



## This time our fight is against corruption

Says Jamaat ameer at Suhrawardy Udyan rally

MD ABBAS and RASHIDUL HASAN

From its mammoth rally in Dhaka yesterday, the Jamaat-e-Islami vowed to wage war on corruption if it gets the people's mandate in the next general election.

"What will a future Bangladesh be like? I say there will be another fight. One battle has been fought against fascism. There will be



**If MPs are elected from Jamaat and form the government, no MP or minister will take government plots or ride tax-free vehicles.**

**Shafiqur Rahman,**  
chief of Jamaat-e-Islami

another fight against corruption," Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman said at the rally.

"We will do whatever necessary and win that fight collectively by uniting the strength of the youth," he said.

Seen as a display of its strength, it was Jamaat's first-ever "National Rally" at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan since independence.

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3, 12

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## NCP's rallies foiled after Patwari's jab

Nahid Islam says no godfather will be allowed to emerge again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two rallies of the National Citizen Party (NCP) were foiled before they were held in Cox's Bazar yesterday following controversial remarks made by the party's Chief Organiser Nasir Uddin Patwari earlier in the day.

The rallies, which were supposed to be held in Chakaria and Eidgaon upazilas, were obstructed by BNP activists enraged by the comments allegedly referring to the party's Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed.

Patwari made the comments at a gathering at Shaheed Daulat Maidan of Cox's Bazar Public Library as part of its July protest march.

Addressing the event, he said, "Under the Awami League, Narayanganj once had a famous 'godfather' – Shamim Osman. Now we hear a new 'godfather' has arrived in Cox's Bazar from Shillong, and he's grabbing land and extorting people."

Without naming anyone, he added, "He doesn't even understand what 'reform' is... The people of Cox's Bazar will resist these so-called reform-opponents who don't understand public sentiments."

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Tens of thousands of supporters turn up for Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's national rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan held yesterday to press home the party's seven-point demand. *Inset*, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman speaks while seated on the stage floor, after having collapsed twice while addressing the rally.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN/STAR

## Are they creating instability to delay polls?

Asks Tarique; Fakhrul says BNP won't compromise with spirit of '71, democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday cast doubt on the motives of those questioning the interim government's ability to hold the upcoming national election.

Speaking virtually at an event honouring the role of private universities during last year's uprising, he said such remarks can no longer be viewed as isolated and urged democratic political parties to remain vigilant against any attempt to delay the polls.

Tarique noted that a series of violent and unexpected incidents in recent times has cast doubt, to some extent, on the interim government's capacity to manage



the situation. He, however, questioned whether certain quarters, with support from within the interim government, were taking advantage of the situation and deliberately trying to create instability.

Citing public conversations on social media and elsewhere, he said people are also sensing "something fishy".

"There is hardly any scope now for dismissing these questions raised by some quarters on the interim government's capability to hold a national election as isolated," he said.

"I also call upon the people, all democratic political parties, and those involved in the movement to stay alert and

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## UN HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE IN DHAKA

## Focus will be on human rights only

Says CA's office

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The mission of the UN Human Rights Office in Bangladesh will focus on addressing serious human rights abuses and will not pursue any agenda outside the country's established legal, social, and cultural framework, the Chief Adviser's Office said yesterday.

"The UN has committed to operating with full respect for Bangladesh's cultural and religious realities," it added, amid criticism from some leftist and rightist political parties.

The statement came a day after the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh's foreign ministry.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam signed the MoU to open the mission here for three years.

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# Curfew begins amid rising death toll

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

The first day of the nationwide curfew, imposed late on the night of July 19, was marked by widespread unrest and violence that left at least 21 people dead and scores injured across Dhaka and other parts of the country.

Most of the victims were hit by bullets, hospital sources confirmed.

The curfew was declared following days of deadly clashes over the quota reform movement. In a late-night announcement, the government deployed army personnel to assist the civil administration.

Army troops were seen patrolling major points of the capital and key locations in other districts from early morning.

Despite the curfew, thousands of demonstrators – students and non-students alike – took to the streets across the country. They brought out processions, blocked roads and highways, and set fire to tyres and wooden planks.

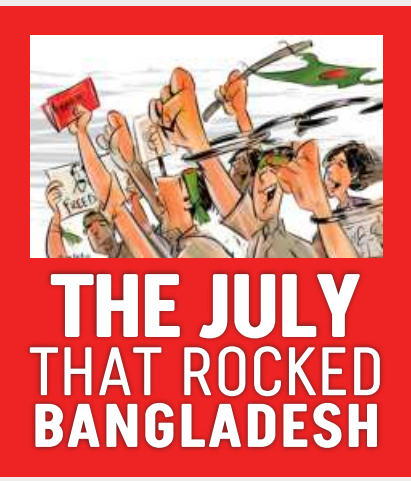
In Dhaka, nine people were reported killed.

One of the most intense flashpoints was Jatrabari, where protesters blocked the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway with parked trucks and covered vans.

Police responded with gunfire, teargas shells, and sound grenades. The protesters fought back, hurling bricks and setting barricades ablaze. Witnesses said helicopters hovered at low altitude, firing teargas canisters from the air.

