

## Violence persists in hills

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Among the speakers were Sumitra Chakma, general secretary of the Rangamati District Committee of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Youth Association, and Mranusingh Marma, general secretary of the Hill Women's Federation Central Committee.

Similar protests were also held in the capital where protesters brought out a procession in the Shahbagh area.

Police on Wednesday arrested four men in connection with the rape, shortly after the victim's father filed a case against six named individuals with Sadar Police Station, according to Arefin Jewel, superintendent of police in Khagrachhari.

According to the case statement, the girl had been staying at a relative's house after attending a fair on the night of the incident. The six men allegedly broke into the house, tied up the relative, and raped her.

She initially did not tell anyone about the incident out of fear, but on July 12, she attempted to take

her own life. After being hospitalised, she shared the details with her family.

A doctor at the hospital on Thursday said her condition is critical.

**MJF DEMANDS JUSTICE**  
Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday expressed deep outrage, concern, and strong condemnation over the recent rape incident in Khagrachhari.

"While several suspects involved in this brutal and heinous crime have been arrested, ensuring their speedy trial and maximum punishment is now an urgent necessity," MJF said in a statement.

The organisation said the incident once again proves that the safety of women and children in the country is under severe threat.

According to data from Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, 1,555 women and girls were subjected to violence in the first six months of 2025. Among them, 354 were rape victims, most of whom were minors and adolescents. In June alone, 65 individuals were raped, including 43 children. Three victims died

after being raped, two of whom were children.

Such brutality against women and children is unacceptable under any circumstances, said the rights organisation.

MJF called upon the interim government to ensure a prompt and fair investigation and trial, with exemplary punishment for the perpetrators.

It also urged the government to provide comprehensive support for the physical and mental rehabilitation of the survivor.

The organisation stressed that there is no time to waste in addressing violence against women and children. It called for immediate action through effective law enforcement, public awareness campaigns, and collective efforts to restore deteriorating family and social values. Without this, more childhoods risk being destroyed.

MJF firmly believes that only exemplary punishment for this crime can deter future rapists and help establish justice and dignity for women in society.

## Won't stop until we dismantle

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we shed blood for it. So, the rules must change. But we know the rules haven't changed yet. In Narayanganj, the game is still on. If it doesn't end, then prepare for another mass uprising," Nahid told the gathering.

He added, "The battle must continue until we dismantle the old system and establish a democratic framework by and for the people."

He said fallen fascists are still trying to regain control of Narayanganj.

"We must liberate Narayanganj from dynastic and mafia control. We must build a people's Narayanganj," he added.

Other central leaders — including Hasnat Abdullah, Sarjis Alam, Nasir Uddin Patwari, Tasnim Jara, and Samanta Sharmin — also spoke at the rally held at Chashara intersection.

NCP's chief organiser (south) Hasnat Abdullah



NCP procession in Narayanganj.

PHOTO: STAR

said, "There was a chance for Awami League to repent, but after the Gopalganj incident the other day, even that opportunity is gone."

The NCP delegation had earlier held a rally in Munshiganj, where Nahid warned of further attacks and urged unity in the face of repression.

"The war we have declared against Mujibism through the mass uprising, the anti-fascist struggle we

have begun — we will not stop until it is brought to an end," he said.

He also promised to address local issues in Munshiganj, including illegal sand extraction, worsening river erosion, poor roads, and fragile healthcare and education systems.

Following the Narayanganj rally, the NCP motorcade left for Chattogram, party sources said.

## 27km stretch of Dhaka-Barishal

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bricks and soil have become exposed, eventually forming potholes.

In front of the Messr Brothers Filling Station in Pukhuria, potholes have merged with muddy water. Near Bhubukdia Thakur Bari, a turning point on the highway has uneven surfaces and potholes as deep as five inches — posing serious risks for vehicles. The stretch from Dangi Bridge to Bhubukdia Bus Stand is also in a sorry state.

In Bakhunda, potholes about two inches deep have formed across the road. From Talma Mor to Jamtoli Bridge and Mohila Road Bazar, large craters dominate the surface.

Md Rahman Sheikh, 42, a bus driver operating on the Faridpur-Tekherat route, said, "This 27-kilometre stretch is so bad that it feels life-threatening to drive on it."

Mehedi Hasan, 32, an ambulance driver from Sadarpur, said transporting critical patients to

Faridpur Medical College has become a challenge. "Sometimes we have to speed up for emergencies, but on this road, if I speed up, the vehicle might fall apart — and so might the patient inside," he said.

Shyamal Mondal, 23, a student of Government Rajendra College, said, "If you sit at the back in a bus, the jolts can make your head hit the ceiling."

