35; their sons Tamim, 18, and Rokon, 14; and their one-and-a-half-year-old daughter Ayesha.

Such explosions occur occasionally in city buildings, especially on ground floors, sometimes killing all family members.

Experts suggest keeping kitchen doors and windows open so that leaked gas can disperse into the air and not accumulate indoors.

Ripon's uncle, Zakir Hossain,

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Keep kitchen doors and windows open
- Avoid turning on lights or fans just after returning home
- Ensure septic, water tanks have proper ventilation
- Report gas leaks to authorities
- Turn off gas burners properly
- Service ACs regularly

said all five were asleep when the explosion tore through their flat. Accumulated gas leaking overnight might have caused the blast, he added.

"Furniture and other household items were also damaged in the fire," he said.

Neighbours rushed the victims to the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

Shawon Bin Rahman, a resident surgeon at the hospital,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

‘Don’t allow UN office in Dhaka’

Hefazat tells govt, demands withdrawal of decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefazat-e-Islam yesterday protested the government’s decision to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to establish an office in Dhaka.

Hefazat, a coalition of various Islamist groups, said the establishment of such an office could pose a “long-term threat to the country’s Islamic values, social stability, and national security”.

It demanded the immediate cancellation of the decision; a more active role from local independent rights organisations in monitoring the rights situation; impartial investigations into extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and murders; and exemplary punishment for those responsible.

The group made the call during a rally at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Amirul Haque new BCMA president

CITY DESK

Mohammad Amirul Haque, managing director of Premier Cement Mills PLC, has been elected as the president of the Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association (BCMA) for the 2025–2027 term, succeeding Alamgir Kabir.

A veteran industrialist with over four decades of leadership across diverse sectors, including cement, LPG, petrochemicals, shipping, agro-processing, edible oil refining, and real estate, Haque is also the founder and managing director of Seacom Group. He currently serves as president of the LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh (LOAB).

He has been repeatedly recognised by the government as a Commercially Important Person (CIP) for his significant contributions to national industry and commerce. Haque has also held directorial roles at both the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the FBCCL.



Firefighters douse a flame that broke out at a garment accessories manufacturing factory in the Karnaphuli Export Processing Zone of Chattogram city yesterday afternoon. The fire originated at “Zant Accessories” around 2:30pm. Eight units of the fire service brought the blaze under control around 4:15pm. The cause of the fire and the extent of damage could not be confirmed immediately.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Rangpur roads riddled with potholes

S DILIP ROY, *lalmonirhat*

Most of the major roads in Rangpur city are riddled with potholes, cracks, and eroded surfaces due to years of neglect and lack of maintenance, causing immense suffering for commuters.

During the rainy season, the potholes fill with water, making the roads even more treacherous.

One of the worst-affected roads stretches from Jahaz Company Mor to Saatmatha – an important route used daily by thousands of people to enter the city.

“Carrying a sick passenger on this road only makes their condition worse. Accidents happen almost every day due to vehicles overturning,” said auto-rickshaw driver Mozammel.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the road from Bangladesh Bank Mor to Burirhat, roughly three kilometres long, in similarly deplorable condition. The

Burirhat-Hazirhat road has over a hundred visible potholes and becomes impassable during the monsoon due to waterlogging.

Faridul Islam, a rice trader at Burirhat



Bazar, said, “There are days we can’t even transport goods because drivers refuse to take this route.”

The total road network in Rangpur city spans 1,456 kilometres; of this, 953km are paved, while 503km are dirt roads, said Azom Ali, superintending engineer (in charge) of Rangpur City Corporation (RCC).

About 300km of the paved roads are now in unusable condition – roughly one-third of the city’s paved roads, he said.

Major city roads – Jahaz Company Mor to Saatmatha, Cigarette Company to Hi-Tech Park, Charnath to Islampur, Babupara, Mistripara, Hazirhat, Mahiganj, and Kukrul – are all dotted with large craters, locals said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

243 govt officials accused in graft cases

FROM PAGE 3

crimes committed by government officials under the ACC Act because the majority of the accused in corruption cases are public servants.”

Since August 5, the two commissions together have accepted 768 complaints for preliminary inquiry. Of these, 399 cases were filed, 231 charge sheets were submitted, and nine final reports were issued. The commission also served 223 notices requiring submission of wealth statements. The highest number of cases filed in a

single month was recorded in January this year – after the Momen Commission took over – when 70 cases were registered.

Among the 1,264 accused are 243 government employees, 114 businessmen, 92 politicians, 447 private sector employees, and 31 public representatives.

The list of accused includes ousted Sheikh Hasina; members of her family, such as her children Sajeb Wazed and Saima Wazed; her sister Sheikh Rehana; Rehana’s son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby; and daughters

Azmina Siddiq Ruponti and Tulip Rizwana Siddiq. Former ministers, former members of parliament, and prominent business figures closely associated with the AL – such as Salman F Rahman of Beximco Group and Saiful Alam of S Alam Group – have also been named.

ACC sources said the cases involve allegations of abuse of power, irregularities and corruption in large-scale government projects, unlawful allocation of plots, and amassing wealth beyond known sources of income. Some individuals are also accused of extortion, tender manipulation, and illegal land grabbing.

There are further allegations that some of the accused laundered money abroad and established houses and businesses in countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, UAE,

Switzerland, and Canada.

Several also face charges of manipulating the stock market, defrauding investors out of billions of takas, and using political influence to embezzle large sums through fraudulent loans from both state-owned and private banks.

Meanwhile, several ACC officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, admitted that in some cases, investigations were rushed and cases were filed without sufficient inquiry.

These oversights, they warned, could weaken the chances of proving the charges in court.

In total, 12,827 complaints have been received by the ACC over the past 11 months. Of these, 3,406 were filed in November last year. Proceedings are also under way on around 3,500 complaints received from the ACC chairman’s office and other offices.

Push for influence-free police force stalls

FROM PAGE 3

Police officials and experts fear that without political consensus, future governments may eventually avoid implementing such reforms to maintain control over the force.

Back in 2007, the caretaker government attempted to establish an independent police commission, which ultimately didn’t see the light of day.

The then government formed the Bangladesh Police Act Drafting Committee, which prepared a draft ordinance aimed at freeing the police from political influence, ensuring accountability, and maintaining transparency in recruitment and promotions.

The draft proposed the formation of both an independent police commission and a complaints commission to replace the colonial-era Police Act of 1861.

However, the ordinance was never implemented due to strong resistance from bureaucratic and vested interest groups, said individuals who were involved in the initiative.

Meanwhile, in its response to the Police Reform Commission, the home ministry rejected the idea of relinquishing its control over the police.

It argued that a neutral commission is “unnecessary” as the ministry already performs its intended functions.

Omar Faruk, professor

of criminology and police science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said, “An independent police commission is vital to remove political and bureaucratic control over the force. There’s no alternative to this.”

Faruk and senior police officials agree that strong political will is needed to establish a commission similar to those in Sri Lanka, Singapore, and other countries.

The Police Headquarters had also submitted several proposals, including a draft framework for a neutral commission, to the reform body. According to the draft, the proposed body would have broad powers to ensure accountability and neutrality in the police. It would be responsible for top-level appointments, recruitment, transfers, and promotions to end the long-standing culture of political interference.

A top police official, who was involved in drafting the framework, said they proposed that the commission be led by a retired Appellate Division judge or a former IGP so that accountability and human rights are upheld.

He also said it would handle complaints against police officers and take action through a complaints commission.

Additionally, a Grievance Redress Committee would allow police personnel to file internal complaints and seek redress, he added.

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STATUTORY NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO-1163 OF 2025

An application under Section-81(2) and Section-85(3) & 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.
Abraham KabirPetitioner.

VERSUS-

DZN Labels Ltd and another Respondents.

Take Notice that an application U/S- 81(2), 85(3) & 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon’ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh for condonation of delay in holding the AGM for the year 2022 & 2023 of DZN Labels Ltd. Upon hearing of the application on 07.07.2025 Hon’ble Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel has been pleased to admit said application. In the said order, the Honorable Justice directed to publish advertisements in the newspaper, and submit affidavit-in-compliance.

If you are interested to oppose the said application you may appear before the Hon’ble Court either in person or through an Advocate. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the under mentioned advocate on payment.

Asikur Rahman Soarav

Advocate, Supreme Court Bar Association Bhaban, Shahabagh,
SS Bhaban (Ground Floor), 70/D Green Road, Dhaka-1205, Phone: 01917399260

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO 1089 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under Sections-81(2), 85(3) & 183 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994. AND
IN THE MATTER OF: Bimal Chandra Roy, S/O: Bishnu Charan Roy and Anita Roy, Shareholder, Director and Managing Director of Next Spaces Limited of 40, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh. -----Petitioner

VERSUS-
Next Spaces Limited of 40, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh and The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies and Firms, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. -----Respondents

Take notice that an application under Sections-81(2), 85(3) & 183 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon’ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of Next Spaces Limited for the calendar years 2022, 2023 and 2024 and to give necessary direction for holding the said meeting within a reasonable time. Upon hearing of the application on 29-06-2025 the Hon’ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel has been pleased to admit the said application. If you are interested to oppose the said application you may appear before the Hon’ble Court either in person or through an advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Advocate Md. Anowar Hossain

Room No. 351 (Main), Supreme Court Bar Association Bhaban, Shahabagh,
Dhaka-1000. Mobile: 01913391551

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO 1177 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under Sections-81(2), 85(3) & 183 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994. AND
IN THE MATTER OF: Md. Jahangir Alam, son of Md. Mohar Ali and Hasina Khatun, Shareholder and Managing Director, Dent Fiftytwo Limited of F # 22, Mohakhali, Amtoli, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh. -----Petitioner

VERSUS-
Dent Fiftytwo Limited of F # 22, Mohakhali, Amtoli, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh and The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies and Firms, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. -----Respondents

Take notice that an application under Sections-81(2), 85(3) & 183 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon’ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of Dent Fiftytwo Limited for the calendar years 2023, 2024 and 2025 and to give necessary direction for holding the said meeting within a reasonable time. Upon hearing of the application on 08-07-2025 the Hon’ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel has been pleased to admit the said application. If you are interested to oppose the said application you may appear before the Hon’ble Court either in person or through an advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Advocate Md. Anowar Hossain

Room No. 351 (Main), Supreme Court Bar Association Bhaban, Shahabagh,
Dhaka-1000. Mobile: 01913391551

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO 1088 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under Sections-81(2), 85(3) & 183 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994. AND
IN THE MATTER OF: Bimal Chandra Roy, S/O: Bishnu Charan Roy and Anita Roy, Shareholder and Director of NextEon Developments Ltd. of 40, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh. -----Petitioner

VERSUS-
NextEon Developments Ltd. of 40, Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh and The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies and Firms, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. -----Respondents

Take notice that an application under Sections-81(2), 85(3) & 183 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon’ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of NextEon Developments Ltd. for the calendar years 2023, 2024 and 2025 and to give necessary direction for holding the said meeting within a reasonable time. Upon hearing of the application on 29-06-2025 the Hon’ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel has been pleased to admit the said application. If you are interested to oppose the said application you may appear before the Hon’ble Court either in person or through an advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Advocate Md. Anowar Hossain

Room No. 351 (Main), Supreme Court Bar Association Bhaban, Shahabagh,
Dhaka-1000. Mobile: 01913391551



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

TENDER NOTICE

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sub-Office in Cox’s Bazar hereby announces the launch of the following tender:

TENDER REFERENCE NUMBER	ITEM DESCRIPTION
BGD - UNHCR ITB 1289	FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FRAME AGREEMENT (s) FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF CONSTRUCTION AND WASH MATERIALS FOR UNHCR-BANGLADESH

Interested and bona fide vendors are invited to participate in this Invitation to Bid (ITB) by accessing and downloading the tender documents from **UNHCR Cloud ERP Supplier Portal**.

UNGM Notice Link: <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/271469>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

Please confirm your participation for BGD - UNHCR ITB 1289 by using the "Acknowledge Participation" functionality in Cloud ERP Supplier portal. Please indicate whether:

- You are interested in participating in this ITB, or

- You are not interested in participating.

Sending your confirmation above will enable to receive automatic email notifications from UNHCR with information on any changes related to this negotiation.

Instruction to Bidders:

UNHCR will organize an online supplier pre-bid conference on 16/07/2025 at 10:00 am hrs BST via Microsoft teams.



You can scan above QR code to join in pre-bid conference.

To register as a potential supplier, please refer to link as follows: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/guidelines-unhcr-suppliers-how-use-supplier-portal>

Existing suppliers use this link: <https://supplier-portal.unhcr.org/> to Log in with your email address and Password Do not create a new profile if you already registered. Kindly. Use the forgotten password feature in case you do not know/remember your password or username from previous registration.

Bid submission deadline: Sunday, 10 August 2025 – 23:59 hrs BST Bangladesh time.

Kindly note that no hard copy is acceptable. The offer to be submitted only through Cloud ERP portal.

MYANMAR Monastery attack kills at least 23

REUTERS

At least 23 people have been confirmed dead, including four children, after an attack on a monastery in a village in Myanmar's Sagaing region, witnesses said yesterday.

The monastery in the village of Lintalu was hit in the early hours of Friday morning, said Hlaing Bwa, head of the Sagaing District People's Administration, a pro-democracy group that administers parts of the central region.

He and a local resident described the attack as an airstrike by the State Administration Council, Myanmar's ruling military junta.

A spokesperson for the junta did not respond to requests for comment.

The monastery housed around 200 people displaced by nearby fighting between the army and pro-democracy forces, Hlaing Bwa told Reuters.

Armed men kill nine bus passengers in Pakistan

REUTERS, QUETTA

Authorities retrieved from Pakistan's mountains the bullet-ridden bodies of nine passengers kidnapped by armed men in a spate of bus attacks in the troubled southwestern province of Balochistan, officials said on Friday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Baloch separatists, agitating for a greater share of resources, have figured in similar past killings of those identified as hailing from the eastern province of Punjab.

Government official Naveed Alam said the bodies with bullet wounds were found in the mountains overnight, while a provincial government spokesman, Shahid Rind, said the passengers were seized from two buses on Thursday evening.

"We are identifying the bodies and reaching out to their families," he said, adding that the victims, working as labourers in the restive region, were returning home to Punjab.

Ethnic insurgents accuse Pakistan's government of stealing regional resources to fund expenditure elsewhere, mainly in the sprawling province of Punjab.

Security forces foiled three insurgent attacks on Thursdays before the kidnappings, Rind said, accusing neighbour and arch rival India of backing the militants.



A woman sitting amid debris looks on as Palestinians inspect destroyed tents at a makeshift displacement camp following a reported incursion a day earlier by Israeli tanks in the area in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US, China hold 'positive' talks amid tariff row

Rubio meets Wang on the sidelines of Asean summit

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday said he had "positive and constructive" talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as the two major powers vied to push their agendas in Asia at a time of tension over Washington's tariff offensive.

The top US diplomat was in Malaysia on his first Asia trip since taking office, seeking to stress the United States' commitment to the region at the East Asia Summit and Asean Regional Forum, where many countries were reeling from a raft of



bilateral meeting as positive and constructive yesterday. And Rubio said the odds of Trump meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping were high.

"We're two big, powerful countries, and there are always going to be issues that we disagree on. I think there's some areas of potential cooperation and I thought it was a very constructive, positive meeting, and a lot of work to do," he told reporters.

Rubio emphasised that his sitdown with Wang was not a negotiation, but rather about establishing a constructive baseline to continue talks.

Rubio's visit is part of an effort to renew US focus on the Indo-Pacific region and look beyond conflicts in the Middle East and Europe that have consumed much of the administration's attention since Trump's return to office in January.

But that has been overshadowed by this week's announcement of steep US tariffs on imports from many Asian countries and US allies, including 25% targeting Japan, South Korea and Malaysia, 32% for Indonesia, 36% for Thailand and

Cambodia and 40% on goods from Myanmar and Laos.

China, initially singled out with levies exceeding 100%, has until August 12 to reach a deal with Washington to avoid Trump's reinstating additional import curbs imposed during tit-for-tat tariff exchanges in April and May.

Analysts said Rubio would use the trip to press the case that the United States remains a better partner than China, Washington's main strategic rival. Rubio met his counterparts from Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia on Friday.

Wang has rebuked the United States in Kuala Lumpur, saying no country should support or agree with its tariffs, according to remarks released by Beijing yesterday.

In a joint communique yesterday, Asean foreign ministers expressed concern over rising global trade tensions and the need to diversify trade, calling for a transparent and fair multilateral trading system.

Without mentioning the United States, they said unilateral tariffs were "counterproductive and risk exacerbating global economic fragmentation".

“

We're sending weapons to Nato... Nato is going to be giving those weapons (to Ukraine), and Nato is paying for those, 100 percent.