In Mohammadpur, a large crowd attempted to march to the local police station. Police responded with bullets, sound grenades, and teargas to disperse the crowd there too. Agitators regrouped near Mohammadpur Bus Stand and blocked roads from there to Beribandh.

Members of the Armed Police Battalion, BGB, and army arrived



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around 5:15pm, triggering a severe clash. By 6:30pm, gunfire and stone-throwing continued. Protesters, including women, children, and students, had also blocked Sat Masjid Road and key intersections from Dhanmondi 15 to Shankar.

In Mirpur-10, law enforcers fired teargas and bullets as demonstrators blocked Rokeya Sarani from Kazipara to Benarashi Palli. Protesters also clashed with law enforcers at Mouchak-Rampura, where parts of the road remained blocked since July 18.

In Savar, five people were killed in separate incidents. Kurban Ali, a 55-year-old poultry trader, was shot in the throat while inside his shop during a clash.

Rickshaw-puller Roni, 27, and Mehedi, 24, a mason, were both shot dead later in the day. Thirteen-year-old Saad Mohammad Khan, a sixth grader, was killed while watching the protests.

In Narayanganj, sporadic clashes broke out from Signboard to Kanchpur. Sound grenades were hurled from

helicopters. Three young men – Sajal, Shahin, and Hridoy – were declared dead at Sugondha Hospital.

Meanwhile, Minarul, 25, a garment worker, died of a gunshot wound to the abdomen. Around 50 others were injured and admitted to local hospitals.

In Mymensingh's Gouripur upazila, three people were killed, and at least 30 injured, including 12 police personnel, during violent confrontations. In Phulpur, a pedestrian named Saiful Islam was killed in a clash.

Similar incidents of violence were reported in Kishoreganj, Narsingdi, Sylhet, and Gazipur.

In Narsingdi, demonstrators torched the Panchadana Muktiyoddha Complex and a highway police outpost in Shibpur. In Sylhet, protesters tried to block the Sylhet-Sunamganj Highway. In Gazipur, police boxes were vandalised at Board Bazar and Chandana intersection.



Armed security personnel patrol the tense stretch near Jatrabari toll plaza on the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in Dhaka, hours after violence erupted there on July 20, 2024.

FILE PHOTO

Meanwhile, differences emerged between two factions of the quota protest leadership over demands and strategy.

One group, represented by Hasnat Abdullah, Sarjis Alam, and Hasib Al Islam, placed an eight-point demand

in a meeting with ministers at the State Guesthouse Padma on July 19 night. These included financial compensation, legal immunity for protesters, and withdrawal of law enforcement from campuses.

However, another group rejected the meeting as a personal initiative and released a separate nine-point demand, which included an apology from the prime minister and the resignation of ministers Obaidul Quader and Asaduzzaman Khan.

The internet blackout continued for the third day, severely affecting digital services including mobile banking, online payments, and communication. Protest leaders alleged that the government was using the blackout to spread misinformation and divide the movement.

Separately, the Detective Branch arrested BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury from his Banani residence at night.

Earlier in the day, a Dhaka court placed BNP leaders Nazrul Islam Khan and Ruhul Kabir Rizvi on one-day remands in connection with cases related to the violence.

In response to the unrest, the government declared July 20 and July 21 as public holidays for all government, semi-government, autonomous, and non-government institutions, except those providing emergency services.

The Supreme Court also scaled back its operations, with lower courts functioning under limited magistrates, and the Appellate and High Court Divisions holding shortened sessions.

As curfew gripped the nation and the death toll continued to rise, the streets of Bangladesh echoed with a chilling message: the demands of the people would not be silenced by force, and the battle for justice had crossed a point of no return.

## This time our fight is against corruption

FROM PAGE 1

The party organised the programme to press for a seven-point demand that includes a level playing field for a free, fair, neutral, and peaceful election.

The other demands include the trial of perpetrators behind all incidents of genocide, implementation of basic reforms, the July Charter and Declaration, rehabilitation of families of those martyred or injured in the July uprising, holding national elections under a proportional representation system, and ensuring the voting rights of over one crore expatriates.

Thousands of Jamaat supporters from different parts of the country gathered at the rally venue. They came in processions with banners in their hands and chanted slogans. Many came in buses, launches and trains, with some arriving the night before. The gathering spilt over to surrounding roads and Ramna Park. Volunteers were deployed to control the crowd so that vehicular movement can remain manageable.

Speaking to The Daily Star, several Jamaat leaders said the rally marks a turning point for the party as it prepares for the 13th parliamentary election slated for next year.

Following the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year, many parties, including the BNP and Islami Andolan, held large rallies. Jamaat had staged only one rally at Purana Paltan, demanding the release of its leader ATM Azharul Islam. Azharul had been sentenced to death for crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War, but was later acquitted.

The rally began at 9:40am with a cultural function. The main session started at 2:00pm with the recitation from the holy Quran.

Shafiqur, in his mid-60s, collapsed twice during his speech. He first fell around 5:20pm but got back up and resumed speaking.