Rashed Ahsan, 49, a passenger from Dhaka, said, "The road from Dhaka to Bhanga is excellent. But once I enter this part, it feels like you've entered a disaster zone."

RHD officials said the 30km stretch between Faridpur's old bus stand and Bhanga interchange includes a 3km bypass in Munshibazar that remains intact. But the remaining 27km is heavily damaged and nearly impassable due to persistent potholes.

Acknowledging the road's condition, Khalid Saifullah Sardar, executive engineer of Faridpur RHD,

said, "The road is on the verge of being unusable. The ministry has allocated 49 crore takas, and we've awarded the contract to RBL Company through tender. But we couldn't begin due to continuous rainfall. Work will start as soon as conditions improve."

He added that the four-lane project is still underway, but land acquisition delays have prevented progress on the Faridpur portion.

"Other districts like Barishal and Patuakhali are well ahead in terms of construction. In Faridpur, although 500 crore takas was deposited years ago with the district administration for land acquisition, they haven't handed over the land yet. That's why we can't start the main work."

### He played

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Dhaka Art School (now the Faculty of Fine Arts at Dhaka University), where Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin played a key role. Prof Monsur also discussed the history of fine arts from 1800 to 1955 during British India, post-partition India, and then East Pakistan.

He mentioned that Zainul Abedin, Shafiuddin Ahmed, Quamrul Hassan, and SM Sultan are the four most prominent artists of the country.

Referring to some of Rabindranath Tagore's artworks, Prof Monsur said the Nobel laureate's landscapes, especially those portraying twilight scenes, depict "a kind of solitude".

He also noted that during the partition, Muslim artists were at a disadvantage, but National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was among those who supported and encouraged them to overcome challenges at the time.

Abul Hasnat passed away on November 1, 2020, at the age of 75. He was also a poet, essayist, art critic, literary figure, and cultural personality.

### UN human

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support implementation of the recommendations made in our fact-finding report, as well as to engage directly on the ground with the government, civil society, and others with our expertise and assistance on the fundamental reforms Bangladesh is undertaking going forward," he said.

The new mission will offer training and technical assistance to the authorities across a range of areas, towards meeting the country's national and international human rights commitments, as well as undertake capacity-building for government institutions and civil society actors.

## Govt to blame if 'July Charter'

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Salahuddin told a rally in the capital's Pallabi yesterday.

BNP's Dhaka Metropolitan North unit organised the event.

Salahuddin said it would be unfortunate for the nation if the consensus commission were to base its decisions on the views of individuals who have, at various times, been affiliated with the Awami League

"Those who are going to the commission, holding discussions, eating, and leaving without making any decision — who are they? Some are from 13 parties, some from 14 parties, and some belong to other parties.

"But we had objected to calling the parties who have connections with Awami League."

He said, "We consider this neutral interim government to be a caretaker government. Your only responsibility is to hold a free and fair national election. It is not your duty to conduct

the local government polls."

"The Election Commission has no mandate to conduct local government polls. Its mandate is limited to conducting the presidential and the national elections."

Salahuddin said local bodies elections are held only if the local government ministry requests. Without naming any political party, he said even those who maintained relations with the AL over the last 16 years want the PR system in the national polls.

"Another party engaged in the politics of spreading confusion in Bangladesh has joined them. At one time, they opposed the country's independence, at another, they stood against the people, and at yet another, against public sentiment."

"... this time they are trying to catch fish in the muddy waters."

Salahuddin said that those who are "plotting to bring back fascist Sheikh

Hasina into the politics of Bangladesh" will be identified. "We must honour the spirit of this student-mass uprising. Their sacrifices must be recognised. We will give constitutional recognition."

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

At another rally in Naya Paltan, Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas called on the government to put an end to its biased attitude. "You should hold the polls soon. If you don't, we will hold you responsible for the situation."

At an event in front of Jatiya Press Club, party leader AZM Zahid Hossain urged all to stay alert, saying those who are conspiring against the restoration of democracy are secretly continuing their evil activities, reports UNB.

## 164 arrested in series

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minimal public presence as he visited key areas in town, including Chourangi intersection, Launch Terminal, Municipal Park, Court premises, and the Sadar Hospital. Except for pharmacies, fruit shops, and eateries, most businesses remained closed.

A 200-member team from Barishal's Armed Police Battalion (APBn) was seen patrolling various streets.

The team, led by Gopalganj Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime and Watch) Ruhul Amin Sardar, was seen checking pedestrians' IDs and allowed them to pass after verification.