DONALD TRUMP
Us president

Police free 1,194 in global trafficking raids: Europol

AFP, The Hague

Police rescued 1,194 potential human trafficking victims and arrested 158 suspects in coordinated raids across 43 countries last month, the European Union's law enforcement agency said yesterday.

Operation "Global Chain", which deployed 15,000 officers, targeted human traffickers and smugglers in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, Europol said in a statement.

Victims came from 64 countries, mostly Romania, Ukraine, Colombia, China, and Hungary.

"Many of the victims had been trafficked across borders, and even continents, demonstrating the global nature of human trafficking schemes," the statement said.

"Investigations show that the vast majority of victims of sexual exploitation are female and adult, while the exploitation of underage victims is mostly connected to forced begging and forced criminal activity such as pickpocketing."

In one of the cases, Austrian police arrested seven suspected human traffickers and rescued eight women during a coordinated cross-border operation targeting a Romanian crime group.

The suspects -- six Romanians and one Hungarian -- were part of a family-run network operating across several EU countries, investigators said.

Victims were allegedly recruited using the so-called "lover-boy method", in which traffickers pose as romantic partners before coercing women into prostitution.

Pak father kills daughter over TikTok account

AFP, Rawalpindi

Pakistan police yesterday said a father shot dead his daughter after she refused to delete her account on popular video-sharing app TikTok.

In the Muslim-majority country, women can be subjected to violence by family members for not following strict rules on how to behave in public, including in online spaces.

"The girl's father had asked her to delete her TikTok account. On refusal, he killed her," a police spokesperson told AFP. Investigators said the father killed his 16-year-old daughter on Tuesday "for honour". He was subsequently arrested.

The victim's family initially tried to "portray the murder as a suicide" according to police in the city of Rawalpindi, where the attack happened.

Trump to supply arms to Ukraine via Nato

Plans major statement on Russia amid frustration with Putin

REUTERS, Washington/Kyiv/Rome

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday the United States would supply weapons to Ukraine via Nato and that he would make a "major statement" on Russia on Monday.

In recent days, Trump has expressed frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the lack of progress towards ending the war sparked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"I think I'll have a major statement to make on Russia on Monday," Trump told NBC News, declining to elaborate.

Trump also told NBC News about what he called a new deal between the US, Nato allies and Ukraine over weapons shipment from the United States.

"We're sending weapons to Nato, and Nato is paying for those weapons, 100%. So what we're doing



is the weapons that are going out are going to Nato, and then Nato is going to be giving those weapons (to Ukraine), and Nato is paying for those weapons," Trump said.

"We send weapons to Nato, and Nato is going to reimburse the full cost of those weapons," he added.

For the first time since returning to office, Trump will send weapons to Kyiv under a presidential power frequently used by his predecessor, two sources familiar with the decision said on Thursday.

Trump on Tuesday said the

US would send more weapons to Ukraine to help the country defend itself against intensifying Russian advances.

The package could include defensive Patriot missiles and offensive medium-range rockets, but a decision on the exact equipment has not been made, the sources said.

On the ground, Ukrainian drone and shelling attacks killed three people in Russia yesterday, while Russian bombardments on east Ukraine forced the evacuation of a maternity centre in Kharkiv.

Russian air defence systems intercepted 155 Ukrainian drones overnight, Moscow said, an attack that comes after Russia pounded Ukraine in successive nightly attacks targeting the capital Kyiv.

The UN has said Russia's intensifying attacks pushed the number of Ukrainian civilians killed and wounded to a three-year high in the month of June.

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A necessary reality check in SSC results

Fair evaluation exposes gaps in learning and system readiness

The results of this year's SSC and equivalent exams, though not what many students expected, mark a welcome shift towards restoring credibility in public exam evaluation. It also marks a departure—decisively, one hopes—from the regressive trend of compromising the quality of pre-tertiary exams through auto-passes or subject/syllabus-related concessions, something that we have seen even in the early days of the interim government. We, therefore, commend the authorities for finally restoring merit-based assessment without succumbing to any sociopolitical pressure for higher grades. As education officials have said, this year's results reflect students' actual performance. That in itself is something worth recognising.

According to official data, the pass rate across all nine general education boards has dropped to 68.04 percent—the lowest in 16 years—while the combined pass rate in all boards (including general, madrasa, and technical) has fallen to 68.45 percent. The number of GPA-5 achievers has also seen a significant decline. Meanwhile, girls have once again outperformed boys in both pass rate and GPA scores, continuing a near-decade-long trend. Among the general education boards, Rajshahi recorded the highest pass rate at 77.63 percent, while Barishal dropped to the bottom with just 56.38 percent. Particularly worrying is the 53.87 percent pass rate in the humanities group, which is far lower than science (85.68 percent) or business studies (66.32 percent).

Naturally, such a sharp decline has caused concern among parents and educators alike. The question is, should we treat this as a disaster or as a reflection of ground realities that have long been masked? By all accounts, the answer lies in the latter. This year, examiners were reportedly instructed to evaluate answer scripts on merit. No extra or grace marks were awarded. But the problem runs much deeper, of course. School education has faced repeated disruptions and closures over the past six years owing to the effects of the pandemic and persistent political unrest. SSC students, in particular, often missed out on regular classroom learning from classes 6 through 10. The psychological effects of all such disruptions on young minds, which we have long anticipated, are becoming increasingly evident. Coupled with stricter marking and apparently more “difficult” question papers, especially in mathematics, it is little surprise that the results have turned out the way they have.

Each of these factors exposes troubling gaps in learning and system readiness that we must address going forward. But first, we should remember that poor results can lead to increased dropout rates, especially among girls and in rural and poorer regions—a trend we must prevent through prompt interventions this time. Equally importantly, it's time we stopped equating higher pass rates or GPA-5 scores with success. This obsession with inflated results has fostered a toxic culture of competition over the years and even led to many cases of suicide among students. What we should instead focus on is improving learning and eliminating the culture of frequent academic disruptions for the long-term future of our students and nation. The education sector is crying for reforms and systemic improvement. We must not fail to do that.

Prevent deaths from open drains

Latest tragedy highlights risks of Chattogram city's exposed drains

We are concerned by the continued deaths of people, including children, from falling into open drains in Chattogram city. Reportedly, at least 14 people have lost their lives after falling into open drains or canals in the city over the past six years, while many more have been injured. The latest victim is a three-year-old child who drowned in the city's Halishahar area on July 9. Reportedly, the child was playing near her home when the incident occurred. Earlier in April, a six-month-old died when a rickshaw fell into an open drain amid strong water flow at the Kapasgola area. The baby's body was recovered 14 hours later, from the Chakait canal. Tragedies like these have become a common occurrence in Chattogram, especially during monsoon, despite frequent protests against unsafe drains and the negligence of those responsible.

Over the years, the authorities have undertaken many ambitious and expensive projects to improve Chattogram city's drainage system and reduce waterlogging, but failed to do something as basic as covering all the drains. According to a 2023 report by this daily, nearly 70 percent of the port city's water bodies have been filled over the last five decades, while numerous canals have disappeared due to illegal encroachment. The city originally had 72 canals and now lists only 56, as per the drainage masterplan prepared by Chattogram WASA. This has led to severe waterlogging.

Last year, the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC)—which has frequently come under criticism for failing to prevent waterlogging—claimed to have covered nearly 80 percent of the unsafe spots near drains with slabs and built around 70 percent of the required retaining walls along vulnerable canals to enhance safety. But what happened to the rest of the drains and canals? How well-maintained are those that have been “secured”? The deaths of two children this year highlight the danger continuously posed by both unfinished work and poor oversight. How many more people will have to die before this problem is fixed for good?

We urge the city authorities to take immediate measures to prevent any casualties from open drains. Every exposed drain must be covered, and vulnerable canals must be secured. A 2021 survey identified 5,527 dangerous spots linked to canals and drains, all of which must be made safe without delay. Equally important is solving the city's persistent waterlogging problem that is directly tied to many of these tragic incidents. Moreover, officials responsible for the city's maintenance and development must be held accountable for their poor performance and negligence.

Tariffquake: Why Bangladesh economy must diversify or fall



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MD BADRUL ALAM SIDDIQUI

It hasn't been just a tremor; it's been a tectonic shock. The announcement from Washington, imposing a 35 percent reciprocal tariff (down from the initial 37 percent announced in April), has not only shaken Bangladesh's industrial heartland, but has presented a moment of reckoning: a sudden, challenging test of a nation's resilience, where the lifeblood of an entire economy is now under severe strain.

The numbers tell a stark story. Over 800 enterprises, their fortunes tethered to the American consumer, are now at “high risk.” For a core group of 168 companies that ship every single product they make to the US, the tariff isn't a headwind; it threatens their very survival. We are talking about a torrent of commerce—a staggering \$5.05 billion from companies exporting to the US last year—now slammed against a formidable wall. The competitive arithmetic is just as grim. An existing average duty of around 15 percent is now compounded by the staggering 35 percent levy, creating a crippling 50 percent total tariff.

But this crisis was not inevitable. Vietnam acted, while Bangladesh waited. The result is a chasm. When Vietnam deftly navigated the diplomatic storm to secure a far more manageable 20 percent tariff, Bangladesh was left facing a significant loss of advantage.

Economists are calling it a “harsh economic blow,” a contagion that will likely spread from apparels to footwear, furniture to food products. It threatens a social crisis of mass job losses—a devastating prospect for millions of female workers, often their families' sole breadwinners. The immediate plunge of the Dhaka Stock Exchange was merely the first, nervous tremor of a much larger

economic earthquake to come.

On the frontlines, the despair is palpable. For the managing director of an apparel manufacturing company, a three-decade relationship with US buyers is on the verge of collapse.



VISUAL: REUTERS

Over 800 export-oriented enterprises in Bangladesh are considered to be at “high risk” following the 35 percent reciprocal tariff imposed by the US.

This sentiment is echoed by another leader in the RMG industry, who has warned of an existential crisis for his US exclusive firms. This dread extends beyond RMG, as the leader of an agro-processing firm has described how the mere threat of tariffs months ago was enough for US buyers to suspend orders. Compounding this market anxiety is a deep-seated frustration, with the managing director of another export-oriented business lamenting the government's “significant shortcoming” in failing to negotiate with its US counterpart effectively, or even consult the very industry it is supposed to protect.

The question, then, becomes a critical one: how did a nation so dependent on a single market find itself so unprepared? The answer is a story of diplomatic miscalculations and critical oversights. Instead of rapid engagement, Dhaka chose what officials called a “strategy of proceeding slowly,” a serious misstep based on misreading signals from Washington. While Bangladesh waited, its competitors acted. As one top exporter put it, the inability to secure a better deal was nothing short of a “complete failure” by the government. The very engine of its export economy—the private sector—was left

move is textbook Trump: a demand for “reciprocity” against a “long-standing and very persistent” trade deficit. But behind this narrative lies a chaotic reality of policy by social media and what one insider dismissed as a “theatrical show.” The signals from Washington may have been erratic, but they demanded an agile and coherent response—a response Dhaka failed to deliver.

Bangladesh now stands at a critical crossroads where the wrong turn risks significant marginalisation. But the path forward, while challenging, is not closed. A three-pronged strategy is emerging from the crisis. First, diplomacy must be reignited—not with the slow pace of the past, but with the fierce urgency of a fire crew. The call to appoint professional lobbyists must finally be heeded. Second, the Vietnam playbook must be examined and adopted. Bold, strategic concessions—from zero-duty access for US-made goods to purchasing high-value products like Boeing aircraft and LNG—are no longer just diplomatic gestures. They are strategic necessities.

And then comes the truth we have dodged for decades: this tariff shock is not just pain. It's a mirror. It's the final alarm. We built an entire economy on one thread, one market, one sector—and now that thread is strained. If we don't diversify our export basket—including pharmaceuticals, IT, agro-processing, and other vital sectors—our competitive position will become untenable. This is the reckoning, and we are out of excuses. Ambitious investment in these new areas must be accelerated, and new trade alliances must be forged with relentless determination.

This 35 percent reciprocal tariff by the US is more than a policy decision; it is a crucible. It is a defining moment that has brutally exposed the vulnerabilities of an economy and the shortcomings of its custodians. The coming weeks will determine whether Bangladesh can write a new chapter of resilience, or if this becomes a cautionary tale of a crisis that was as much made as it was met.

How expat Bangladeshi footballers are reconnecting to ancestral roots

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MD. AMJAD HOSSAIN

Bangladesh, a nation with a long-standing passion for sports, especially football, has been experiencing a long drought in the sport for myriad reasons: poor performances on the international stage, inadequate domestic infrastructure, irregular and uncompetitive local football, absence of age-level and school competitions, lack of visionary strategies, and corruption among football officials. Gradually, even die-hard fans are losing interest, while the younger generations are more invested in European football.

However, a new ray of hope is quietly emerging, marking an immense potential for the sport in Bangladesh and offering the country a new global identity, thanks to the involvement of

inclusion can strengthen the bond with the vast Bangladeshi diaspora and foster a renewed sense of national pride.

For more than two decades, Bangladeshi football has remained confined to domestic competition, with no significant international success. Although local leagues retain loyal (if dwindling) followings, the international reach and competitiveness seen in other South Asian nations have largely eluded our country.

Then a new chapter began with Jamal Bhuyan, a Danish youth of Bangladeshi descent and now the national team captain, who pioneered this legacy in 2013 when he first joined the squad. While a few African footballers once expressed interest in representing Bangladesh after acquiring citizenship, they were ultimately unsuccessful.

In 2023, Norwegian defensive midfielder Tariq Kazi followed in Jamal's footsteps and joined the

talents—hailing from youth academies and clubs in the UK, US, Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, Australia, Sweden, the UAE, Spain, and Estonia—promise to inject fresh energy into Bangladesh football. Their polished technical skills, tactical discipline,

lives to Bangladeshi traditions. Their multilingualism and cultural adaptability also make them excellent ambassadors for cross-cultural engagement.

Community-based initiatives such as school visits, local tournaments,



FILE PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

For more than two decades, Bangladeshi football has remained confined to domestic competition, with no significant international success.

physical conditioning, and professional experience are rare in the domestic arena. Their journeys—from life abroad back to their ancestral homeland—symbolise a profound devotion and connection to their roots.

These footballers play a significant role in uniting the global Bangladeshi diaspora. Bangladeshis living abroad make remarkable contributions to the socioeconomic and cultural life of their host countries. However, maintaining meaningful ties with Bangladesh often proves challenging. Football, as a global language and a powerful emblem of national identity, offers a unique way to bridge this gap.

The Bangladesh national football team's international tours—particularly in cities with large Bangladeshi communities such as those in the UK, US, and Middle East—transcend sport. They act as cultural touchpoints, rekindling national pride and fostering a shared identity among Bangladeshis living overseas. Second and third-generation Bangladeshis living abroad often feel emotionally connected when they see players who share their heritage on the field. These athletes can become inspirational figures, linking global

and social media campaigns can help nurture a collective sense of pride. Interactive strategies like Q&A sessions, virtual meet-and-greets, and behind-the-scenes content will make these athletes more relatable, particularly to diaspora youth.

However, for this momentum to bear fruit, the BFF and relevant stakeholders must adopt a strategic and forward-thinking approach. This includes actively identifying talent within the diaspora, simplifying the path for integration, and creating long-term engagement plans. At its core, this approach must acknowledge that the future of Bangladesh football lies not just within its borders, but in its diverse and dynamic global community.

These expatriate footballers are not merely players; they are emblems of a modern, globalised Bangladesh, driven by ambition and resilience. Beyond revitalising the sport domestically, this is an opportunity to unite the diaspora around a shared sense of pride. By embracing these players as cultural ambassadors, Bangladesh can build bridges that transcend boundaries—one kick at a time.

These footballers play a significant role in uniting the global Bangladeshi diaspora. Bangladeshis living abroad make remarkable contributions to the socioeconomic and cultural life of their host countries. However, maintaining meaningful ties with Bangladesh often proves challenging. Football, as a global language and a powerful emblem of national identity, offers a unique way to bridge this gap.

expatriate footballers.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) recently organised a three-day trial at the National Stadium in Dhaka, participated by 52 expatriate footballers of Bangladesh origin, aged between 14 and 27 years. This initiative forms part of BFF's broader strategy, The Next Global Star, aimed at recruiting Bangladesh-origin players who play at club or academy levels abroad. These talented individuals, trained in various football academies and professional leagues—particularly in Europe—bring not only technical ability but also a strong desire to represent the national team. Their

national team, paving the way for others. However, the most notable breakthrough came when Hamza Choudhury, the only English Premier League player of South Asian origin, cleared all FIFA protocols and arrived in Bangladesh to serve the national side. Hamza's inclusion received overwhelming attention and motivated BFF to intensify its efforts to scout more expatriate talent. Subsequent additions of Fahmidul Islam (Italy) and Shamit Shome (Canada) further energised fans and shifted media attention—albeit temporarily—from cricket to football.