"I was saying that we, together with all, will build a Bangladesh free from corruption. We pledge that if Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami forms the government with Allah's kindness and people's love ..., " he said before collapsing again.

Shafiqur then continued the speech seated, as doctors monitored his condition.

"If MPs are elected from Jamaat and form the government, no MP or minister will take government plots or ride tax-free vehicles. They will not handle public money personally. Any funds must be reported to all 180 million citizens.

"We will not carry out or tolerate acts of corruption or extortion. This is the Bangladesh we want," he added.

"Even though my body did not cooperate, it was Allah's will that I could still speak. I want to say that our struggle is not for a specific class of people. I stand for street cleaners, tea garden workers, rickshaw pullers, and farmers," he said.

Shafiqur demanded justice for all political killings, including the October 28, 2006, incidents, the Paltan killings, Shapla Chattar killings, the Pilkhana carnage, and the 2024 killings.

"There will be no stability unless justice is ensured. These people did

not die for nothing," he said.

The Jamaat chief criticised the existing state system, saying, "If the old system remains, why did they give their lives? Bring them back if you can. You can't. So, we need a new system and a new Bangladesh."

Shafiqur was later rushed to a hospital. A Jamaat leader, later in a text message, told this newspaper that Shafiqur's blood pressure and sugar levels were normal.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said the turnout was a response to years of repression. "Jamaat is the most oppressed political group in Bangladesh," he said.

He urged party activists to ensure the safety of all religious communities during festivals.

Calling for unity based on the holy Quran and Sunnah, he encouraged the youth to vote for the Jamaat to establish a welfare-oriented Islamic state.

Jamaat leader Azharul demanded justice for the 10 executed Jamaat leaders.

"I was sentenced to death, but Allah saved me," said Azharul, who spent 14 years in prison. "Our leaders were punished for demanding Islamic rule."

He added that only Allah's law can bring real change to Bangladesh.

Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said the Jamaat opposes all forms of terrorism. "There is no place for extremism in Islam," he said.

"Militancy will not rise in Bangladesh, whether Islamic or political. Jamaat will resist it, if necessary," he added.

Taher said the Awami League is "gone case" and has no future. "They are irrelevant now," he said.

Speaking on reforms, he said that some parties support it in principle but resist during meetings. "Reform benefits everyone. Those who oppose it have hidden motives."

He urged the government to formulate the July Charter and Declaration soon.

Supporting a proportional representation system, Taher said, "Under PR, no one can seize the centre. Votes cannot be bought with money. That's why those with bad intentions oppose it."

"Some ask how these reforms will be legal. They say it will be done by the next parliament. Does that mean they are sure they will win? Or are they planning to seize control?"

He said such rhetoric confuses the public. "Jamaat wants the people to vote the election. Those the people vote for should win. InshaAllah, the pro-Bangladesh forces will triumph."

The rally was attended by leaders of various parties, including the National Citizen Party, Gono Odikhar Parishad, Hefajat-e-Islam and Islami Andolan Bangladesh. The BNP said it was not invited, but a Jamaat leader claimed to have invited all parties, including the BNP.

Nearly 6,000 uniformed volunteers were deployed at 20 points across the venue. Fifteen medical booths were set up with beds, doctors, emergency medicines and ambulances.

[Our Dhaka University Correspondent Mahathir Mohammad also contributed to this report]

## NCP's rallies foiled after Patwari's jab

FROM PAGE 1

BSS reports that addressing the same event, NCP Convener Nahid Islam said, "During the previous government's tenure, Cox's Bazar had become a sanctuary of the terrorists and drug abuse."

"Just as Narayanganj had a godfather, Cox's Bazar also had a godfather. Sheikh Hasina was a godfather and under her, there were small godfathers all over Bangladesh.

"We have put an end to that godfather system. We will not allow a new godfather to emerge again," he said.

Soon after Patwari's speech was reported in the media, BNP and its affiliated organisations launched protests across the district.

The NCP motorcade skipped the Eidgaon rally due to resistance from BNP supporters.

In Chakaria, BNP and Chhatra Dal activists dismantled a truck mounted stage set up for the NCP rally near Janata Shopping Centre around 3:45pm. Army and police personnel later dispersed the crowd.

NCP central leaders were scheduled to address the rally there around 5:00pm.

Chakaria Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shafiqul Islam said the situation was under control and traffic on the highway remained normal.

Meanwhile, in Cox's Bazar town, Chhatra Dal activists tore down NCP banners and set fire to posters. They later held a protest march and a rally.

Speaking at the demonstration, Chhatra Dal leader Fahimur Rahman said, "Salahuddin Ahmed is a pride of Bangladesh, and Nasir Uddin Patwari has made indecent remarks about him.

"Nasir Uddin lacks proper family and social education; that's why he speaks like this."

Similar protests were also held in Pekua, Ukhiya, and other locations in the district.

Salahuddin, a senior BNP leader, is a three-time former MP from Cox's Bazar-1 (Chakaria-Pekua) serving from 1996 to 2006. His wife, Hasina Ahmed, was elected MP from the same seat in 2008.