However, no army patrols were visible in the area, and only a limited number of police personnel were seen on the streets.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Ruhul Amin said, "The situation in the town is currently under control. We're ensuring that no shops remain open during curfew hours. Legal actions are being taken only against those involved in criminal activities; ordinary citizens are not being harassed."

Later in the morning, a brief relaxation of the curfew allowed some people to venture out for essential shopping, but businesses were forced to close again once the curfew resumed at 2:00pm.

A resident of the town's Chourangi area, wishing to remain unnamed, said, "I have never witnessed such a fearful situation. Stepping outside fills me with anxiety. I don't know when things will return to normal. The way things are going, it feels like our daily lives will be disrupted for quite some time."

Nihar Mridha, an auto-rickshaw driver

from Paikkandi village in Gopalganj Sadar, said he was forced to take his vehicle out during the curfew.

"There are no passengers in town. In two hours, I made only Tk 70. There's no rice at home, no groceries. I have to pay Tk 500 in rental fees for the rickshaw. Whatever remains will be used to buy some rice, lentils, and salt. If I can't manage to take food home, my family will go hungry. I don't know how we'll survive if the curfew isn't lifted."

Alamgir Hossain, a fruit vendor in the Launch Terminal area, said, "Due to the curfew, I couldn't open my shop, and as a result, in just three days, 22 kg of my fruits worth Tk 25,000–30,000 have gone to waste."

In the afternoon, the police launched drives against those violating the curfew, detaining individuals unable to provide valid reasons for being outside. Law enforcers were seen taking people into custody from various parts of town throughout the day.

Around 5:30pm, police set up a barricade at Pachuria intersection where several young men were seen detained inside a police van. Family members rushed to the scene upon hearing of the arrests.

Many pleaded with the authorities for the release of their loved ones. By evening, police had detained at least 75 individuals.

So far, police arrested 164 people in connection to three cases filed with Gopalganj Sadar, Kashiani, and Kotlajpara police stations over Wednesday's violence, said Gopalganj Assistant Superintendent of Police (Muksudpur Circle) Abdul Bashed.

[Our Faridpur correspondent contributed to this story.]

## Starlink officially launches

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"While many nations deliberate, Bangladesh acted," Dreyer said. "By embracing connectivity as a foundation for human potential, you have positioned your nation as a model for others to follow."

She highlighted the speed and decisiveness of the government, noting that within just a few months of initial dialogue, Starlink service had moved from discussion to deployment. Approvals were finalised by May 2025, and the first Bangladeshi customers were online shortly thereafter.

"This is not just about satellites," Dreyer said. "We are launching opportunities — opportunities for remote learning, telemedicine, digital entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth."

## Trump seeks to release some

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testimony from the case against Epstein, apparently in hopes of dampening fury among many of Trump's most loyal supporters over what they see as a White House cover-up.

Epstein, a financier, was found hanging dead in his cell in New York in 2019 while awaiting trial on charges that sexually exploited dozens of underage girls at his homes in New York and Florida.

The case sparked conspiracy theories, especially among Trump's far-right voters, about an alleged international cabal of wealthy pedophiles. Epstein's death — declared a suicide — before he could face trial super-charged the narrative.

When Trump returned to power for a second term this January, his supporters clamoured for

revelations about Epstein's supposed list of clients. But Bondi issued an official memo in July declaring that there was no such list.

The discontent in Trump's MAGA, or Make America Great Again, base poses a rare challenge to the 79-year-old Republican's control of the political narrative in America.

It remained unclear whether a court would authorise the unsealing of what is usually highly secret grand jury testimony.

Even if such material were made public, it was also unclear whether it would shed much, if any, light on the main questions raised in the conspiracy theories — particularly the existence and possible contents of an Epstein client list.

Trump was friends with Epstein and the two were photographed and videoed

together at parties over the years, although there has never been evidence shown of wrongdoing.

The Wall Street Journal article published late Thursday was damaging because it indicated a shared interest in sex.

The Journal reported that Trump had wished Epstein a happy 50th birthday in 2003 with a letter featuring a hand-drawn naked woman and referring to their "secrets." The letter was reportedly among a slew of well-wishes from other rich and well-known figures for a birthday album.

A furious Trump said on Truth Social that the purported letter was a "Scam" and "Fake."

Trump also said that the Journal's chief editor, Emma Tucker, had been told the letter was fake and that she shouldn't publish it.

## Govt to cut power

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For the current fiscal year (FY2025-26), around Tk 37,400 crore has been allocated for power sector subsidies and Tk 10,000 crore for gas.

Subsidies in the power sector were between Tk 7,000 crore and Tk 9,000 crore until FY2020-21, but have sharply increased afterwards.