Now, this new group of emerging

Time to rethink media transformation



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND
Dr Shamsad Mortuza
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SHAMSAD MORTUZA

I started my career as a cub journalist for a long-deceased daily. I worked there for three months without an appointment letter, or any pay, only to hear the editor one day telling a district correspondent to use his ID and collect wheat from the local DC instead of payment. The next day, I showed up at this daily's office. With S.M. Ali as its editor at the time, seasoned journalists with international experience, experienced sub-editors, and a fresh bunch of talented graduates, the place was vibrant with professional enthusiasm. Early in my career, I became aware of two types of journalism divided by their personal and public interests.

Every day, I learnt something new while typing on manual typewriters. I learnt the use of "reportedly" and "allegedly" as safeguards. I learnt the need for presenting both sides of the story to give balanced news and restrict myself from views. In the 1990s, "bothsideism" was still considered a principled journalistic norm. I started my career after the fall of an autocratic regime, when the media literally took up the role of the fourth estate. There was a renewed urgency to investigate, interrogate, and inform. Unfortunately, while the situation at present is somewhat similar, the mainstream media is now on the verge of being irrelevant in a political climate that thrives on distrust.

Media today has transformed into a spectacular performance focused on visibility. Instead of news, we have diluted and digitised versions of views. In the so-called post-truth era, a significant segment of the media no longer prioritises presenting the truth to power. Most media outlets are in survival mode. Truth is filtered through algorithms, while dissent is punished through digital mobs or official or unofficial sanctions on ads (with stories of such sanctions becoming common during Awami League's tenure). A large number of media outlets have been reduced to factories of

consent. One contributing factor of such a change is the "digital transformation" of media and the emergence of new media. With the decline of print subscriptions and increasing disengagement of young readers from newspapers, media houses are all trying to stay afloat by chasing online clicks. Their platform performance comes at the expense of public trust.

Most mainstream media use aggressive PR machinery to inflate their algorithms to seek advertisements. Newspapers, like any other business house, pursue search engine optimisation (SEO), thumbnail attractiveness, and emotionally charged photo cards. The goal is no longer to give both sides of the story so the reader can come to their own intelligent conclusion. Instead, complex issues are chopped into bite-size testers and teasers. The trend has become to simplify, sensationalise, and provoke. The audience is given infographics, explainer videos, and amplified opinions. Clickbait is the new malaise that is conditioned by the desire to be viral. Contexts are often ignored, and facts conveniently trimmed. In the process, the core journalistic ethic of telling all sides of a story is compromised.

During the previous regime, surveillance, censorship, and even oppression were used to turn newsrooms into ideologically gated communities. Still, there were avenues to express dissent. But in a changed political milieu, one would have expected real reform that does not shy away from truth. But once again, we are seeing a return to the "either with us or against us" mentality. When the main exponents of the July uprising criticised binary thinking shortly after the political changeover, it gave us reasons to be optimistic. But as time rolls on, the motto "Either you're with us, or you're part of the problem" is striking firm ground. The sociopolitical polarisation is further deepened by the complicity of some media

outlets. Voices of dissent are touted as agents of sabotage.

Any attempt to hold the dominant power or pressure groups accountable is considered a sacrilege. "Where have you been in the last 15 years?" is used to defuse any hint of criticism. The fear factors unleashed by some instances of ransacking media offices and withdrawal of press accreditation cards have tamed the watchdogs. Most media outlets function as

obedience has replaced editorial autonomy as newspapers now prioritise counting likes and angry reactions on social media. This fear of anonymous bot networks can drive any individual to their emotional nadir. The fear is more than an arrest under the cyber law. It involves social annihilation. Every digital footprint is monitored and vulnerable. As a coping mechanism, many of us resort to self-censorship. Every time I type something,

alternative voices, enjoying considerable trust among younger audiences. Then again, this citizen journalism can be vulnerable and dangerous without proper training, institutional backing, legal protection, and the editorial support that traditional media provides.

So when we talk about reform as part of the July protocol, we must rethink the media's transformation. The reform needs

to be approached with courage and open-mindedness. For journalism to be the fourth estate of our democracy, media houses must recommit to truth over traffic. Claiming that we live in a post-truth era can only offer confusion. Media houses must unite to defend editorial autonomy over political compliance. Journalists need protection from all types of threats—physical and cyber. Instead of direct interventions, the transitional government must act through independent regulatory bodies, transparent ad policies, and genuine protection laws to spare the audience and the state from misinformation and disinformation. We have gone beyond the stage of performative declarations. Now is the time for change.



VISUAL: COLLECTED

Let's not forget the silent emergencies of the world



Selim Jahan
is former director of the Human Development Report Office under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and lead author of the Human Development Report.

SELIM JAHAN

Today, the world is preoccupied with loud emergencies: Israel-Palestine war, Iran-Israel conflict, and Russia-Ukraine war. Political and diplomatic efforts are focused on these hotspots of global crisis. Attention is also being paid to the plight of refugees—120 million people have been uprooted from their homes due to war, conflict, violence, and the breakdown of law and order. On World Refugee Day, observed on June 20, the world expressed its solidarity with refugees and made pledges to move "beyond words, into action." These efforts are commendable.

But there is another emergency, silent yet deadly, knocking on the door of 13 global hotspots. Hunger and the looming threat of famine remain below the radar of global attention.

Currently, around 155 million people face the risk of acute food insecurity in 13 crisis-affected regions: Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Gaza Strip, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

A few points are worth noting. First, eight of these 13 hunger hotspots are located in

Africa. Second, in several of these African countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, the DRC, Somalia, and Sudan—hunger has been a chronic issue stretching far into the past, with occasional famines. Third, more than half of the 155 million at risk are concentrated in just three countries: Nigeria (31 million), the DRC (28 million), and Sudan (25 million). Fourth, the severity of food insecurity varies not only between countries but also across regions within them—from moderately acute to severely acute conditions, even bordering on famine. Finally, this food insecurity leads to nutritional insecurity, particularly among children.

Multiple factors trigger food insecurity. Armed conflict is the primary driver in 12 of the 13 hotspots. In all areas of highest concern, widespread and escalating violence is causing dramatic deterioration in food security. In some countries, such as Sudan, ongoing conflict combined with the approaching lean season may lead to famine-like conditions.

In Gaza, the risk of famine is increasing due to protracted military operations. Humanitarian efforts are constrained both by inadequate relief materials and inaccessibility to the most

affected areas. In South Sudan, floods and macroeconomic challenges, combined with political tensions and subnational violence, are compounding the food crisis. Currency depreciation and macroeconomic instability have driven staple food prices five times higher than last year, eroding household purchasing power.

In Haiti, unprecedented levels of gang violence and mass displacement are

grown, resulting in high inflation that limits both food availability and access. In Palestine, soaring food prices and exhausted livelihoods are accelerating the collapse of household purchasing power.

In addition to conflict and economic turmoil, climate extremes and increasing variability are worsening the situation. While neutral El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions are forecast from June to October

2025, weather anomalies—floods, droughts, cyclones, and erratic rainfall—are expected to persist. In South Sudan, above-average rainfall raises flood risks, while in Haiti, an intense Atlantic hurricane season threatens food production and livelihoods.

Meanwhile, funding for food, emergency agriculture, and nutrition assistance has fallen critically short. The outlook for the remainder of 2025 is deeply constrained. The United Nations recently announced a drastic scaling back of its global humanitarian assistance plan. Last December, the UN appealed for \$44

billion; that amount has now been slashed to \$29 billion. With half the year gone, only \$6 billion—just 13 percent of the original request—has been received.

The initial plan aimed to assist nearly 190 million people in over 70 countries. These unprecedented funding cuts have been driven in large part by massive reductions in foreign aid by the US, severely affecting the global humanitarian sector.

These shortfalls, compounded by severe access constraints, risk drastically reducing the delivery of food and nutrition support. Millions could be left without aid, worsening already dire conditions. Going forward, food assistance will have to be prioritised for the most urgent cases—directed quickly and effectively to where it is needed most.

Without immediate humanitarian action and coordinated international efforts to address access challenges and advocate for conflict de-escalation, starvation and death will continue across vulnerable regions. At the same time, investment in anticipatory action must continue. Proactive intervention saves lives, reduces food gaps, and protects livelihoods at significantly lower costs than delayed responses.

Brutal funding cuts are leaving policymakers with brutal choices. But humanitarian assistance must not be reduced. On the contrary, urgent support must be scaled up to boost emergency food production and ensure access across all hunger hotspots.

The world is being forced into a triage of human survival. But amid our obsession with loud emergencies, let us not forget the silent ones.

Global economic fragility, rising debt burdens, geopolitical volatility, and trade disruptions are all deepening food insecurity in several of these hotspots. Conflicts in various parts of the world have further destabilised global food supply chains. In Sudan, the risk of partial economic collapse by 2025 has grown, resulting in high inflation that limits both food availability and access. In Palestine, soaring food prices and exhausted livelihoods are accelerating the collapse of household purchasing power.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Feral
7 Miles off
11 Driven out
12 Moreno of movies
13 Tot
14 Sketched
15 Yard surroundings
17 Headed out
20 Fidgety
23 "— Blue?"
24 Symbol of solidity
26 Golf goal
27 Chart model
28 Oklahoma city
29 Maggie and Lisa, e.g.
31 Black goo
32 Rocker John
33 Addition column
34 Kremlin setting
37 Captain of fiction
39 Baltimore player
43 Raw numbers
44 Bamboo eaters
45 Not natural, in a way
46 Sacks out

- DOWN**
1 Put in stitches
2 Cut dramatically
3 Compete
4 In the air
5 Heredity unit
6 Unspoiled spot
7 Passionate
8 Top-notch
9 Stopped fasting
10 Unrefined
16 Sweet treats
17 Small error
18 Some messages
19 Captain's aide
21 Car type
22 Decade divisions
24 Some tourneys
25 Ventilate
30 "What a shame!"
33 Binding need
35 Perp pursuers
36 Vaccine type
37 Throw in
38 Cow chow
40 Exalted work
41 Pet perch
42 Slalom section

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7-5

WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

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C	A	N	O	E		D	E	A	L	T
S	T	A	G	S		A	G	G	I	E

Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to dsopinton@gmail.com

LEVEL FIVE LEVELS UP

When *Utshob* revealed its first song, *Tumi*, it instantly took root in my mind—and that’s how I discovered Level Five. Though the song was originally composed two years ago, it caught the attention of director Tanim Noor, a devoted fan of the band. *Tumi* went on to play a pivotal role in portraying the beautiful love story of Sadia Ayman and Shoumya Joyti.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Hooked by its catchy tune, I found myself diving into the band’s YouTube channel, eager to explore what made the band stand out.

The indie rock band has steadily broken free from its niche label, surging in popularity during the pandemic. Their riveting lyrics, dynamic vocals, punchy guitar riffs, and tight rhythm section struck a chord with audiences—particularly through their breakout hit, *60’s Love*.

Recently, the band stopped by The Daily Star Centre for an acoustic session and a heartfelt conversation about their music. The current lineup includes vocalist Aiedid Rashid, bassist Razin Halim, guitarist Ashiqul Alam Ashiq, keyboardist Asif Ahmed, and manager Shahriar Tahsin Nasif. Two founders of the band, Ehsan Kaizer and Sadmaan Guppu Asif, now reside in North America.

With *Utshob* performing exceptionally well in theatres, the band has also been actively promoting *Tumi*, even accompanying the cast during hall visits. While discussing the song’s unexpected inclusion in the film, Aiedid shared:

“When Tanim *bhai* called us, we were sure he’d want *60’s Love*,” said

Aiedid. “But nope—he wanted *Tumi*! He said it was perfect to capture young romance. At the time, we had no idea the film would be such a big deal. And when we learned it features legends like Zahid Hasan, Chanchal Chowdhury, Afsana Mimi, and Jaya Ahsan, we were stunned. Our song... in that movie?”

The band’s rise started during Covid-19. Stuck at home, people finally had time to scroll, click, and get addicted to their music. “Out of nowhere, views started spiking,” recalled Razin. “We used to play this little game—guessing which song would get how many views that week. One day, *Gholate Megh* was climbing, and we were like ‘Whoa, 50k? That’s crazy!’ Then Ashiq added, ‘Forget *Gholate Megh*—check *60’s Love*!’ Refreshing the page was like watching a rocket launch.”

Some listeners assume Level Five only makes love songs—probably because of *60’s Love* and *Tumi*. “I guess love and heartbreak just work well in Bangladesh,” Razin chuckled.

There’s a touching story behind *60’s Love*. “Apu derived it from a letter his father wrote to his mother back in the 1960s,” Aiedid shared.

Despite their growing success, Level Five has only a few music videos—a conscious choice. They prefer listeners to interpret the songs based on their own experiences. Among the select few are *Room 17* and *Beep*. But it was the chilling backstory behind *Room 17* that

truly intrigued me.

“I only learned about the song’s true meaning a few years ago,” shared Aiedid. “When I was composing it, I had no idea what the lyrics meant. So, I asked Ehsan, my friend who wrote it. He told me it was based on a murder-mystery. The lyrics go, ‘She is not there for whom you searched on Wednesday. She is not there who you saw on Tuesday.’”

“The song is written from the perspective of a hotel receptionist,” he explained. “A man is looking for a missing person. The staff tells him he can check Room 17, but he doesn’t find the person. The dark truth? That person was murdered there, and the hotel is covering it up.”

Before the pandemic, their gigs were intimate, sometimes for a single person even. But they never gave up. Immediately after lockdown, they played a late slot at a small Banani café, expecting nothing.

“They announced our name,” said Aiedid, eyes still wide. “And the crowd cheered! We were stunned.”

Not every show ends on a high note, though. With concert security becoming a growing concern, the band has faced dangerous situations. Manager Nasif recounted a harrowing experience, “In December 2024, we played a school rag day event outside

Dhaka. Word got out, and things got chaotic. Some showed up with sticks. The political climate was tense. Thankfully, I had local contacts, so we avoided trouble—at first.”

“The concert went fine. But after the show, it was chaos. Fans were fighting for selfies. I got the guys to safety, but I got caught in the scuffle. Took a few bruises for the team,” he said with a smile.

For Level Five, virality is never the goal.

“We don’t chase numbers,” said Aiedid. “We just make music that makes us happy. If people connect with it, that’s amazing. But we’re not going to be upset if a song doesn’t go viral.”

“Our last release wasn’t *Tumi*—it was *Semicolon*,” Razin added. “Not many listened to it, but it means a lot to us. It’s about mental health. The semicolon is a symbol for survivors—people who choose to keep going. We launched the song in collaboration with Mindspace, who offer 24/7 mental health support. We even hosted an event with a mental health session.”

Nasif added, “Post-Covid, so many people were struggling. Some even tried to harm themselves. After we released *Semicolon*, Mindspace told us they saw a spike in people reaching out. Knowing our song helped someone—that’s what truly matters!”



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



DATE: 12 JULY 2025
TIME: 3:00 PM TO 6:00 PM
VENUE: BANGLADESH FILM ARCHIVE, AGARGAON, DHAKA

‘Films for Future’

Today (July 12) | 3pm-6pm
Bangladesh Film Archive



Exhibition: ‘Aesthete’

July 8-15 | 3 pm-9pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka,
Dhanmondi



‘Shrotar Asor: Shrabon 1432’

July 18 | 7pm- 8:45pm
Chhayanaut Shongshkriti Bhobon

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix The Sandman



Prime Video The Summer I Turned Pretty



Hulu Such Brave Girls



Apple TV+ Foundation



HBO Max Opus



STYLE STATEMENT

David Corenswet & Rachel Brosnahan

James Gunn’s *Superman* premiered with classic flair at the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood last Monday, with the cast strikingly channeling their on-screen personas.

David Corenswet, who plays the role of the Man of Steel, channeled Clark Kent in a dark blue pinstriped three-piece suit—sharp, timeless, and confident.

Rachel Brosnahan lit up the carpet as a modern Lois Lane, dazzling in a sparkling purple sequin gown, silver starburst earrings, and a sleek ponytail.

Their looks balanced old-Hollywood charm with contemporary polish, setting the tone perfectly for Gunn’s fresh take on the iconic superhero saga, which was officially released worldwide yesterday.



‘Squid Game’ bows out with a brutal farewell

Squid Game Season 3 concludes the series with a chilling, emotional, and thought-provoking finale. At its heart is Gi-hun, whose raw grief and moral struggle ground the chaos around him, making his journey deeply human.

The season raises the stakes with a suspenseful hide-and-seek game that strips players of choice, delivering heartbreak and sharp commentary on survival and morality. Performances by Lee Jung-jae and Kang Ha-neul are electric, especially as their characters clash in devastating ways.