SM Sujauddin, joint member secretary of NCP, however, said the party had no pre-scheduled rallies in Eidgaon and Chakaria.



BNP and Chhatra Dal supporters vandalising the stage of an NCP rally in Chakaria Bazar of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

According to him, local leaders and activists had independently arranged roadside gatherings, and central leaders planned to attend if time permitted.

He said the Eidgaon rally could not be held due to obstruction, while the stage set up for the Chakaria rally was vandalised by BNP activists, and so they left Cox's Bazar in the afternoon and were on their way to Bandarban.

"Our banners were also torn and burned in Cox's Bazar... If someone

feels offended by any remark, peaceful political protest is the appropriate response and should be encouraged by all."

Ali Akbar Sumon, general secretary of Chhatra Dal's Rangamati District unit, warned NCP leaders against making indecent remarks about BNP leaders.

Urging Patwari not to visit Rangamati, he demanded that the NCP apologise for the comments on BNP leaders.

## 'Almighty will serve justice'

FROM PAGE 12

Another victim, Ramzan Munshi, who was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, died in the early hours of Friday.

A violent clash involving Awami League followers and law enforcers over an NCP rally at Gopalganj Municipal Park also left around 50 injured, including 10 policemen.

"I don't even know who shot him; against whom should I file a case?" said Sanjay Saha, elder brother of Dipto Saha.

Talking to The Daily Star at their Udayan Road residence in Gopalganj town yesterday, Sanjay said, "We tried everything to save him, but couldn't. He died on the operating table at Gopalganj General Hospital."

He said he carried Dipto's body on his shoulder to their home and later cremated him at the municipal crematorium that evening.

Recalling the incident, Sanjay, who runs a readymade garment shop in the town's Chourangi area, said he told his younger brother to return home as the situation turned violent around 2:00pm. "When I was returning home, taking a different route, I heard Dipto was shot."

Dipto's mother, Vibha Rani Saha, was barely able to speak before she said, "The Almighty will serve justice for my son's murder."

Like the Sahas, Ramzan's family has also chosen not to file a case.

Ramzan's brother, Jamal Munshi, said Ramzan's body was brought home from Dhaka after a post-mortem at DMCH and buried on Friday night.

Regarding filing a case, Jamal said, "What good would it do? It won't bring back my brother. And we don't know who to accuse. We leave it to Allah."

Ramzan's uncle, Kalim Munshi, said, "No one helped when my nephew was shot. What's the point of filing a case now?"

The families of the other two victims, Imon Talukdar and Sohel Mollah, expressed similar sentiments.

Gopalganj Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mir Mohammad Sajedur Rahman yesterday said, "None of the victims' family members have approached us regarding filing a case."

Meanwhile, police filed another case on Friday night with the Gopalganj Sadar Police Station over the violence, bringing the total number of cases in connection with the incident to four.

The case, filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act, has 54 named and 350 unnamed accused – all allegedly Awami League activists. The charges include attacking police, vandalising and setting vehicles on fire, blocking roads, and engaging in anti-state activities, said the OC.

In the four cases, police accused 345 named and 2,650 unnamed persons and have arrested 306 people so far.

Besides, the ongoing curfew imposed in Gopalganj since Wednesday has been extended by another 12 hours till 6:00am today.

Gopalganj Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Kamruzzaman made the announcement yesterday.

## Focus will be on

FROM PAGE 1

Until now, one or two UN officials under the UN Resident Coordinator were responsible for reporting on human rights issues in Bangladesh. According to UN officials, a separate OHCHR office will now be set up with more staff.

Since last August, the UN Human Rights Office's engagement with Bangladesh has increased significantly. It has been working with various stakeholders to advance rights reforms and conduct a comprehensive fact-finding inquiry into the deadly repression of mass protests.

However, some leftist and rightist political parties have harshly criticised the opening of the OHCHR mission.

Criticising the lack of public discussion on the MoU's terms, Communist Party of Bangladesh Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said the UN's rights offices historically reflect imperialist interests.

Rightist political party Hefazat-e-Islam, in a statement yesterday, strongly protested the signing of the MoU.

"The government cannot unilaterally decide on such a sensitive issue by ignoring the opinions and concerns of its citizens. If the agreement is not scrapped immediately, we will be forced to take stern action," it said.

"A subservient UN human rights office, acting on behalf of American interests, cannot be allowed in this country," it added.

Mamunul Haque, ameer of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, said yesterday that only an elected government has the authority to make any decision on opening such a mission in Bangladesh.

He also said his party will resist any attempt to establish foreign dominance in the country.

The CAO, in a statement yesterday, said the mission's objective is to support the promotion and protection of human rights in the country by

providing training and technical assistance to government institutions and civil society organisations.

"Its objective is to help Bangladesh fulfil its national and international human rights obligations through capacity-building, legal support, and institutional strengthening," it added.

However, the statement said the government is aware of some groups' reservations about the opening of the mission.

"Bangladesh is a society deeply rooted in its cultural and religious traditions. We have received feedback from citizens who opined that any international partnership should respect these values," it said.