Officials said the government is now looking at ways to reduce power production costs as a means to limit subsidy requirements. The initial plan aims to bring down production costs by around 10 percent, which would potentially save Tk 10,000–11,000 crore.

Zahid Hussain said that small steps have already been taken. These include lowering the service charge for furnace oil-based power plants from 9 percent to 5 percent. He also pointed to the need for a cost review of power producers and mentioned that the coal for Payra power plant is currently overpriced.

He added that starting operations at gas-based power plants like the one in Khulna's Rupsha would also help reduce dependency on more expensive fuels.

"But the government needs to act fast," he said, noting that the price of the dollar has a direct impact on production costs as it affects dollar-denominated capacity payments.

The recent fall in the dollar's price might reduce the cost, but the Bangladesh Bank's intervention to encourage exports and remittances did not let the price to decrease sharply, he said.

The central bank purchased \$313 million from 22 commercial banks in an auction last Tuesday, reacting to the sharp drop in the US dollar rate.

## 20 HC judges

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According to the ordinance, the council will consider a candidate's education, experience, professional skills, legal publications, training, and reputation. It will also look into whether a candidate has any criminal convictions, along with their knowledge regarding special legal aspects, overall knowledge, honesty, and respect for the law.

In the past, judges were chosen through mutual understanding between the government and the chief justices and then appointed by the president. Many of these appointments were allegedly made based on political considerations.

In the full text of a verdict released in May, the HC observed that many past judge appointments were not based on merit, which has harmed the judiciary's image.

The bench of Justice Md Akram Hossain Chowdhury and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury noted that while the constitution's framework for appointing judges is generally sound, in practice, there have been flaws.

"The impression, nevertheless, has prevailed that the appointment of

Officials said the government is ramping up imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to meet growing demand and increase power generation from gas-based plants, which remain cheaper than other energy sources except coal. Increasing coal-based power production is also under consideration, they said.

The government is also reviewing power purchase agreements with high-cost Independent Power Producers (IPPs), aiming to renegotiate the prices.

After a meeting of the advisory council last Tuesday, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told reporters that legal consultants would be appointed to review those deals.

Meanwhile, the IMF has made subsidy rationalisation in the power sector a key condition for the release of future tranches of its \$5.5 billion loan programme.

As part of the agreement, the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources must adopt and publicly share a three-year roadmap to reduce the gap between generation costs and electricity selling prices to a fiscally sustainable level.

The plan must outline tariff reforms and safeguards for vulnerable groups, according to recently released IMF documents.

In response, the government told the IMF it has already begun curbing generation costs by phasing out high-cost, fuel oil-based plants and boosting gas-based production.

It also said subsidies are expected to stay within the agreed Tk 37,400 crore cap for FY2024-25. Should costs rise beyond this ceiling, electricity tariffs may be adjusted, but only after all other cost-cutting measures have been exhausted.

judges to the Supreme Court has not always been made on merit, and many unsatisfactory appointments were made on political or other grounds, with the result that the fittest persons were not appointed, which has badly affected the image of the judiciary of the country," they said.

On April 28, the bench delivered the verdict after disposing of a writ petition that challenged four sections of the 2025 ordinance.

Following the ordinance, on May 28, the Supreme Court issued a public notice for the first time, inviting applications for the posts of additional High Court judges.

Meanwhile, on May 30, Supreme Court lawyer MA Sayeed Khan filed a writ petition with the HC seeking a stay order on the effectiveness of the public circular.

He also challenged the legality of the ordinance, saying it was issued without parliamentary debate or legislative scrutiny.

The petitioner, Sayeed Khan, told The Daily Star that the hearing of the petition may take place next week.

## Teesta chars remain

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in Rajarhat, said less rainfall is a major reason for the situation.

Around 354 millimetres of rainfall were recorded in June this year, compared to 750 millimetres in June last year. Up to July 12 last year, 650 millimetres of rainfall were recorded, whereas this year it is only 27 millimetres.

According to the Water Development Board, around two crore tonnes of silt and sand enter Bangladesh each year through the Teesta from upstream India. Over 100 chars have formed along 115 kilometres of the river within Bangladesh. In the dry season, these sandy lands become cultivable with the help of deposited

silt, but as the river's water-holding capacity declines, the sandbars no longer submerge even with moderate flows.

Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Kurigram, said, "The char lands of the Teesta usually get submerged during monsoon, allowing silt to deposit. This makes them highly fertile in the dry season. But this year, the sandbars haven't been submerged — it's alarming."

Dalia Water Development Board Executive Engineer Amitabh Chowdhury said it is essential to dredge the Teesta. "This matter has been forwarded to higher authorities," he added.