Fan-favourite Hyun-Ju adds strength and depth, while a shocking twist involving a newborn contestant poignantly explores inherited trauma. Though the VIPs’ scenes occasionally stumble with awkward dialogue and excess, the overall storytelling remains gripping and visually stunning.



The finale avoids false hope, instead offering a sobering but powerful reminder of the real-world parallels that *Squid Game* has always hinted at. Even with a few missteps, this final chapter reaffirms why the show became a global sensation—through bold ideas, unforgettable characters, and a relentless gaze at the cost of a broken system.

WHAT’S PLAYING

‘OJOS TRISTES’ by Selena Gomez, Benny Blanco & The Marías

Selena Gomez slips into a melancholic daze with *Ojos Tristes*, a hazy, heart-aching ballad that feels like velvet at dusk. Teaming up with Benny Blanco and The Marías, she revives Jeanette’s 1981 classic “El muchacho de los ojos tristes” with a bilingual flair—gliding between English and Spanish vocals as effortlessly as silk on skin.

Gomez’s voice floats—at once fragile and assured—over a lush soundscape of soft synths and dreamy



strings. While fans may speculate about its muse, Gomez has made it clear: this one isn’t about just one person. It’s about all of them. Lovers. Friends. Ghosts of who we used to be.

With over 120 million Spotify streams and a peak at No 54 on the platform’s Global Chart, *Ojos Tristes* has become the emotional undercurrent of playlists worldwide. It also made history, debuting at the top on Billboard’s Hot Latin Pop Songs chart.

How could they kill a man so brutally?

FROM PAGE 1

Hasan Mohin, 41, and Tarek Rahman Robin, 22. A firearm was recovered from Robin's possession.

Sources said Mohin is affiliated with Jubo Dal. He was placed on a five-day remand on Thursday in connection with the murder case. Meanwhile, a separate case was filed against Robin under the Arms Act, and he was placed on a two-day remand in that case.

Meanwhile, the Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested two more people in connection with the murder.

They are case accused Alamgir, 28, and Monir alias Lomba Monir, 32.

A video of the brutal killing has gone viral on social media, sparking outrage. People criticised how such a barbaric attack took place in broad daylight and in full view of the public, without any intervention.

According to the case filed by the victim's sister, Monjuara Begum, with Kotwali Police Station on Thursday, Sohag had been running his scrap business in the Rajani Bose Lane area under Wari's DC Roy Road for years.

His growing business presence allegedly sparked tensions with a rival group seeking control over the area's scrap trade and local influence.

The family alleged that the accused had previously padlocked Sohag's warehouse and threatened him on several occasions in an attempt to drive him out of the neighbourhood.

"The accused had asked my uncle to close the shop or give them Tk 2 lakh and a portion of his income every month. My uncle did not agree, and for this, they killed him so brutally," Sohag's niece Bithi Akter told The Daily Star.

She also alleged that some of the accused

are involved in Jubo Dal politics.

On the day of the incident, around 5:40pm, a group of 15 to 20 individuals, some named in the case and others unidentified, attacked Sohag at his shop, Sohan Metal, in Bangshal.

They were armed with sharp and blunt weapons.

According to the case details, the attackers stormed the shop, dragged Sohag outside, and began beating him indiscriminately.

Even as Sohag's employees and other witnesses begged them to stop, the attackers assaulted the staff and others trying to intervene.

They then dragged Sohag to the premises of Mitford Hospital's Gate-3, where they continued to beat him with blunt and sharp weapons. At one point, they crushed his head and torso with concrete blocks.

Witnesses said Sohag was stripped during the assault.

When he collapsed near a drain, the attackers pulled him out to the paved road in front of the hospital around 6:20pm and left his bloodied body there.

The assailants celebrated loudly before leaving the scene, added the case statement.

Police later recovered the body and sent it for autopsy.

The accused in the murder case are Mahmudul Hasan Mohin, 41; Sarwar Hossain Titu, 42; Monir alias Chhoto Monir, 25; Alamgir, 28; Monir alias Lomba Monir, 32; Nannu, 27; Sajib, 25; Riyad, 22; Titon Garji, 32; Rajib, 35; Saba Karim Laki, 45; Kalu alias Swachhchasebak Kalu, 40; Rojob Ali Pintu, 46; Sirajul Islam, 55; Tarek Rahman Robin, 22; Mizan, 27; Apu Dhata Das, 32; Himmat Ali, 24; and Anisur Rahman Hawlader, 40.

Rohingya

FROM PAGE 12

within the camps. The majority are women and children.

"There is a huge gap in terms of what we need and what resources are available. These funding gaps will affect the daily living of Rohingya refugees as they depend on humanitarian support on a daily basis for food, health and education," Baloch told reporters.

The humanitarian sector has been roiled by funding reductions from major donors, led by the US under President Donald Trump and other Western countries, as they prioritise defence spending prompted by growing fears of Russia and China, reports Reuters.

"With the acute global funding crisis, the critical needs of both newly arrived refugees and those already present will be unmet, and essential services for the whole Rohingya refugee population are at risk of collapsing unless additional funds are secured," Baloch said.

The refugee response is facing a critical funding shortfall, with UNHCR's appeal for \$255 million only 35 percent funded. Without additional support, health services could collapse by September, and food assistance may cease by December, affecting 230,000 children, including 63,000 recent arrivals, the agency warned.

Baloch added that the situation is fuelling desperation and anxiety, prompting some to undertake dangerous sea journeys in search of safety.

Despite the border with Myanmar remaining officially closed, the Bangladesh government authorised emergency assistance for the new arrivals. UNHCR and its partners have called on Dhaka to continue providing managed access to asylum, while urging the international community to step up support.

Bangladesh has long been praised for its generosity in hosting Rohingya refugees, but officials and aid agencies warn that without sustained global solidarity, the humanitarian response may falter.

Another

FROM PAGE 3

said Ripon suffered 60 percent, Chandni 45 percent, Tamim 42 percent, Rokon 60 percent, and Ayesha 63 percent burns.

"All of them have suffered burns to their respiratory tracts as well. Their conditions are critical," the doctor said.

Earlier on Thursday, a woman and her husband died, while their three-year-old daughter sustained burn injuries in another "gas explosion" in Jatrabari.

Experts from the Fire Service and Civil Defence and law enforcement agencies said there is no risk if leaked gas from pipelines, cylinders, air-conditioners, or septic or water tanks escapes into open spaces.

But if the gas accumulates inside a closed room, it becomes akin to a ticking time bomb. When the gas comes in contact with a spark – either from an electric short circuit or a lit matchstick – an explosion can rip through the room.

Ex-Jubo Dal

FROM PAGE 12

Locals said Mahbub had a long-standing rivalry with a group involved in drug dealing and had come under attack on multiple occasions since August 5 last year.

OC Atahar said police were conducting drives to arrest the attackers. The body of Mahbub was sent to Khulna Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

PRAYER TIMING		JULY 12			
Faaz	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:40	12:45	5:00	6:55	8:17	
JAMAAT 4-15 1-15 5-15 7-00 8-45					
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

Consensus talks set to enter

FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, the commission has proposed a new plan to form the caretaker government and appoint the chief adviser through an inclusive parliamentary process.

The previous proposal suggested appointing the chief adviser via the National Constitutional Council and selecting an individual from retired chief justices, in accordance with the 13th amendment of the constitution.

According to the new proposal, a seven-member "chief adviser selection committee" will be established 30 days before the conclusion of the parliament's term.

The committee will include the prime minister, the opposition leader, the Speaker, the opposition deputy speaker, and three upper house members nominated by the government, the opposition, and other parties.

Within 24 hours of its formation, the ruling coalition and main opposition will each propose five eligible names, while other parties represented in both houses will jointly propose four more.

The committee will hold a hearing in the lower

house within five days, with upper house members also present there to review all 14 nominees.

After the hearing, the ruling coalition and the main opposition will pick one name from each other's list and one from the list proposed by the smaller parties. A common choice will automatically be the chief adviser.

If there is no common choice, upper house members will vote using a ranked-choice system – in which candidates are ranked in order of preference – to select one. Then the president will appoint him/her as chief adviser.

The chief adviser will then appoint up to 15 advisers.

On June 18, BNP and its allies opposed the formation of a proposed National Constitutional Council (NCC), which was intended to oversee appointments to constitutional bodies and the chief adviser.

In contrast, parties like Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party (NCP) supported the proposal.

On June 19, political parties remained sharply divided over the process of electing the president. The BNP rejected a proposal to elect the president through

an electoral college of MPs and local government representatives.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh and the LDP favoured retaining the existing system where only MPs elect the president, while Jamaat and NCP supported the electoral college model.

On June 22, after two days of discussions, all parties except the BNP and two others agreed on limiting a person's tenure as prime minister to 10 years.

On June 25, the commission revised the structure and functions of the proposed NCC, renaming it the Committee for Appointments to Constitutional and Statutory Bodies.

It also excluded the chief adviser's appointment from its purview, responding to objections from BNP and its allies.

Additionally, the word "pluralism" was dropped from the proposed basic constitutional principles due to opposition from the BNP, Jamaat, and several Islamic parties.

798 killed

FROM PAGE 12

cemeteries, families, Palestinian health authorities, NGOs and its partners on the ground.

Most of the injuries to Palestinians in the vicinity of aid distribution hubs recorded by the OHCHR since May 27 were gunshot wounds, Shamdasani said.

"We've raised concerns about atrocity crimes having been committed and the risk of further atrocity crimes being committed where people are lining up for essential supplies such as food," she said.

Meanwhile, Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), has accused Israel of engineering the "most cruel and Machiavellian scheme to kill" in Gaza, in an outraged response to the killing of nine children who were in line for food supplements.

Rizvi slams

FROM PAGE 3

The BNP leader said reforms are an ongoing process across countries and over time. "Reform is not something fixed like the Thai mountain range – it is a dynamic process."

He said reforms should be carried out when needed for the sake of democracy, the state, or the people, and appropriate laws should be enacted accordingly.

"This is the very nature of a democratic constitution. But insisting that reforms must come first and that the July Charter must be included in the Constitution's fundamental principles is misleading. It is creating confusion among the people," Rizvi said. "Why are you trying to mislead the public in this way?"

The BNP leader urged political parties to prioritise returning power to the people over making confusing demands.

At another programme yesterday, BNP Standing Committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy said the party is not desperate to come to power but is committed to restoring democracy. "I hope Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus will honour his promises and conduct a fair election. And no one can obstruct that – because the people are here," he said, while speaking as chief guest at a cultural event organised by Jatiotabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Meanwhile, BNP Vice Chairman Shamsuzzaman Dudu yesterday demanded the interim government announce a specific date for the national election, although it has already hinted at February.

Speaking at a protest rally in the capital, Dudu alleged that "certain quarters" are trying to block the election by raising issues related to reforms and justice.

Don't allow

FROM PAGE 4

Mosque, organised by its Dhaka city chapter, according to a press release.

It said the move to open the UN rights office will be an "interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs and a threat to the country's sovereignty".

Presiding over the rally, Hefazat Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque said the interim government is taking decisions that go against public sentiment and the spirit of independence.

"The so-called human rights of the United Nations are actually tools of Western ideology, which go against Islam and humanity," he claimed.

Mamunul added that the government has no right to make decisions that ignore public opinion.

He warned of a stronger movement if the decision is not withdrawn.

No polls alliance with Jamaat

FROM PAGE 12

shortcomings in how the meetings are conducted by the National Consensus Commission, which is making the whole process time-consuming.

"I hope that the discussion would not continue much longer. We should move towards a summary and conclusion."

Salahuddin said there is significant development that the caretaker government system has almost been restored – only the Supreme Court's review is pending. "We hope the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will deliver a positive verdict on the review petition."

He said the people of Bangladesh agree that national elections should be held under a neutral caretaker government. "But there is still debate over its structure or

whether the immediate past chief justice should remain the first option for the chief adviser of a caretaker government."

The BNP leader said discussions on alternatives are still ongoing. "If no better option is agreed upon, the current structure will be in force."

Salahuddin, who is representing the BNP in discussions with the Consensus Commission, strongly opposed the idea of introducing a proportional representation (PR) system in the formation of the upcoming parliament.

He argued that the PR system could disconnect voters from their direct representatives, discourage voter participation, and create instability by resulting in fragmented parliaments with no clear majority.

The BNP leader explained that voters in Bangladesh prefer to vote for a person they know from their own area, not just for a political party.

Even within alliance partners of BNP, Salahuddin said different views may arise. "That could be part of their bargaining strategy, like seat sharing."

Asked about the Awami League's future, he said, "My view is that the Awami League is no longer a political party. They lost their political ideals and character long ago. They have transformed themselves into a mafia-like organisation – an undemocratic, fascist force. Throughout their history, from before 1975 until now, they have never practised democracy. Democracy is simply not in their DNA."

Trump slaps 35% tariff

FROM PAGE 12

Trump had not made a final decision on those issues, an administration official said.

Trump complained in his letter about what he referred to as the flow of fentanyl from Canada as well as the country's tariff and non-tariff trade barriers that hurt US dairy farmers and others. He said the trade deficit was a threat to the US economy and national security.

"If Canada works with me to stop the flow of Fentanyl, we will, perhaps, consider an adjustment to this letter," Trump wrote.

Canadian officials say a minuscule amount of fentanyl originates from Canada but they have taken measures to strengthen the border.

Trump has broadened

his trade war in recent days, setting new tariffs on a number of countries, including allies Japan and South Korea, along with a 50 percent tariff on copper.

His latest salvo rattled investors anew, with US and European stock futures dipping in Asia yesterday as markets nervously awaited ahead of expected tariff on European Union later yesterday.

The potential escalation between the EU and the US is a big deal for financial markets," said Joseph Capurso, head of international economics at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. "If you get something similar to (the US-China trade war in April), that's going to be very destabilising."

People won't allow

FROM PAGE 12

Central NCP leaders held the rally as part of their month-long "July March to Build the Nation" campaign, which is being carried out across all districts throughout July.

Criticising the Election Commission, Nahid said, "The most dysfunctional institution in the country is the Election Commission. The people of Bangladesh will not accept any election without justice and reform."

He also demanded that neutral individuals be appointed to the Anti-Corruption Commission, the police operate impartially with promotions based on merit and competence, and that the army focus on strengthening the country's defence system.

"We do not want any officer of the army or DGFI

to be involved in enforced disappearances. We want to build a state rooted in justice, responsibility, and compassion," he said.

At a separate event in Benapole, NCP chief organiser (South) Hasnat Abdullah also criticised the EC, saying, "The commission is again moving towards a staged election and pre-determined results. We don't want a BNP-backed or NCP-backed commission. We want a Bangladesh centric Election Commission."

He made the remarks during a views exchange meeting with July uprising victims and families of the martyrs at a hotel in Jashore town.

Addressing the BNP, he said, "We urge you not to betray the blood of your own activists."

Washington, Dhaka try to iron out key tariff

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh reduce its reliance on China for sourcing industrial raw materials, the official familiar with the discussions said.

Bangladesh, however, stuck to its demand that the US lower the tariff on Bangladeshi exports to at least 10 percent, as the country remains a member of the least developed countries (LDC) group.

US Trade Representative negotiators expressed concern over Bangladesh's heavy dependence on China for industrial inputs, the official said.

He added that it was difficult to predict the outcome of the ongoing talks, especially as US President Donald Trump had already sent a letter to Dhaka imposing a 35 percent tariff on all Bangladeshi goods entering the US starting August 1.

According to the official, the steep tariff was triggered by the high concentration of Chinese content in Bangladeshi exports, a move seen as part of Washington's broader

strategy to curb China's economic influence.

In FY24, Bangladesh imported \$16.63 billion worth of goods from China, about 26.4 percent of its total import bill, Bangladesh Bank data shows. Over 80 percent of those imports were industrial raw materials, particularly for the garment sector, including fabrics, chemicals, and accessories.

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin met with US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer at the USTR office in Washington, DC, at 11:00am local time on Thursday, according to a statement from the Chief Adviser's Office.

During the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepen bilateral ties and discussed key issues in trade and commerce, with special focus on the tariff negotiations.

The talks were comprehensive, covering nearly all aspects of the Bangladesh-US trade relationship, the statement

added.

Bashir Uddin is leading the Bangladesh delegation in Washington, DC. National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman and the Chief Adviser's Special Assistant on ICT and Telecommunications Faiz Ahmed Tayeb joined the talks virtually from Dhaka. Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman and an additional secretary also attended the meeting in person.

Senior US officials from various sectors, including agriculture, labour, environment, Treasury, innovation, intellectual property, and investment, participated in the discussions.

Meanwhile, business leaders in Dhaka expressed deep concern over the potential impact of the new tariff. At a meeting with four advisers at Rail Bhaban on Thursday evening, they warned that exports, which reached around \$8 billion to the US last year, would take a major hit.

Industry insiders estimated that nearly 200 small and medium

enterprises could be forced to shut down, resulting in job losses for more than 100,000 workers.