The CAO said the OHCHR mission will concentrate on tackling and preventing severe human rights abuses, such as those carried out by the previous government, and ensuring accountability for violations.

"We expect that the mission will always demonstrate transparency and maintain close cooperation with local stakeholders," the statement said.

The Chief Adviser's Office said the government retains sovereign authority to withdraw from the agreement if the partnership no longer aligns with national interests.

It is worth noting that if such an office had existed during the previous administration, when extrajudicial killings and public massacres occurred with impunity, many of those crimes might have been properly investigated, documented, and prosecuted, it said.

The CAO statement said, "Our commitment to human rights today must be rooted in justice, not ideology."

"The government considers this partnership an opportunity to strengthen our institutions and enhance protections for our citizens, guided by our values, shaped by our laws, and accountable to our people," it added.

## Are they creating instability

FROM PAGE 1

closely observe whether anyone is trying to delay the national election beyond the possible timeline promised by the interim government," he added.

Tarique urged the government to take stronger action to address the country's law and order. He warned that without political empowerment of the people, no reforms would be effective or sustainable.

He also said the martyrs of 2024 would be remembered by the nation like those of the 1971 Liberation War. Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said there can be no compromise on the spirit of the Liberation War or democracy.

"1971 is our core principle—the war of independence is our foundation, and there can be no compromise there," he said at a discussion titled "The Promise of the Mass Uprising and the Path to Democratic Transition", organised by Ganatantra Mancha at the Jatiya Press Club to mark the anniversary of the July uprising.

"Similarly, there can be no compromise in our democratic

aspirations. We believe in democracy, and we want democracy. We will not hand the country back to fascism. Our people want to return to a democratic system, and we all agree on that goal. There may be differences, but those can be resolved by going back to the people."

Fakhrul called on the interim government to act swiftly on three key issues: reforms, a national charter, and elections.

"The sooner we move forward on these issues, the better it will be for the country. The more you delay, the more complicated the situation becomes."

He warned that those who opposed the July uprising and democracy are regrouping to "destroy the democratic process" and urged the government to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue.

Fakhrul also stressed the need for an acceptable framework for elections.

"We hope those in charge will present an arrangement acceptable to all parties. Once we reach a consensus, we will take it to the people."

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## Skills alone not enough, ethics and discipline key

Army chief urges students, professionals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army Chief General Waker-Uz Zaman yesterday urged students and professionals in engineering and applied sciences to become not only skilled experts but also disciplined and ethical individuals who can contribute meaningfully to national development.

He made the remarks while speaking as chief guest at the closing

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Dhaka witnessed congestion in some areas as thousands of Jamaat-e-Islami supporters from all over the country converged on Suhrawardy Udyan for the party's national rally yesterday. According to traffic police, the situation became normal in the evening. The photo was taken in Bangla Motor area in the afternoon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Traffic slows in some spots as Jamaat holds rally

Party deploys volunteers to help manage crowd, traffic flow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka witnessed traffic congestion in some areas yesterday as thousands of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami supporters from all over the country converged on Suhrawardy Udyan for the party's national rally.

Gridlock was reported since morning across major intersections – including Shahbagh, Bangla Motor, Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, Matsya Bhaban, Kakrail, Paltan and Jatrabari.

Meanwhile, volunteers deployed by Jamaat were seen managing traffic and maintaining order at various points.

Nearly 6,000 volunteers were positioned across 20 locations, each assigned to different divisions and wearing identifying uniforms. Fifteen medical booths were also set up in and around Suhrawardy Udyan, each staffed with two MBBS doctors, multiple beds, emergency medicine and ambulance services.

Volunteers, along with members of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's traffic division, were seen urging rally participants to avoid creating noise disturbances and were helping ensure thoroughfares remained clear.

Buses carrying attendees were parked at various parts of the city, including Manik Mia Avenue, Banani and Motijheel, far from the rally venue.

As it was the weekly holiday, private vehicles and buses were relatively few on the roads.

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## GOPALGANJ DEATHS

Bodies will be exhumed for autopsy, if needed

Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said the bodies of those killed in the violence centring a rally in Gopalganj would be exhumed if necessary to conduct post-mortems.

"In some cases, the bodies were taken by the families themselves. So how will post-mortems be done? But if needed, the bodies can be exhumed and examined," he told reporters after visiting the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

In response to questions about alleged pressure to avoid autopsy, Jahangir emphasised the importance of on-ground

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## 'Misinformation rises 30% in first half of 2025'

Says Rumour Scanner report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Misinformation in Bangladesh's digital and political spheres rose by around 30 percent in the first six months of 2025 compared to the same period last year, according to a report by fact-checking organisation Rumour Scanner.

The organisation identified 1,795 instances of false or misleading information. Of these, 1,125 were entirely fabricated or false, while the remainder were classified as misleading.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus was the most targeted individual during this surge. In the first half of 2025, 112 pieces of disinformation were directed at him, with 88 percent portraying him negatively.