They also said US retailers and clothing brands were already delaying work orders due to the prevailing uncertainty. Business leaders claimed they had urged the government two months ago to appoint lobbying firms in the US to help negotiate the tariff issue with the Trump administration.

On Thursday, Trump suggested he may raise the baseline tariff on foreign imports from 10 to 20 percent.

This rate would still add on to some other pre-existing levies such as 'Most Favored Nation' tariffs, according to a US official who requested anonymity to discuss the matter.

That would push the typical total average effective rate even higher. US sectoral tariffs, such as on automobiles and steel, are separate from the baseline rate but not cumulative – importers pay one or the other.

CREATIVE NONFICTION

The pond remembers:

On visiting Lojithan Ram’s ‘Arra Kulamum, Kottiyum, Āmpalum’

Ram took this memory, layered it into cyanotype, adorned it with lotus blossoms and ritual light, and gave us something that hovered between relic and vision. It was not just a tribute. It was an invocation.

NASEEF FARUQUE AMIN

"I hate travelling and explorers. Yet here I am proposing to tell the story of my expeditions." Claude Lévi-Strauss opens *Tristes Tropiques* with this paradox, wary of the voyeurism that often accompanies travel yet compelled to reckon with the journey nonetheless. I carried that same ambivalence on my recent visit to Sri Lanka. I did not arrive as a tourist chasing beaches or colonial nostalgia, but as a seeker, curious about the textures of place, history, and memory through literature, visual culture, and lived landscapes. In reading Sri Lankan authors, I had already encountered the haunting reverberations of the civil war, stories often told in whispers, in absences. By sheer coincidence, I walked into an exhibition in Colombo that echoed these very undercurrents. What I found there was not simply art, but a deeply personal vocabulary of grief and endurance, offering a visual grammar for the silences I had previously only read.

I walked into the Paradise Road Saskia Fernando Gallery, located at 41 Horton Place, Colombo, a gallery that felt less like a place to see and more like a place to feel, and found myself enveloped in blue. Not metaphorically, but truly and deeply. The air was heavy with the indigo tint of cyanotypes, those old photographic prints that soak up the sun and give back spectral images.

The exhibition, titled "Arra Kulamum, Kottiyum, Āmpalum", was the debut solo of an artist named Lojithan Ram, aka, Ramanathan Parilojithan. Not just an artist, but a cartographer of absence, a memory-smith hammering his own past into forms both tender and ghostly. A Tamil from Batticaloa, eastern past of Sri Lanka, born into a community whose memories have been tattooed by civil war, Ram was not telling



PHOTOS: NASEEF FARUQUE AMIN

stories—he was exhuming them.

There was one cyanotype that caught me mid-breath. A fabric print, blue as old ink, fluttering slightly at the corners like it might escape its pins and fly. A man stood at its center, shirtless and strong, with two children resting on each hip. Behind him, a cascade of flora, a canopy of the past. Beneath him, a pond blooming with lotus flowers. It looked like a family photo, like something folded into an old album and hidden

in a drawer of relics.

But then I saw it. Layered onto the photo, in gleaming gold lines, was a tape recorder. A boombox. Its symmetry cut across the image like a portal. Not nostalgia, I soon understood. Not just aesthetic play. This was his uncle. The one who sang the funeral chants, the Vaikuntha Ammanai, is that Tamil hymn of mourning sung for 31 days after a death. His uncle had recorded himself chanting these rituals. And when he died, the tape was played at his own funeral. The machine became the mourner. The voice, disembodied yet intimate, officiated its own exit. A resurrection, performed by cassette.

Ram took this memory, layered it into cyanotype, adorned it with lotus blossoms and ritual light, and gave us something that hovered between relic and vision. It was not just a tribute. It was an invocation.

This is the alchemy of Ram’s work. The ordinary turned ceremonial. Family turned epic. Tape recorders turned gods.

Along a quiet wall of the gallery hung a series of works on old cement sacks, their surfaces bearing faint blue cyanotypes and golden silhouettes of everyday objects: a cactus, a chair, a flower, a kettle. These were not simply still lives but acts of remembrance. The cement sacks came from Ram’s childhood, when his father would collect them from construction sites, choosing the strongest ones to bring home. There, they were cut and folded into paper bags, a small family livelihood crafted by hand. Ram, as a boy, often helped in that process.

By returning to these materials, he honors that shared memory. The objects printed on them are drawn from daily life but transformed through memory and labor into something sacred. What once held building materials now carries the traces of a household’s quiet endurance. The artworks shimmer with tenderness. They speak of making do, of making meaning, and of a bond between father and son that lives on in paper and ink.

His art becomes a geography of loss. Not a personal loss alone, though it certainly is that, but a collective cartography of erasure. Civil war, displacement, disappearances. A nation that cannot remember its wounds tries to pave them over, and here comes Ram, peeling back the asphalt and revealing the bones underneath.

And then there is the title of the exhibition. “Arra Kulamum, Kottiyum, Āmpalum”, a verse borrowed from *Avvaiyar*, the ancient Tamil poetess, whose lines speak of a dried-up pond. The birds flee when the water disappears, but some aquatic plants remain. Kotti. Āmpal. Neythal. Their roots dig deep into cracked soil. They do not escape. They endure.

This is the metaphor Ram has chosen, and perhaps the one that has chosen him. His art is not about survival in a triumphant sense. It is about rootedness in the absence of sustenance. The clinging of memory to barren ground.

Ram’s sculptural series *Poigai* works like a memory pond. Objects float or sink within imagined lotus landscapes. A bicycle stands with a stack of papers balanced on its rear, an offering to his father who once pedaled through life with persistence and poise. A bed blooms with lotuses, transforming sleep into sanctum. These objects, so ordinary, become altars. Their dailiness becomes their divinity.

It struck me that what Ram has done is to reassign the role of memory from the realm of thought to the realm of form. You do not merely remember these things. You see them, smell them, feel the edges of their weight. They become as tactile as mourning itself.

There is a certain stillness in his work, but it is a deceptive stillness. Beneath it, there is an ache. That ache is not loud. It doesn’t wail. It murmurs. It seeps in like humidity. You don’t realize it has soaked you until you are wrung out.

And yet, his work is not hopeless. That would be too simple. Ram does not paint grief without its twin, love. He does not mourn without memory. He allows for longing, for reflection,

for the possibility that even absence can be a presence of sorts. It is a form of devotional art, not in the religious sense, but in its attentiveness. He worships the memory. He enshrines the mundane. He tends to the invisible.

As I moved through the space, I began to understand that this was not just an exhibition. It was a ritual. A visual liturgy. The cyanotypes were prayers. The sculptures were offerings. The gallery itself had transformed into a pond of recollection, and we, the visitors, were either the birds that fly away or the roots that stay. I did not



know which I was, but I knew I would carry the blue with me.

What Ram gives us is not a story with a clean ending. He does not offer a resolution. He offers a landscape of longing. A space where belonging is uncertain, and home is not a place, but a sensation revisited over and over again. His work recognizes the ache of impermanence, the fact that everything can be lost, and yet insists on the beauty of what remains.

I left the gallery not with clarity, but with questions. I thought of the pond. I thought of the plants. I thought of the boombox playing its sacred chant into the silence. I thought of my own family, of my own ghosts, of the photographs I’ve forgotten to look at for years.

Ram does not ask us to mourn with him. He asks us to listen. To the pond. To the chant. To the cassette that rewinds itself over and over until the voice of the dead becomes part of the living again.

In a time where spectacle often overshadows sincerity, where art sometimes forgets its heart, Lojithan Ram offers a whisper. A blue whisper. And in that whisper, you may just hear your own name.

Naseef Faruque Amin is a writer, screenwriter, and creative professional.

|| STAR BOOKS & LITERATURE PRESENTS ||

OUR JULY STORIES

This July marks one year since the uprising that shook Bangladesh and ignited calls for justice across the nation.

As we mark the anniversary of that turning point, we pause to remember, reflect, and reckon with its echoes today.

This year, we invite university students, who stood at the forefront of the July uprising, to share their experiences and reflections. We want to hear from you—your stories, your traumas, and your hopes.

Submit your writing to us under one of the following categories:

- Poetry
- Fiction (500 words)
- Essay/creative non-fiction (1000 words)

Email your submission to: dsliteditor@gmail.com

Selected pieces will be published online or in print.

DEADLINE: JULY 25, 2025

Nine scored, but Butler urges ‘more clinical’ Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler lamented his team's finishing despite a resounding 9-1 victory over Sri Lanka in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday.

Mosammat Sagorika, one of nine senior national team members included in the squad, led the way with a hat-trick. Munki Akter scored twice, while Shikha Jahan, Rupa Akter, Sapna Rani, and Shanti Mardi added one each. Layansika Jasotharan netted a late consolation goal for Sri Lanka.

"I thought we could have been more



I just felt we were a little bit wasteful. I gave a few players opportunities to play. Some, in my opinion, did very well. Some of the others maybe not as good.

Bangladesh coach, PETER BUTLER

clinical with our finishing," Butler said during the post-match press conference. "I just felt we were a little bit wasteful. I gave a few players opportunities to play. Some, in my opinion, did very well. Some of the others maybe not as good."

Just a week ago, Butler guided the senior team to a historic qualification for the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Myanmar. Several players from that side

featured in yesterday's match, and their confidence and experience was evident as Bangladesh scored twice in the opening five minutes. However, the team managed only one more goal before halftime. The second half saw a more dominant display as they added six more.

"To me, the most important thing was I was just looking at a few combinations, and it gave me an opportunity to try out

a few different players," Butler said. "I thought Shanti [Mardi] came on and was outstanding. I thought we looked a little bit laboured, but that's understandable coming back from a long trip. Really not having a lot of time to prepare, but that's no excuse. There's no excuse for sloppiness."

The match was played on a rain-soaked pitch, and Butler acknowledged the challenging conditions, relieved as none of his players got injured. Bangladesh faced similar conditions in the Asian Cup qualifiers in Myanmar due to torrential rain but the pitches there fared better.

"The pitch didn't help. The pitch was very heavy. Obviously nobody's fault. But yeah, to score nine goals and still be disappointed to concede the solitary goal at the end, which was a little bit sloppy on our behalf. But just relieved we've come through unscathed with no injuries," he added.

Bangladesh will face Nepal, who beat Bhutan 6-1 in the day's other match, in their second match tomorrow at the same venue.

Subrota claims GM Zia Memorial crown

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Subrota Biswas became champion in GM Zia Memorial 2025, beating IM Minhaz Uddin Ahmed in the ninth and final round at Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall Room on Friday.

Subrota finished with an impressive eight points from nine matches in the event -- organised to honour the memory of the late Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman.

FM Tahsin Taswar Zia, son of GM Zia, finished second with 7.5 points after tie-breaking with IM Kushagra Mohan, who also secured 7.5 points.

Three players -- Indian IM Subhayan Kundu, IM Manon Reja Neer, and Anata Chowdhury -- earned equal 6.5 points each, and the tie-breaker saw Kundu, Neer and Anata finish 4th, 5th and 6th, respectively.

U-18 ASIA CUP HOCKEY

Bangladesh boys suffer semifinal defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite leading till the 50th minute, Bangladesh suffered a 6-4 defeat to Japan in the first semifinal of Men's U-18 Asia Cup hockey in China on Friday.

Yuma Fujiwara slotted a hat-trick to help Japan stage a fightback against Bangladesh, who had led the match by 4-3 goals till the 50th minute.

Bangladesh took a 2-0 lead within 12 minutes, but Japan fought back by end of second quarter.

Bangladesh, who were runners-up in the last edition held in Dhaka in 2016, restored their lead on the stroke of the half-time but it was again Fujiwara, who levelled the margin with a field goal in the first minute of the fourth quarter.

Moududur Rahman Shuvo's charges reacted quickly to restore the lead three minutes later but Japan scored three more goals in the final quarter. Bangladesh will play the third-place deciding match against Malaysia, who lost the second semifinal against Pakistan 4-3 in a tiebreaker.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh women's team were held to a 2-2 draw by Kazakhstan in a Super 4 match later in the day. The two teams will meet again tomorrow in the third-place deciding match.

Italy seal historic T20WC berth

STAR SPORTS DESK

Italy, known for football and other European sports, have scripted a massive piece of history in the country's sporting folklore by sealing a historic place in next year's T20 World Cup.

The Azzurri will be one of the 20 teams to fight with the willow and leather in India and Sri Lanka, come February-March next year.

They achieved this incredible feat by finishing runners-up in European regional qualifiers, despite a nine-wicket defeat to eventual winners of the qualifiers, Netherlands, in the last game on Friday.



After being restricted for 134/7, Italy needed to hold Netherlands for at least 15 overs in order to qualify.

Michael Levitt and Max O'Dowd got the hosts off to a flier in the Powerplay that took the momentum away from Italy early on but the visitors made sure to stretch the match till the 17th over to help themselves book a berth to India and Sri Lanka next year.

Netherlands, a regular feature in both ODI World Cup and T20I World Cup, sealed the top spot while Jersey missed out narrowly on net run-rate despite knocking out Scotland in a nail-biter earlier in the day.

Middle-order timidity laid bare

SPORTS REPORTER

Out of the 12 players who rolled their arm over in the first T20I between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Pallekele on Thursday, the only one who finished with an economy rate of below six runs per over was the hosts' Dasun Shanaka -- a batting all-rounder who only occasionally bowls in T20Is.

Shanaka, with his military medium pace bowling, conceded only 22 in four overs and also nicked off Tawhid Hridoy.

In a career spanning 103 T20Is, Shanaka has bowled in only 53 matches, and the last time before Thursday he had bowled four overs in a T20I was more than five years ago, against India in January 2020.

The second-best economy rate among the Sri Lankan bowlers belonged to leg-spinner Jeffrey Vandersay, who conceded 25 runs in his four overs, and also took the wicket of Bangladesh captain Litton Das.

This was an excellent performance for Vandersay, who was making his comeback to Sri Lanka's T20I side after three-and-a-half years.

Shanaka and Vandersay operated through the middle phase, bowling eight of the 10 overs between overs 7-16, in which Bangladesh made just 62 runs for the loss of three wickets.

Together, they conceded a mere 47 runs off 48 balls and also claimed a couple of wickets, and it



was their bowling that canceled out Bangladesh's promising start.

The Tigers had reached 54-1 after the Powerplay, and with Pravez Hossain Emon, who was going great guns, still unbeaten, they were in an ideal position to build towards a big total.

Sri Lanka were also without ace pacer Matheesha Pathirana in the match, leaving their bowling for the middle phase a little light.

But rather than taking calculated risks to further unsettle the Lankans, the Bangladesh batters let the game drift along, allowing a part-timer like Shanaka and a returning Vandersay to complete their quotas without any pressure.

This languid approach from Litton (6 off 11), Hridoy (10 off 13), Mohammad Naim (32 not out off 29), and Mehidy Hasan Miraz (29 off 23) was even more surprising, considering Bangladesh had announced a batting-heavy playing XI.

A stroke-maker like Shamim Hossain could play only five deliveries,



two of which he deposited for sixes, while Rishad Hossain and Mohammad Saifuddin did not get to bat.

In contrast to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka did not allow the opposition's part-time option to bowl any cheap overs.

Chasing 155, the hosts had virtually killed off the match in the Powerplay, which yielded a record 83 runs. The hosts' batters then batted conservatively and strolled to the target in 19 overs with seven wickets in hand.

Kusal Perera batted during that period of calm and made 24 off 25. But even he pulled out a reverse sweep and hit Shamim for a six to take 11 of his over.

After that, captain Litton did not bring Shamim back into the attack, even though spinners Miraz and Rishad fared better than the pacers. By attacking the part-time option at the right time, Perera displayed match awareness, which the Bangladeshi middle-order batters were too timid to do.

Wimbledon awaits A NEW QUEEN

AGENCIES

Wimbledon is guaranteed to crown a new women's singles champion on Saturday, as Amanda Anisimova and Iga Swiatek prepare for their first-ever showdown in the tournament's final.

For both players, this match is a defining chapter -- for Anisimova, a moment of redemption; for Swiatek, a statement on versatility and perseverance.

Seeded 13th, Anisimova arrives at the final on the back of a remarkable resurgence. Just a year ago, she exited in the last round of qualifying and had plunged outside the Top 400 following a mental health break midway through 2023. The American's journey back has been nothing short of extraordinary. She returned to form with a title win in Doha and reached the Queen's Club final last month. Now, having knocked out World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in a three-set thriller (6-4, 4-6, 6-4) in the semifinal, the 23-year-old finds herself on the verge of a maiden Grand Slam title.

"It goes to show that it is possible," Anisimova said after the win. "Just me being able to prove that you can get back to the top if you prioritise yourself -- that's been incredibly special."