Following a regular meeting of the Advisory Council on May 22, where Prof Yunus expressed thoughts on stepping down due to obstacles to the government's initiatives, Rumour Scanner

### JAN-JUN 2025

1,795 false or misleading claims identified

1,125 claims entirely false; rest misleading

Chief adviser most targeted, with 112 false claims

Facebook largest source misinformation (1,661 false claims)

31 Indian media outlets spread 38 false claims about Bangladesh

Communal misinformation still a concern



recorded a spike in misinformation related to the matter. Between May 22 and 25, the organisation fact-checked at least 16 false claims about the attempted resignation, making it the most misinformation-heavy event of the year so far.

The interim government was the subject of 69 false claims, over 90 percent of which carried a hostile tone. Additionally, 68 pieces of misinformation targeted 12 advisers and Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam.

Law Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul was mentioned in 14 false claims, while Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury and LGRD Adviser Asif Mahmud were each named in 11.

Facebook remained the largest source of misinformation, with 1,661 false claims detected between January and June – an average of more than nine per day. In the second quarter alone, misinformation on the platform rose by 22 percent. YouTube

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## PARTY REGISTRATION

EC flags six discrepancies in the NCP application

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has identified six discrepancies in the application submitted by the National Citizen Party seeking registration as a political party ahead of the upcoming 13th national election.

The constitutional body issued a letter to NCP Convener Nahid Islam on July 17 following preliminary scrutiny, asking the party to rectify the issues and submit the necessary documents by August 3.

The EC's letter said the party did not submit a list of all functional district offices with their corresponding addresses. Additionally, the rental agreements for the Dhaka

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

## CHT PEACE ACCORD

Govt working to resolve challenges Says foreign adviser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday said the government has identified several challenges in implementing the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord and is working to resolve them.

"We tried to resolve the simpler issues and explored ways to tackle the more complex ones. The main focus was on finding practical solutions," said Touhid, also the convener of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord Implementation and Monitoring Committee.

"This was my first meeting with the committee. The discussion was held in a sincere and cordial atmosphere. There's much to learn and understand," he told reporters after the meeting, at the Parbatya Chattagram Unnayan Board Rest House in Rangamati.

The meeting was the first of the CHT Accord Implementation and Monitoring Committee, formed by the current interim government.

It began around 10:30am at the rest house in the Bhedbhedhi area of Rangamati town.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

## AWAMI LEAGUE TENURE

## ACC probing 15yrs of financial irregularities



### AT A GLANCE

- ACC seeks information on 9 former BB top officials
- Asks for records on 11 companies that benefited from loan regularisation
- Demands all documents of 9 banks approved during AL tenure

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) has launched an investigation into alleged corruption by individuals, financial institutions, industrial groups, and loan defaulters during the Awami League's 15-year tenure, which it claims led to the destruction of the country's financial system.

As part of this move, the commission is examining the role of former top officials of Bangladesh Bank, including three former governors and four former deputy governors, in major irregularities in the financial sector.

In a recent letter signed by ACC Deputy Director Mominul Islam, the commission sought information on various allegations of irregularities in the banking sector over the last 15 years.

"Several teams are working on financial

irregularities. Once the investigation is complete, the assigned committee will submit its report. The findings will be disclosed in due time," ACC Director General (Prevention) and spokesperson Md Akhter Hossain told The Daily Star.

According to ACC sources, information has been sought regarding former BB governors Atiur Rahman, Fazle Kabir, and Abdur Rouf Talukder; former deputy governors SK Sur Chowdhury, SM Moniruzzaman, Abu Hena Mohammad Razee Hassan, and Abu Farah Mohammad Nasser; and former heads of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit Masud Biswas and Kazi Saidur Rahman.

These nine individuals held responsibilities at the central bank at different times during the past 15 years.

The ACC has also requested documents related to the approval of new banks

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



Dhaka North City Corporation has dug up nearly one kilometre of Hashem Khan Road in the capital's Rayerbazar to install underground drainage pipes. The work, ongoing for around 16 days without any safety fencing, has been causing significant suffering to locals. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## IN MEMORY OF JULY UPRISING

## ‘One martyr, one tree’

## STAR REPORT

A tree plantation campaign titled “One Martyr, One Tree” was held across the country yesterday, in memory of those who sacrificed their lives during the last year’s July uprising, according to reports from our correspondents and a news agency.

In Kurigram, the programme was inaugurated on the premises of the Deputy Commissioner’s office, led by DC Nusrat Sultana.

The event concluded with prayers seeking eternal peace for the martyrs.

In Noakhali, DC Khandaker Istia Kh Ahmed started the programme by planting a tree on the Sonapur Degree College campus.

Six trees were planted in the names of martyrs Raihan, Abdul Jabbar, Furuk, Noor Hossain Piyas, Mamun Hossain, and Nasima Akhter.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



A tree plantation campaign titled “One Martyr, One Tree” was held across the country yesterday, in memory of those who sacrificed their lives during the July uprising. The photo was taken in Rajshahi.

PHOTO: STAR

## One killed, twenty injured in Rangpur LPG station blast



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An explosion at an LPG station in Rangpur city’s CO Bazar area yesterday has left one dead and at least 20 others injured, including four technicians who were working on the gas tank at the time.