Anisimova's grass-court growth has



been evident throughout the fortnight. Against Sabalenka, she won 24 of 40 second-serve points and saved 11 of 14 break points. Her fearless shot-making and backhand power have seen her win 28 straight matches in 2025 when taking the first set -- a stat that could prove vital against her next opponent.

Swiatek, meanwhile, continues to break new ground. The 24-year-old Polish star reached her sixth Grand Slam final with a commanding 6-2, 6-0 win over Belinda Bencic in just 71 minutes. A four-time French Open winner and 2022 US Open champion, this marks Swiatek's first Wimbledon final -- and her first title match on grass.

"Honestly, I never even dreamed that it's going to be possible for me to play in the final," Swiatek admitted. "But tennis keeps surprising."



She has won all five of her previous Grand Slam finals and boasts the best first-serve point win percentage (78%) among players past the first round at this year's event. Under coach Wim Fissette, Swiatek has adopted a more aggressive serve-and-strike approach suited to grass, and it's paying off.

Their upcoming duel will be the third Wimbledon final in the Open Era between two players who've never previously met in WTA competition. However, they do share junior-level history -- with Swiatek having defeated Anisimova in straight sets during the Junior Fed Cup final.

As the Centre Court curtain rises on Saturday, one certainty remains: a new name will be etched into Wimbledon history.

Sinner sets up final against Alcaraz

Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates after victory over Serbia's Novak Djokovic (6-3, 6-3, 6-4) during their men's singles semifinal of the Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on Friday. The world's No. 1 player will face two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz of Spain in the final.

PHOTO: REUTERS



India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah celebrates dismissing England skipper Ben Stokes on Day 2 of their third Test at Lord's on Friday. Bumrah finished with 5-74 as England were dismissed for 387 in their first innings. India were 145 for three at stumps. Photo: Reuters

PHOTO: REUTERS



Rohingya influx hits 1.5 lakh in 18 months

Says UN refugee agency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has received nearly 150,000 Rohingyas over the past 18 months, marking the largest influx since 2017, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The arrivals, driven by targeted violence and persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine state, have placed further strain on the already overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar, where nearly 1.1 million Rohingyas are being sheltered in just 24 square kilometres -- making it one of the world's most densely populated refugee settlements, the UN Refugee Agency posted on its website yesterday.

UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch, at a press briefing in Geneva, said 121,000 of the new arrivals have been biometrically registered, while many others remain undocumented

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



Mosammat Sagorika (R) celebrates one of her three goals with Munki Akter during their 9-1 drubbing of Sri Lanka in the opening match of SAFF U-20 Women's Championship at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday. Nepal, meanwhile, beat Bhutan 6-1 in the second match of the day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

People won't allow polls sans reform

Nahid tells Jashore rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday warned that if elections are held without reforms, Bangladesh would once again "descend into darkness".

"But the NCP will not allow that darkness to return. We will build a justice-based economy and Bangladesh-centric politics," he said at a rally at the Central Eidgah intersection in Jashore.

"A political party speaks for crores of people. We saw during the July uprising how many crores you actually have. But when we called, people flooded the streets like Ababil birds. Don't try to show us your crores of people -- we've seen all that. If there is justice and fairness, even a single person can stand equal to lakhs."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

No polls alliance with Jamaat

Says Salahuddin, hints at scope for talks with NCP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed has ruled out any possibility of an electoral coalition with long time ally Jamaat-e-Islami but hinted that scope for talks with the National Citizen Party would remain open.

In an interview with UNB, Salahuddin expressed confidence that the interim government will hold the next national election by mid-February next year as he thinks various parties are demanding the polls as part of their broader political strategies.

He also urged the National Consensus Commission to conclude discussions on reform proposals within a reasonable timeframe, warning against unnecessary delays that could hinder the election process.

"We had an alliance with them [Jamaat] in the past as part of our political strategy, but we don't feel the need of it this time."

Salahuddin said the BNP is rather focused on forming an electoral alliance and a national government with those who joined their simultaneous movement and democratic struggle.

Asked about a possible alliance with the NCP, Salahuddin said, "Discussions on political alliances will continue until the election schedule is announced."

He said all democratic parties will adopt different strategies ahead of the election. "So, let's wait and see what strategy the BNP ultimately chooses for the election and alliances."

The BNP leader said there seem to be some

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

798 killed near Gaza aid hubs in six weeks

Says UN; UNRWA chief accuses Israel of turning Gaza into 'graveyard of children'

AGENCIES

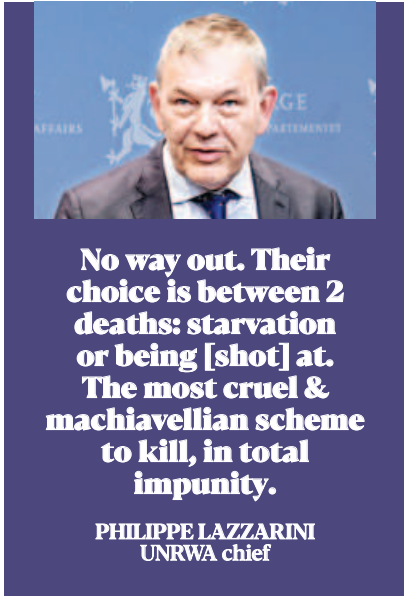
The UN rights office yesterday said it had recorded at least 798 killings within the past six weeks at aid points in Gaza run by the US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and near convoys run by other relief groups.

The GHF uses private US security and logistics companies to get supplies into Gaza, largely bypassing a UN-led system that Israel alleges has let Hamas-led militants loot aid shipments intended for civilians. Hamas denies the allegation.

After the deaths of hundreds of Palestinian civilians trying to reach the GHF's aid hubs in zones where Israeli forces operate, the United Nations has called its aid model "inherently unsafe" and a violation of humanitarian impartiality standards.

"(From May 27) up until the seventh of July, we've recorded 798 killings, including 615 in the vicinity of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation sites, and 183 presumably on the route of aid convoys," UN rights office (OHCHR) spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told a media briefing in Geneva.

The GHF, which began distributing food packages in Gaza at the end of May after Israel lifted an 11-week-old aid blockade, told Reuters the UN figures were "false and misleading". It has repeatedly denied that deadly



incidents have occurred at its sites.

"The fact is the most deadly attacks on aid sites have been linked to UN convoys," a GHF spokesperson said.

The Israeli army said it was reviewing recent mass casualties and that it had sought to minimise friction between Palestinians and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) by installing fences and signs and opening additional routes.

The OHCHR said it based its figures on a range of sources such as information from hospitals in Gaza,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

Ex-Jubo Dal leader shot dead in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Unidentified assailants shot dead a former Jubo Dal leader in front of his house in Khulna city yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Molla Mahbubur Rahman, 42, was the vice-president of the Daulatpur unit of the BNP's youth wing.

Quoting witnesses, Mir Atahar Ali, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station, said the attackers first shot Mahbub and then severed the tendons in both of his legs to ensure his death.

Mahbub had been expelled after a photo of him wielding a machete went viral during a clash between students and outsiders at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) on February 18.

Witnesses said three men on a motorcycle approached and opened fire while Mahbub was cleaning his car near his house in the Maheshwarpasha West Para area around 1:30pm.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

Consensus talks set to enter crucial stage

Key issues like CA appointment, PM tenure, upper house to be revisited

MD ABBAS

Talks between the National Consensus Commission and political parties are set to enter a crucial stage this week, with key unresolved issues set to dominate the agenda, sources said.

According to commission members, talks will likely focus on key contentious issues such as the prime minister's term limit, the appointment process of the chief adviser to the caretaker government, adopting basic constitutional principles, forming an upper house of parliament, rules for declaring a state of emergency, and other related matters.

These issues have come up repeatedly since the dialogue began on June 2, but no agreement has been reached yet.

"The talks are entering a crucial phase. We have discussed many matters, but decisions on some vital points remain pending," said Badiul Alam Majumdar, a member of the commission, speaking to The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Ali Riaz, vice president of the commission, said discussions on these pending issues will gain further prominence in the coming days.

"We are hopeful that we will be able to finalise the July Charter within this month," he said.

The next round of dialogue is scheduled to resume tomorrow (Sunday).

We hope that the issues regarding the process of appointing the chief justice and the declaration of emergency will be resolved on that day, Ali Riaz said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

US TARIFF THREAT

Walmart puts on hold some orders from Bangladesh

REUTERS, London/New York

Suppliers to Walmart WMT.N have delayed or put on hold some orders from garment manufacturers in Bangladesh, according to three factory owners and correspondence from a supplier seen by Reuters, as US President Donald Trump's threat of a 35 percent tariff on the textile hub disrupts business.

Bangladesh is the third-largest exporter of apparel to the United States, and it relies on the garment sector for 80 percent of its export earnings and 10 percent of its GDP. The factory owners all said they expected orders to fall if the August 1 tariffs go into effect, as they are unable to absorb that 35 percent rate.

Iqbal Hossain, managing director of garment manufacturer Patriot Eco Apparel Ltd, told Reuters an order for nearly 1 million swim shorts for Walmart was put on hold on Thursday due to the tariff threat.

"As we discussed, please hold all below Spring season orders we are discussing here due to heavy Tariff % imposed for USA imports," Faruk Saikat, assistant merchandising manager at Classic Fashion, wrote in an email to Hossain and others seen by Reuters. Classic Fashion is a supplier and buying agent that places orders for retailers.

"As per our management instruction, we are holding Bangladesh production for the time being and in case the Tariff issues settled, then we will continue as we planned here."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



Loading up on green vegetables from adjacent districts, a boat transports fresh produce to Dhaka via the Turag river. The photo was taken in the capital's Mohammadpur area.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Trump slaps 35% tariff on Canada

REUTERS, Washington/Ottawa

US President Donald Trump has ramped up his tariff assault on Canada, saying the US would impose a 35 percent tariff on imports next month and planned to impose blanket tariffs of 15 percent or 20 percent on most other trading partners.

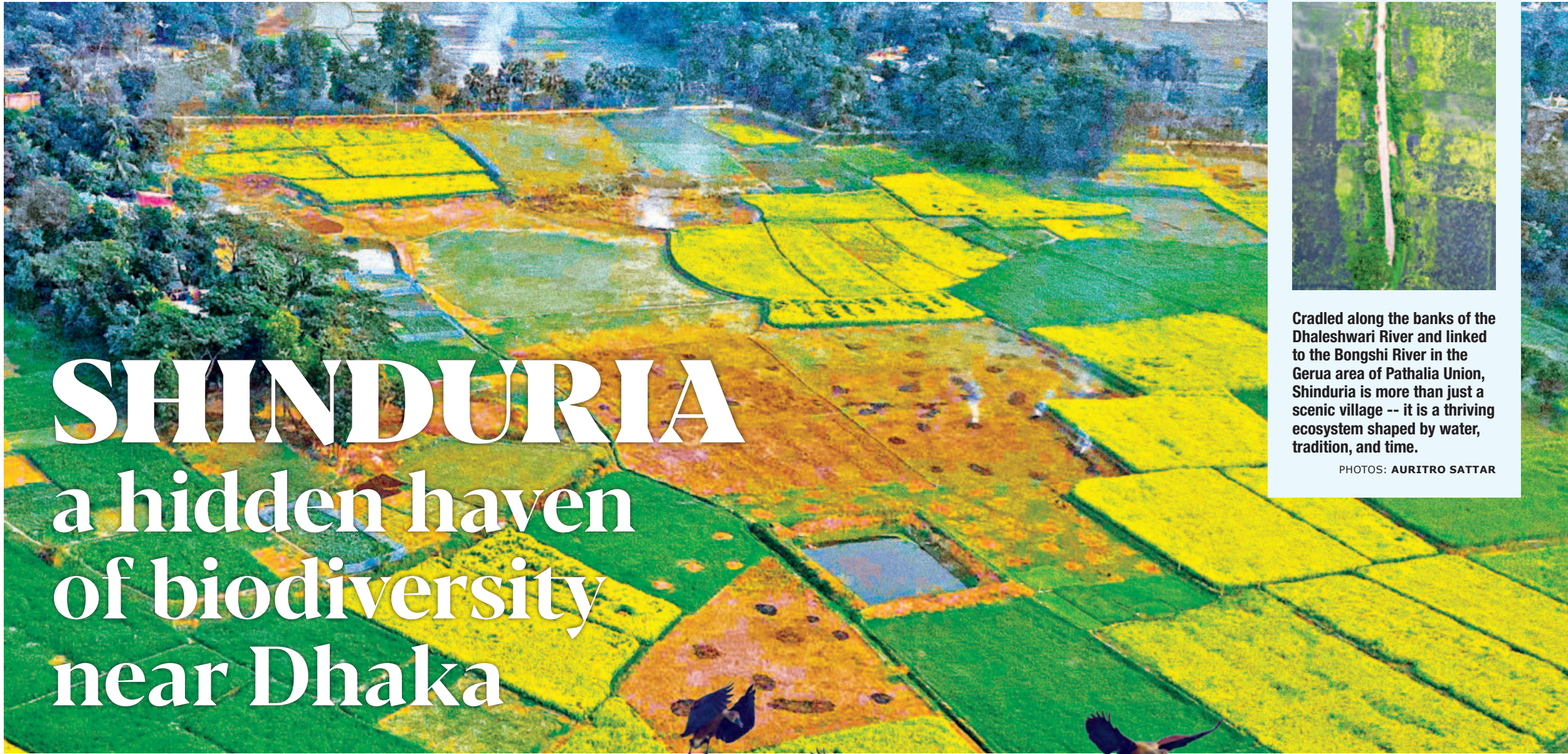
In a letter released on his social media platform, Trump told Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney the new rate would go into effect on August 1 and would go up if Canada retaliated.

In a post on X late on Thursday, Carney said his government will continue to defend Canadian workers and businesses in their negotiations with the US as they work towards that deadline.

The 35 percent tariff is an increase from the current 25 percent rate that Trump had assigned to Canada and is a blow to Carney, who was seeking to agree a trade pact with Washington.

An exclusion for goods covered by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) on trade was expected to stay in place, and 10 percent tariffs on energy and fertilizer were also not set to change, though

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



SHINDURIA

a hidden haven of biodiversity near Dhaka



Cradled along the banks of the Dhaleshwari River and linked to the Bongshi River in the Gerua area of Pathalia Union, Shinduria is more than just a scenic village -- it is a thriving ecosystem shaped by water, tradition, and time.

PHOTOS: AURITRO SATTAR



“Because Shinduria is relatively remote and free from heavy industry, the river water here remains clear,”

PROF AMIR HOSSAIN BHUIYAN
of Jahangirnagar University's Environmental Science Department.

SAKIB AHMED

Just 35 kilometres from the noise and fumes of Dhaka, and a mere five kilometres from Jahangirnagar University, lies a quiet village most city-dwellers have never heard of: Shinduria.

Cradled along the banks of the Dhaleshwari River and linked to the Bongshi River in the Gerua area of Savar's Pathalia Union, Shinduria is more than just a scenic village -- it is a thriving ecosystem shaped by water, tradition, and time.

It is a living, breathing ecosystem -- nourished by seasonal floods, sustained by traditional practices, and home to an extraordinary range of wildlife. Despite its proximity to one of Dhaka's most polluted rivers, the floodplains here remain surprisingly vibrant.

A Floodplain Full of Life

Each monsoon, Shinduria and neighbouring Mirertek are submerged by nutrient-rich floodwaters that rejuvenate the land. These waters leave behind fertile silt and organic matter, boosting the productivity of native grasses, crops, and wetlands.

“Because Shinduria is relatively remote and free from heavy industry, the river water here remains clear,” said Prof Amir Hossain Bhuiyan of Jahangirnagar University's Environmental Science Department. “But as the Dhaleshwari flows



Lesser Whistling duck

Black-breasted Weaver, Chestnut-headed Munia, Tricoloured Munia, Indian Silverbill, Common Myna, Black Drongo, Spotted Dove, Little Cormorant, Little Egret, Lesser Whistling Duck, White-throated Kingfisher, Bronze-winged Jacana, and Pheasant-tailed Jacana. These birds feed, nest, and breed here, attracted by the abundance of food and safe habitat.

Auritro Sattar, a conservationist and Environmental Sciences student at Jahangirnagar University, documented 12 mammal species in the area, including the Large Indian Civet, Small Indian Civet, Common Palm Civet, Golden Jackal, Jungle Cat, Fishing Cat, Greater Bandicoot

into natural nesting sites for birds like the Munias and Weavers.

“In a 400-metre stretch, we found over 300 nests,” Auritro said. “Some trees had as many as 50 nests.”

These groves are now quietly attracting birdwatchers, amateur photographers, and curious travellers.

“I was amazed,” said Sharmin Rahman, a visitor from Dhaka. “The calls of birds, the soft wind, and the shimmering water -- it feels like another world.”

A Fragile Future

But Shinduria's peaceful rhythm is being disrupted.

The majority of Shinduria's residents are engaged in agriculture

PHOTO: SAKIB AHMED

construction waste, causing serious damage to both soil and water ecosystems.

“Because of plastic deposition, the soil fertility in these floodplains is decreasing. Chemicals are not dispersing as they should, and the oxygen in the water is getting blocked by surface oil layers,” warned Prof Bhuiyan.

“Coconut trees are also dying, possibly due to increased radiation and environmental stress. If they disappear, the birds will follow -- leading to a chain reaction of ecological imbalance.”

He continued, “Such changes will severely impact the biodiversity and the delicate ecosystem that has developed here over generations. Even Jahangirnagar University's wetlands are at risk. Since these ecosystems are hydrologically connected, filling in Shinduria's floodplains could eventually cause waterlogging on the university campus itself.”

Tourism, too, is becoming a double-edged sword. The increased foot traffic, litter, and noise are already disturbing wildlife.

Over two years, conservationist Auritro Sattar observed the importance of these types of annual floodplains in Shinduria and Mirertek. They trap sediment and dilute pollutants, breaking them into less harmful forms while supporting biodiversity. During dry seasons, soil cracks enhance oxygen flow, limiting methane and carbon monoxide production. These floodplains also foster fertile grasslands that sustain insects and granivorous birds, linking aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems even near polluted areas like Dhamrai. However, this balance is under threat from rapid development -- plastic, paper and food waste from restaurants, motorbike emissions, poultry farms, overfishing, boat activity, and landfilling -- putting pressure on the ecosystem's ability

to maintain environmental stability and pollution thresholds.

Hope in Local Action -- But Is It Enough?

Still, there's a glimmer of hope. Local residents and young conservationists are stepping up.

Auritro and his team have started awareness campaigns, going door to door to educate villagers and business owners.

“I cut two of my coconut trees when I rebuilt my house,” said Saiful Islam, a 65-year-old resident. “Had I known they were important for birds, I wouldn't have.”

His family

In recent years, the expansion of restaurants, poultry farms, and infrastructure has led to the filling of floodplains and wetlands.



planted those trees 35 years ago.

For over 16 years, hundreds of Baya Weavers have returned to nest there, especially during the months of Falgun, Bhadra, and Ashar.

Saiful also recalled that his was one of only six households in the area decades ago. Now, new settlements -- often unplanned -- have sprung up on the floodplains, contributing to habitat destruction.

“The natural beauty of Shinduria brings joy to all of us. We grew up here -- this open field, the riverside, the environment -- you won't find such beauty anywhere else in Savar. Earlier, not many people used to come here, but with the improvement of roads, more and more visitors are arriving. Shops are also being set up. In a way, it feels good, since the place used to be quite isolated. But sometimes, the large crowds become uncomfortable for us, and the environment is gradually changing,” said Sheikh Abdul Kader, 24, a resident of Shinduria.

Some business owners are also seeing the bigger picture.

“People come here for the beauty,” said Jasim, who runs a local restaurant. “If we destroy it, our business dies too. We want to help -- but we need proper guidance.”

While these grassroots efforts are encouraging, experts agree: they're not enough.

Institutional backing, stricter environmental regulations, and community-based conservation models are urgently needed. Without them, the slow erosion of Shinduria's ecosystem could become irreversible, they said.



Buff striped keelback snake



Jungle cat



Bays Weaver



Golden Jackal

PHOTOS: SAKIB AHMED

downstream towards Savar and Dhaka, it turns dark and toxic due to industrial waste, sewage, and urban runoff.”

This upstream clarity makes Shinduria's wetlands a seasonal paradise.

A Sanctuary for Birds, Mammals, and Reptiles

From the rustling grasslands to the silent coconut groves, Shinduria has become a haven for birds and other wildlife. Field observations and research surveys have recorded dozens of bird species, including the Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Stonechat, Watercock, Baya Weaver,

Rat, and Common House Rat. He also recorded 15 reptile species, notably the Monocled Cobra, Spectacled Cobra, Banded Krait, Lesser Black Krait, Indo-Chinese Rat Snake, Painted Keelback, Checkered Keelback, and Smooth scaled Water Snake.

“The biodiversity here is deeply rooted in the community's traditional lifestyle,” Auritro explained. “Even household waste contributes organic nutrients to the ecosystem.”

One of the village's most fascinating features is its coconut tree groves, planted decades ago by villagers. These trees have evolved

and small-scale businesses, which include grocery shops, vegetable stalls, and fish trading. In terms of agriculture, locals primarily cultivate paddy, seasonal vegetables, and mustard.

Additionally, a portion of the population is employed in various positions at Jahangirnagar University, while some work in the garment industry.

However, in recent years, the rapid expansion of restaurants, poultry farms, and infrastructure has led to the filling of floodplains and wetlands. These developments are discharging plastic, chemicals, oils, metal scraps, restaurant and

Uncovering the Silent Deaths of MIGRANT WOMEN

Behind each coffin lies an untold story, an unanswered question, and a denial of justice. Every life lost without clarity and accountability is not just a statistic; it is a stain on our collective conscience.

MUJIB RAHMAN

In the shadows of booming remittance flows and the quiet resilience of Bangladesh's labour diaspora, a disturbing reality persists: numerous Bangladeshi female migrant workers, particularly those employed as domestic help in Gulf countries, are returning home in coffins. Officially labelled as suicides or natural deaths, many of these cases conceal a far darker truth.

Marina Sultana, Director of Programmes at the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), has been tracking these patterns for years. "Most Bangladeshi female migrants work as domestic workers in Gulf countries," she explains. "A worrying trend has emerged: the rising number of deaths, often obscured or misclassified on official death certificates."

Two harrowing cases reveal the gravity of the crisis. In one, a young woman's death was ruled a suicide, yet



PHOTO: STAR

"We have not received any formal complaints from the families of the deceased," Shariful adds, "but if complaints are made, we are committed to conducting thorough investigations."

Yet the absence of complaints does not mean the absence of abuse. Families often lack legal support, awareness, or the courage to seek justice.

According to BRAC, based on government data, 714 women returned in coffins from Middle Eastern countries between 2016 and 2022. The yearly breakdown is as follows: 52 women in 2016; 94 in 2017; 110 in 2018; 139 in 2019; 80 in 2020; 121 in 2021; and 117 in 2022. Behind each coffin lies an untold story, an unanswered question, and a denial of justice. It is time to demand more—both from Bangladesh and from host countries. Every life lost without clarity and accountability is not just a statistic; it is a stain on our collective conscience.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ / THE DAILY STAR

The coffin carrying the body of Nodi, a female migrant worker, is taken for burial from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka after arriving from Saudi Arabia. The photo was taken on October 31, 2020.

her family insists otherwise. They recall speaking to her just a day before her death; she had described being scalded with hot water by her employer, an injury they believe led to her death. In another case, the cause was reported as a rooftop fall, but the family suspects foul play.

Shakirul Islam, Founder and Chairperson of Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP), says families of deceased workers rarely accept the official explanations. "Many believe these deaths result from severe abuse," he says. "Some allege the victims were thrown from rooftops after enduring prolonged torture." Shakirul shares the account of a survivor who, after a brutal assault, was left bleeding without medical help. She survived, but her story underscores the isolation and vulnerability of domestic workers abroad.

The death certificates, he points

out, are often "superficial, if not misleading". They rarely reflect the abuse, psychological trauma, or dire conditions that may have contributed to these deaths.

Piyara Begum, who worked as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia for four years, recounts her ordeal: "I suffered chronic head and stomach issues, but there was no proper medical care," she says. "I received no support from any Bangladeshi official." Her health deteriorated, and when she pleaded to return home, her employer withheld four months' salary. Eventually, with the help of a local NGO, she returned home and received treatment.

Her son, too, returned from Oman—physically abused, tortured, and penniless.

Mim Akter, another returnee from Saudi Arabia, faced similar exploitation. "A dalal (middleman)

charged me 5,000 BDT. When I arrived, no one received me," she says. Forced to work long hours, her employer only provided lunch, leaving her to fend for the rest. One day, a brick fell on her chest, causing a serious injury. She paid 40,000 BDT for treatment herself. Her employer delayed her return for six months and seized assets worth nearly 300,000 BDT.

"I had to pay for my own return," Mim says. "Now I am trying to lodge a complaint through OKUP."

Shariful Islam, Deputy Director of the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB), says, "At least 15 million Bangladeshi migrants are actively contributing to the national economy. But the deaths of female migrant workers highlight the link between their vulnerability at home and their fate abroad." He acknowledges that stress and exploitation in the workplace may be contributing factors.

"We need a well-informed migration strategy to save lives," urges Marina Sultana of RMMRU. "Food habits, language barriers, poor accommodation, long work hours, and social isolation all contribute to daily hardship, sometimes with fatal consequences. Bangladesh should take inspiration from Hong Kong by improving residential training, including modules on workers' rights, behavioural expectations, and cultural orientation."

She also highlights how both the government and returnees often hide cases of abuse due to diplomatic caution or social stigma. "But we, as human rights advocates, have the testimonies and evidence to break this silence."

Bangladesh must demand clarity, accountability, and dignity—not only for those who return but for those who never get the chance.

Mujib Rahman is a journalist at The Daily Star.

The Wedding Melodies of Rangpur

Songs of Love, Loss, and Longing

NURUNNABI SHANTO

I remember—it was late afternoon, the sun leaning westward. From a distance, a soft yet resolute melody drifted through the air. I was just a boy then, curious and drawn by the sound. I approached quietly. The women of our neighbourhood had gathered beneath the jackfruit tree on the side of our yard. A low wooden stool sat there, upon which a group of village women had seated themselves and begun to sing:

"Gao hyalani diya nachey Golapi / Kol hyalani diya nachey Golapi / Golapir-o shisher sendur roidey jholomol korey / Golapir-o naker nolak roidey jholomol korey..."

[Sway, O Golapi, sway with your hips / She sways with grace, she sways with ease / Her vermilion sparkles in the sun / Her nose ring glitters with light...]

This biye'r geet is more than mere melody; it is an invisible theatre without stage or instruments, yet rich with the prose of life. A language of survival and self-expression, it allows women to voice joy, sorrow, memory, or protest.

These songs are the heartbeat of our intangible culture—though now rare in everyday practice, they still flow like a quiet stream through the villages of Rangpur. Meanwhile, on urban stages, biye'r geet is experiencing renewed life, with digital platforms such as YouTube and Facebook hosting countless performances that often blend traditional voices with both local and contemporary musical accompaniment.

At their core, these songs are layered with the emotions of departure: of leaving one's father's home for another family. In them echo the thrill and panic of transition, the beauty and ache of detachment. In a single verse, one hears longing, loss, and the unspoken fear of an uncertain future. Some voices make us laugh, some move us to tears, while others pierce through sarcasm, irony, and poetic mischief to touch parts of the heart untouched by words alone. These melodies reach beyond meaning itself; they are the music of lived experience, intimately and uniquely feminine.

Men rarely participate in these songs, as they are historically and culturally rooted in women's oral traditions. Occasionally, a man of humour or someone with a fluid gender identity may join, but the tone, language, and performance remain unequivocally female. Women compose and perform

spontaneously, drawing from memory and inherited tradition. These songs require no musical training, no formal choreography. The capacity to sing a wedding song is not taught; it is absorbed, embodied, passed from one generation to the next.

Wedding songs are dynamic and constantly evolving, with new verses crafted by altering select lines to mirror the unique circumstances and experiences of each community. The local accent, the inflection of the spoken dialect, shapes the musical phrasing. Thus, a single geet might sound different in Nilphamari than it does in the Gaibandha districts of Rangpur division.

The journey of marriage begins with matchmaking, and even that stage finds expression in song. These early songs carry not shame but a kind of humorous self-assertion: "O worthless matchmaker, why did you come? / We have no rice in the pot, what will we serve you..."

[Ore morar bayata ghatokkona / Alche hamar baritey / Ki khaite dimo clay / Chaul nai hamar harite...]

Yet even here, there's no apology—just an honest, sometimes cheeky presentation of life's truths. The bride's party sings with dry humour; the matchmaker's side replies, sometimes in kind: "Why not? Serve some stale rice / Add a bit of fried greens / We'll eat and fill our stomachs / And make this match happen!"

[Hoy na kyane panta bahey / Sathey ekna bhujina dyao / Khaya nemo pat bhore / Aghoton ghatamo hamra / Biyeokona hobar porey...]

Once the negotiations conclude, the ceremonies unfold: gaaye holud, the turmeric bathing; the setting of the marowa (banana plant altar) wrapped in pieces of vibrant, colourful cloth or papers; the lighting and submerging of the phorol (clay lamp); and many more. Each ritual is accompanied by songs. In one verse, the singers hide a woman's sorrow; in the next, it is laid bare in melody:

"Raindrops fall upon the yard / It's slippery with tears / There I tried to dance, O beloved / My necklace snapped and fell..."

[Jhori pore chipo re chipo / Angina hoila mor picila re Rosia / Sei na anginay



In the villages of Rangpur, wedding songs—biye'r geet—come alive through music, dance, and spontaneous performances, where women and community members gather to express joy, sorrow, and the timeless rhythms of rural life.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED



nachon re nachite / Chhirila golar malar re Rosia...]

The broken necklace is more than jewellery—it's a symbol of a girl's separation from childhood, from home, from identity. She knows she will not be the same after this night:

"Mother calls me her little one / Father says he won't marry me off / But how long can I live / In the shadows of youth..."

[Maaye koy mok chhoto chhoto / Bape na dey biya / Ar kotokal akimo / Joibon onchole bandiya...]

Wedding songs often repeat the same words, sung to a continuous, undulating rhythm. Their consistent pattern turns listeners into participants. In some cases, songs are sung in alternating groups—one for the bride's side, one for the groom's—creating a musical dialogue, almost like a social debate.

In every part of the wedding, song is inseparable from ritual. As the bride sits before the marowa, the women sing: "Little marowa, spread your leaves / The crows have flown to the city / O marowa, stay with us, we love you..."

[Chhoto chhoto marowa / Dhal dhal paan / Shohore melia geise kaak / Re marowa bhalobasom tok...]

Before the phorol is submerged in water, another verse rises:

"The leader goes ahead, her lamps behind / Between them goes the golden light / But with gold at hand, they chose bamboo instead / So be it, let the wedding happen!"

[Age age jay re Moroli / Pache jay tar Phoroli / Modhhey jay re sonar chailon bati / Sonar chailon thakite basher chailon byarakaishe / Hoya jak aaj ei chailoner shadi...]

These songs have no single author, no written notation, no scores. They are born in voice, sustained in memory, and shaped by life. As the ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl reminds us, "Traditional music is not just a set of sounds, it is a symbolic act embedded in society." The biye'r geet is a living expression of collective behaviour, an intangible cultural heritage, an identity, and a deep-rooted echo of who we are.

And yet, this art form now stands tragically on the brink of disappearance. Social and religious anxieties, economic

marginalisation, and cultural neglect are slowly reducing these songs to relics fit for museums. In many wedding yards today, the air is filled not with biye'r geet but with loudspeakers blaring Hindi film songs or DJ remixes. The geet gaownis—the women who once led these songs—have fallen into silence.

Still, when a wedding arrives, they wait to gather again, voices rising in memory and defiance. Perhaps they are the last generation. But they hope that the new generation will one day recognise that biye'r geet is not just cultural ornamentation—it is the language of women's introspection, resistance, and remembrance. Through these songs, women have articulated questions they could not otherwise ask, and answers they could only sing. To lose these songs would be to erase the unwritten autobiography of our women, their collective memories, and one of the most exquisite oral literatures of Bangladesh.

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Our Disaster, Their Management

Rethinking Disaster Preparedness in Bangladesh

GAWHER NAYEEM WAHRA

Over the past 54 years, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in disaster management, transforming itself from one of the world's most vulnerable countries into a global example of resilience and preparedness. A wide range of measures has been introduced at various levels to minimise damage and save lives—from the construction of cyclone shelters and embankments to the deployment of early warning systems and community volunteers. Technological advancements are enhancing these efforts, while innovative strategies from around the world continue to shape the modernisation of disaster management in Bangladesh. A key government priority today is to reduce the economic toll of disasters by strengthening disaster risk reduction in line with Bangladesh's Seventh Five-Year Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving this vision requires more than infrastructure and technology—it demands a people-centred approach that responds to the needs, experiences, and aspirations of those most at risk.

As risks evolve, so too must our approach. Disaster management must place people at its core. Making systems more accessible, inclusive, and people-friendly is crucial to ensuring that no one is left behind when disaster strikes.

Embankments

To stop the sea's fury during a cyclone, we have to build embankments along riverbanks and coastal lines. Unfortunately, our embankments often cannot withstand the normal tides of September (Bhadra). In the recent past, we witnessed the collapse of embankments in Shoronkhola (Bagerhat) when the cyclone was far away in Odisha (India). But there are other stories of long-lasting embankments as well.