The explosion occurred around 12:00pm at LPG Auto Gas and Conversion Centre, one of the busiest gas stations in the area.

The blast also destroyed at least 20 vehicles and caused extensive damage to nearby homes and shops, confirmed Deputy Director of Rangpur Fire Service Badsha Masud Alam.

The injured were rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

The deceased was identified as Selim Reza Shohag, an engineer who was

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

## ONE YEAR OF NARSINGDI JAILBREAK

## 177 inmates still at large

JAHIDUL ISLAM, Narsingdi

A year after the attack on Narsingdi District Jail, authorities have yet to recapture 177 of the 826 inmates who escaped during the incident on 19 July 2024.

Among the fugitives are nine convicted militants.

In addition, 28 looted firearms and over 5,000 rounds of ammunition remain unaccounted for.

Locals have expressed concern that these weapons may now be in the hands of criminals and could be used in ongoing criminal activities across the region.

On July 19, around 4:30pm, an organised group stormed the prison by hurling bricks and petrol bombs, eventually breaching the main gate.

They ransacked the prison’s armoury, looting 85 firearms and over 8,000 rounds of ammunition. The attackers also set fire to multiple buildings inside the prison complex, including administrative offices, barracks, the condemned cell, officers’ quarters, and



28 firearms, over 5,000 rounds of ammunition remain missing

- Attackers looted 85 weapons, set fire to key prison buildings
- Legal proceedings disrupted by loss of records
- Three probe bodies formed, but findings not made public

garage, destroying at least 29,000 legal documents.

Following appeals from the district administration, 649 inmates voluntarily surrendered through legal channels, including courts and local police stations.

Another 57 weapons and approximately 3,000 rounds of ammunition were recovered through joint operations by law enforcement.

Still, 177 escapees remain at large, along with 28 weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition and explosives.

The then jailer, Kamrul Islam, filed two cases after the incident.

The Ministry of Home Affairs’ Security Services Division later suspended Kamrul and Jail Superintendent Abul Kalam Azad.

Three investigation committees were formed by the inspector general of prisons, the Security Services Division, and the district administration.

However, the findings of these investigations have not been made public.

On the day of the attack, the violence spilled beyond the prison.

Simultaneous arson attacks targeted the Itakhola Highway Police Outpost, Meherpara Union Parishad Office, Narsingdi District Council building, and the Madhabdi Municipality office.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



PHOTO: COLLECTED

A Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar.

## MONSOON PERILS

## Funding cuts heighten risks for Rohingyas Says UNHCR

UNB, Dhaka

Reductions in funding for a community maintenance programme in the Rohingya camps of Cox’s Bazar have not only affected their incomes but also compromised safety during the monsoon season, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has warned.

In the world’s largest and most congested refugee camp, home to over one million Rohingyas, life is always difficult. But monsoon rains make conditions even worse – turning narrow paths treacherous and threatening essential sanitation infrastructure such as latrines and water points with landslides, it said.

Since 2020, UNHCR has supported a programme where refugees were paid small amounts to carry out essential work like path repairs and slope stabilisation.

However, due to the global aid funding shortfall, this initiative has faced severe cuts. While each project previously engaged 30 to 40 refugees current funding only allows for seven or eight workers in a few remaining projects.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

## Dengue claims another life

UNB, Dhaka

One more death was reported from dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning, raising the number of fatalities from the mosquito-borne disease in Bangladesh to 62 this year.

The death has been reported in the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). During the period, 394 more patients were hospitalised with viral fever, raising the number of confirmed cases to 16,789 this year.

## Bodies will be exhumed for autopsy, if needed

FROM PAGE 3

journalism and thanked media professionals who risked their lives to livestream the events.

“I express my gratitude to the journalists. Those who watched the live coverage won’t have such questions. But those who weren’t there or didn’t cover it live often raise many doubts,” he said.

Asked whether the intelligence agencies had failed to prevent the violence, the adviser said, “A high-powered committee

has already been formed. It will determine who is responsible.”

“You, the media, are already reporting on this. You know the facts. But some are just waiting for me to say something specific. When the committee submits its report, you will see the recommendations. Actions will be taken accordingly,” he added.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser’s Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday said the government is doing everything lawfully

in Gopalganj.

“I will urge all journalists to visit Gopalganj and see we are doing everything lawfully,” he said while speaking to journalists after attending an event of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, hosted by Cumilla University, reports UNB.

Shafiqul said those who took the law into their own hands and were involved in the violence in Gopalganj will be brought to justice.

He also said there is no uncertainty regarding the

upcoming national polls.

“The election will be held in time as announced by the chief adviser. A congenial environment will be ensured for it, alongside creating a level playing field for all. The polls will be better than any elections held in the past.”

About the national consensus on reforms, Alam said parties are sitting regularly and all are joining talks. He said no party had boycotted the talks.

So far, he said, consensus had been reached on eight issues, discussions were

ongoing on seven others, and three issues had yet to be discussed.

Responding to a question regarding the deterioration in the law-and-order situation, he said the government is trying sincerely to improve the situation.