Bangladesh has two successful examples of constructing high-quality embankments by involving the people of the vulnerable areas from the very beginning, as well as including them in ongoing maintenance. One is in Bhola and the other in Lakshimpur. These embankments remain strong 35 years after their construction.

On 28 May 2024, while visiting Koyra (Khulna) to see the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, I found a group of affected people with baskets and shovels repairing the embankments as the river water began to recede. They were working without any wages, with elderly people, women, and children all helping. There, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with Nilmoni Mondal, a day labourer who cannot support his family if he misses even a single day of work. Yet he volunteered to join the embankment repair work along the Shakbaria River without any payment.

I asked him, "Why are you giving 'baagar' (the local term for unpaid work) when you have no means to run your family?"

"We have no other option. If we don't work on 'baagar', it will take too long to fix this embankment. By then, there will be no way to live in this locality," he replied.

He continued: "Our disaster should be a matter of our management. We can't wait for your solution. We can't wait for the elephant (he was referring to the government) to come and fix the embankment. The elephant is great and heavy—perhaps even long-lasting—but it moves slowly. Perhaps you know the saying: 'Shomoyer ek fuor, ashomoyer dosh fuor' (One timely blow is worth ten untimely blows)."

The Story of Palm Trees and Lightning

Each year, more people are killed by lightning than by floods or cyclones. In 2025, up to 16 June, at least 171 people have been killed by lightning—seventy-five of them were farmers working in the fields. In 2011, a single lightning strike killed 13 people in Saraswatipur village of Sunamganj. A few years ago, in the month of August, 17 people were killed during a



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

People seek refuge in a school during the 2024 flood in Feni.

wedding party in Chapainawabganj.

Curtin University in Australia has conducted research on lightning incidents in Bangladesh. According to their findings, Bangladesh experiences an average of 8.4 million lightning strikes each year, 70 percent of which occur between April and June. Their accumulated data confirmed that around 1,878 people died from lightning strikes in Bangladesh between 2013 and 2020, 72 percent of whom were farmers.

The country's policymakers declared lightning a disaster in 2016 and promised to take necessary steps to address it. At that time, it was decided to plant 10 million palm trees and install lightning arresters on electric poles. However, after four years, it was discovered that the "Qazi's cows were in the book but not in the cowshed" (an expression meaning the promises existed only on paper).

The Ministry of Disaster Management claims that 3.5 million palm trees have been planted. Even if this claim is accurate, they are not in a position to prevent lightning strikes. It takes ten years for a palm tree to grow. Furthermore, palm trees were not planted where they were actually needed. They were mostly planted along roadsides, but very few people die from lightning while on the road. People die in the fields. Farmers are particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes while farming. It seems that mistakes were also made in selecting the locations for planting palm trees. We need to verify the truth of these allegations and revise our plans if necessary.

If the alternative to palm trees is lightning protection towers, then we need to think about that. We need to act before another lightning season arrives. If Vietnam and Nepal can do it, why can't we? Before citing financial crisis as an excuse for not installing lightning protection devices, we must consider the value of human lives. People should be encouraged to plant palm trees, date palms, and other suitable species in appropriate places, and the cutting of palm trees must be stopped. The selling and buying of boats made from palm trees (dunga) in open markets and the plantation of palm trees cannot go hand in hand.

Tularampur Haat, on the Narail-Jashore road, is one such major dunga haat where palm (taal) trees are sold in the form of boats. Every Friday and Monday from June to September, this market operates, and at least five to six thousand dungas are sold each season.

This year, a group of young people wrote a letter to the Deputy Commissioner of Narail, urging action to stop the haat and save thousands of mature taal trees. These young people are still waiting for a reply and positive action.

Coastal Green Belts and Shipbreaking Yards

Through afforestation and tree-planting programmes along the coast, it is possible to prevent erosion and reduce damage from other natural disasters in coastal areas. The

Green Belt Project, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1995, aimed to achieve this. However, much of the project, which ended in 2002, is now in disrepair. Over the past 25 years, more than 50 percent of the once-beautiful keora-bain-jhauban, paraban, and mangrove forests in the country's coastal areas have been destroyed.

Large sections of forest land have been cleared to build shipbreaking factories. As a result, the coastal map is changing due to increased sea erosion and storm surges. Croplands are being destroyed by rising salinity levels. A terrible environmental disaster is unfolding, putting the 715-kilometre-long coastal belt at serious risk.

This information was highlighted in a report by National Geographic a few years ago. Various international environmental organisations, including Greenpeace, have consistently expressed concern over the waste disposal practices of Bangladesh's shipbreaking industry. All harmful chemicals, including heavy metals and oil, are directly discharged as waste from this industry, severely damaging marine biodiversity. It is not only the shipbreakers—shrimp cultivators and salt field owners are also destroying the mangrove forests.

What Trees Are Being Planted?

There is no alternative to social forestry or the creation and maintenance of forests in coastal areas. People are planting trees and making efforts to protect them, which is very encouraging. However, the types of trees being planted also matter.

After Cyclone Sidr, it was observed that while many people were swept away by the cyclone and tidal waves, almost twice as many people died from falling trees. The trees that were uprooted were not native varieties. When planting trees in cyclone-prone areas, safety considerations should come before commercial interests. The uprooted trees were not native species. When planting trees in these vulnerable zones, safety must take precedence over commercial value.

Why Are People Reluctant to Use the Cyclone Shelters?

Many changes have been made to the design of cyclone shelters to meet the special needs of people of all ages in coastal areas. In the past few years, around 320 new cyclone shelters have been built, with space to accommodate livestock as well. These centres can shelter approximately 256,000 people and about 44,000 livestock in times of immediate danger.

Despite these improvements, why do people still hesitate to go to the shelters voluntarily? Why is there no spontaneity?

Why would people go to a shelter where only two square feet of space is allotted to each person? With technological advancements, in the past it was possible to receive accurate cyclone forecasts 24 to 36 hours in advance. Now such information is available even earlier. To ensure safety, the concerned administration also issues 'evacuation orders' to move to shelters nearly 50 or more hours before the cyclone is expected to hit.

But is it realistic to expect people to wait in such

cramped spaces for so long? Do we have no other options besides these so-called shelters?

A group of teachers, engineers, and architects from BUET calculated that it is possible to build around 32 to 33 storm-resistant houses for the cost of constructing one cyclone shelter. Almost twice as many people as one shelter can accommodate could take refuge comfortably in these houses.

If such houses exist in neighbourhoods, there would be no need to run around with belongings 50 hours before a cyclone hits. This is not merely a theoretical calculation—such a house has already been built in Kalapara, Patuakhali. Now, similar houses are being constructed in other areas through private initiatives using different designs.

Cyclone Warning

We still receive cyclone warnings designed primarily for ports and ships. A complex maze of signals—such as 'distant warning signals', 'distant cautionary warning signals', 'local warning signals', 'local cautionary signals', 'distress signals', 'great distress signals', and 'signals for communication loss'—creates confusion.

The general public living in vulnerable areas still do not understand the meanings of these various signals.

People living in places like Dhalghata or Chhnua do not understand how the signal suddenly jumps from number 5 to number 8 without passing through 6 and 7. Yet before every cyclone, these signals are broadcast over cable, radio, loudspeakers, and mobile phones.

If you call 1090 at no cost, you will receive advance warning of a thunderstorm. But, like the earlier radio broadcasts, you will hear

the ability to live with floods. We need to think more about controlled flooding rather than focusing solely on flood prevention or full protection from floods.

Is it right to build flood shelters in the form of two-storey buildings in flood-prone and river erosion areas in the name of disaster risk reduction? Or would it be more prudent to raise the roofs and courtyards of people's homes?

These days, however, we hear more about mega-plans than basin- and town-based local plans. The 'Teesta Master Plan' to manage floods in the Teesta basin is one such mega project.

The main idea of the project is to reduce the current width of the river from the Bangladesh-India border downstream to the confluence of the Teesta and Jamuna rivers to between 700 and 1,000 metres. The depth of the river will also be increased to 10 metres.

According to the proposed master plan, the Teesta River will be brought under proper management through river governance.

Those who have studied rivers, even briefly, and are familiar with rivers like the Teesta, have unanimously called it an anti-nature project. Prominent river expert and geologist Mohammad Khalequzzaman (Professor, Lock Haven University, Pennsylvania, USA) has clearly stated that the water seen at the bottom as a result of deepening the river is actually nothing but groundwater located in the basin areas on both banks. Using this visible water for irrigation will lower the groundwater level in the basin, reducing the availability of drinking water and irrigation water extracted through shallow tube wells.

Furthermore, due to the construction of embankments on both banks of the river,



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Community-led efforts to repair embankments in Koyra, Khulna.

the phrase: "There may be occasional rain in one or two places, somewhere, sometime, either in the day or at night." It sounds like a nonsensical rhyme.

Last December, when the Indian districts adjacent to Bangladesh were bracing for the arrival of Cyclone Jawad, while the panchayats were broadcasting messages over microphones about the rain and advising farmers on what to do, we in Bangladesh were still hearing the same old message—the broken record of warning signal number 3—broadcast from Satkhira to St. Martin.

The Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) is now much more extensive than before. However, there are many questions about its quality and continuity. This programme once played a significant role in developing rural leadership. In the past, the mock drills were far more innovative, regular, well-planned, and engaging. Nowadays, however, they fail to attract audiences or generate interest. In most cases, the average age of CPP volunteers is over 50, which means it fails to attract the new generation and youth.

Floods and River Erosion

Floods and river erosion are part of life in Bangladesh, a country of river basins. Bangladesh has developed because it has

the cross section will be greatly reduced, resulting in a significant increase in water flow and current levels during the rainy season. This will dramatically increase the erosion susceptibility of both banks.

Let us start open discussions among experts on all river-related mega projects.

Bangladesh has already proven its ability to predict river erosion. The Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS), a government trust organisation, is doing this efficiently and with confidence.

It is important to find a sustainable way to communicate river movement information to people living in erosion-prone areas, utilising the capabilities of this government trust organisation.

We must also keep an eye on development-induced disasters, especially urban disasters. The work of a nationwide land use plan should begin this year. Otherwise, neither the cities nor the villages will be safe.

As Nilmoni of Koyra hints, we need our own disaster management strategy, with one hundred percent ownership by the people living in disaster-prone areas.

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A powerful cyclone batters Teknaf in 2023.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Working at jute mills was somewhat of a family tradition for Nasima Akter.

Her father, Abdul Mannan, migrated from Noakhali's Companiganj to Khulna in the pre-independence era and took a job at Crescent Jute Mills, one of the oldest in the region. Later, Nasima and her two brothers, Shahadat and Al Amin, would follow him into the same line of work, reporting to their factory gates for more than a decade.

The jobs brought security, dignity and stability for the family, till July 2020, when it all came crashing down.

That monsoon, the then Awami League-led government announced the sudden closure of 25 state-owned jute mills across the country, citing years of losses, excessive production costs, and inefficiencies that had made the operations unsustainable.

More than 50,000 workers were laid off, including Nasima and her brothers, in three categories -- permanent, temporary, and substitute

Thursdays were payday, our happiest day of the week," he recalled.

"Now, I work all day, and still, I can't afford the minimum expenses. I don't know when we'll see better days again," he added.

Md Khalilur Rahman, former Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) leader of the closed Platinum Jute Mills, said that since mill closures in 2020, thousands of families have been pushed into extreme poverty.

"Children dropped out of school, medical care turned into a luxury, and despair became widespread. Hope alone cannot feed a family," said Rahman.

"The collapse of the jute industry has affected every layer of the city, from small vendors to transport workers to landlords," he said, "When the mills were running, life had sound and rhythm. Now, everything is quiet. Hundreds pull rickshaws to survive, and they are hoping that one day it will be open," he added.

in desperation. A year later, Rahima returned home with a child in her arms. Her husband had left.

"I worked at the mill for 16 years," Nasima said. "But I was never made permanent. When it closed, they gave me Tk 114,000 as part of the golden handshake. That money doesn't last long."

BEATING HEART NOW SKIPS A PULSE

Of the nine mills in the southwestern belt, three mills -- Daulatpur Jute Mills, Khalishpur Jute Mills and Crescent Jute Mills -- have been leased out. Meanwhile, two others, Platinum Jute Mills and Star Jute Mills, are in the leasing process.

In the Khulna-Jashore region, Jessore Jute Industries (JJI), Carpeting Jute Mills and Eastern Jute Mills are currently in production.

Alim Jute Mills has remained closed due to legal disputes related to its lease.

Yet the number of jobs created is not enough to create opportunities for workers like Nasima.

WHAT IS THE GOVT DOING?

Md Abdur Rouf, secretary at the Ministry of Textiles and Jute, told The Daily Star that efforts were underway to transfer the mills to the private sector.

"Today, (July 8) we finalised terms with four more mills," he said. "Many have already been leased out. Several mills began operations after taking leases but later withdrew. They cannot sustain the costs."

When asked why they were struggling or whether they wanted to diversify beyond jute, he replied, "We allowed and continue to allow them to venture into textiles beyond jute. These mills are very large in scale. They could utilise other sections of the premises for different purposes. Yet some lessees still terminated their agreements."

He added, "The jute mills are valuable resources. They must be utilised. That is only logical. The BJMC owns mills and factories across 13,000 acres of land. These sites are strategically important. They are being used in some form, and this must continue. Letting them sit idle is not an option."

"The BJMC or the government will not invest directly or run businesses here. They are stepping back from that. But there is no reason to leave these resources unused. The jute mills are resources," he said.

In a visit to Daulatpur Jute Mills earlier this year, Textiles and Jute Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin said the conditions for leasing jute mills to the private sector would be relaxed, allowing for the establishment of other industries alongside jute-based industries.

He noted that the initiatives to reopen jute mills under government management have only led to the loss of thousands of crores of taka and produced nothing fruitful.

BJMC BLEEDING CONTINUES

The BJMC, which operated the mills until June 2020, incurred losses of Tk 775 crore in the fiscal year 2019-20, the highest on available records.

The corporation suffered Tk 400 crore plus in the subsequent year after shutting down the jute mills and laying off workers.

Its losses continued in the following years too, as delays in leasing out the closed mills to private players and integration of existing employees to other state agencies, and to protect its huge estate.

Since the closure of the mills, the BJMC's total losses crossed Tk 1,300 crore until FY25, according to the Bangladesh Economic Reviews of different years.

The government projects BJMC's loss at over Tk 210 crore for the current fiscal year.

The closure of the loss-making mills might have slowed the bleeding by BJMC, but it did not stop completely. To do so, either the leasing process will have to be expedited, or the government will view the actual costs of life and livelihood through a different lens.

Kudrat E Khuda, president of Patkal Rokkay Sammilito Nagorik Parishad, wants the government to reopen the mills and give priority to the experienced workers.

"Workers have the right to live with dignity," said the civil society activist.



BROKEN PROMISES

The government plan was to reopen the mills within three months. That didn't happen.

Later, in April 2021, the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), which manages all government-owned jute factories and industries in Bangladesh, called upon interested investors to submit expressions of interest for leasing out 17 of the mills for a period of five to 20 years.

As of now, only 13 have been handed over to the private operators under lease.

In the Khulna-Jashore region, once the beating heart of the country's jute industry, nine mills were shuttered. Four have resumed limited production under private management, collectively employing just over 3,100 workers, a fraction of the 34,000 who once relied on those jobs.

"After I lost the job, even landlords started to act reluctant to rent houses to us. They are afraid we won't be able to pay the rent on time," said 49-year-old Nasima, who now works as a seasonal labourer.

"You'll see hundreds of 'To-Let' signs all over Khalishpur, but they won't rent to jute mill workers like us."

She was forced to leave her rented home in Noyabati, Khalishpur, and move to the city's Bastuhara area with her children, Hasib and Rahima. Her dreams of educating her kids faded quickly.

Her son, Hasib, took a job at a private power plant. Her daughter, Rahima, was married off early -- a choice made

workers in the jute mills.

At that time, the then government said closed factories would be modernised and reopened soon through various arrangements, including joint ventures, public-private partnerships or government-to-government partnerships.

Five years on, that revival remains partial and uneven.

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Despite all the hurdles, the laid-off workers still hope for a return to their old days. For them, it was not just a job, but also social security and respect.

"When the mill was running, local shopkeepers gave us groceries on credit because they knew we would pay them back when we got our wages. Now they don't trust us anymore. They know we can't pay," said Nasima.

Her brothers, who also lost their mill jobs, survive by hawking goods on the streets of Khulna city.

Tajul Islam, a former worker of Platinum Jute Mills, now earns his bread by working as a helper on public transport.

"Back when the mill was open, we had three proper meals a day. I could afford to feed my three children."

"Back then, when the morning siren blew, we'd line up to enter the mill. Work gave us respect, routine, and joy.