“We are also getting some results. In sensational cases, arrests are being made quickly and relevant laws have also been amended. Efforts are on to hold trials in rape cases fast,” he added.

## Skills alone not enough

FROM PAGE 3

ceremony of the “3rd International Conference on Mechanical Engineering and Applied Science (ICMEAS 2025)” held at the Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST).

According to a press release from ISPR, researchers and professionals from Bangladesh, the US, the UK, Brunei, Egypt, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Australia, India, Singapore, and China took part in the conference.

In his speech, Waker congratulated the organisers for successfully hosting a platform that promoted the exchange of ideas and collaboration across disciplines. He also handed over awards to the best paper presenters.

Highlighting the army’s long-standing involvement in engineering, he said army engineers have carried out many significant projects across the country – from roads to bridges and major infrastructure – earning recognition both at home and abroad.

Referring to the growing interest among students about studying at MIST, he said, “A total of 869 students are currently

studying in 12 departments. I am very happy that so many students these days want to study at MIST.”

However, he emphasised that technical excellence alone is not enough.

“It is not enough to produce great engineers – we have to produce great human beings. Only then can the country and the nation prosper,” he said.

Encouraging students to remain disciplined and ethical, Waker said, “We are producing great scholars, great engineers, great doctors, great civil servants, and great military officers. But without ethics, the country will not benefit.”

Addressing the delegates, researchers, and contributors, he said, “Your presence has added immense value. Your dedication to advancing knowledge and engaging in meaningful dialogue is deeply appreciated,” he said.



PRAYER TIMING  
JULY 20

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:15	12:45	5:00	6:54	8:15
JAMAAT 4:50	1:15	5:15	6:58	8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh is looking for a suitable candidate for the function of “Accounts Clerk”.

The full job description, job requirements and application guidelines (how to apply) can be found on our website: <https://bit.ly/JobsatEU>.

The deadline for receiving applications is **Thursday, 07 August 2025 at 16:00 hours**.

*Please note that only electronic applications received within the deadline will be accepted. Paper and late applications will be disregarded.*

*Only short listed candidates will be contacted.*

**Any form of persuasion, telephone call, or other form of contact during the selection process will automatically disqualify the applicant.**

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## TENDER NOTICE

Eastern Bank PLC. (EBL) invites sealed bids from bona fide/eligible competent bidders for the following services/items:

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**Lot 2: Laptop and Desktop Computers**  
**Lot 3: Treasury Management System**  
**Lot 4: PCI DSS Recertification Services**  
**Lot 5: Licenses for VMware and Operating System**

Interested bidders are requested to collect the RFP document electronically by sending an email from their official email address to [bidit@ebi-bd.com](mailto:bidit@ebi-bd.com) mentioning the name of the company and the authorized contact person, mailing address, telephone & mobile phone numbers on or before **Monday, 28 July 2025**.

Queries are to be mailed by **Thursday, 31 July 2025**.

Bids should be prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in the RFP document and submitted as per the process described in the RFP document bearing official authorized personnel’s seal & signature in two separate sealed envelopes clearly marking “Technical Offer” (hardcopy and softcopy both) and “Financial Offer” (hardcopy only) on the envelopes.

Bids should be dropped in the ICT Tender Box, addressing to The Office of the President, Purchase Committee, Head Office, Eastern Bank PLC., 100 Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka-1212 (Basement-1, ICT Tender Box) on or before **Thursday, 7 August 2025**.

Tenderers are allowed to bid for all lots or any lot separately. However, common documents need not to be submitted for multiple lots, submission with one lot is enough.

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## SWEIDA CLASHES US declares Syria-Israel ceasefire

AFP, Sweida

Syrian interior ministry forces began deploying in Sweida yesterday under a US-brokered deal intended to avert further Israeli military intervention in the Druze-majority province. Israel had bombed defence ministry forces in both Sweida and Damascus earlier this week to force their withdrawal after they were accused of summary executions and other abuses against Druze civilians during their brief deployment in the southern province.

More than 700 people have been killed in Sweida since Sunday as sectarian clashes between the Druze and Sunni Bedouin drew in the Islamist-led government, Israel and armed tribes from other parts of Syria.

The office of interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa announced an “immediate ceasefire” in Sweida, which it called on “all parties to fully respect”.

But AFP correspondents in and around the city reported gunfire and sporadic rocket fire and explosions as Druze fighters battled armed Bedouin who had seized some neighbourhoods on Friday.

The Observatory, a Britain-based war monitor, said the armed volunteers had been deployed with the support of the Islamist-led government although an AFP journalist said security personnel were manning checkpoints yesterday to prevent further reinforcements getting through.

The deal between the Islamist-government and Israel was announced by Washington early yesterday.

The International Committee for the Red Cross warned that health facilities were overwhelmed, with power cuts impeding the preservation of bodies in overflowing morgues.

The International Organization for Migration said 79,339 civilians had fled the fighting.



This aerial view shows smoke rising in the city of Sweida in southern Syria’s Druze majority province.

PHOTO: AFP

## BOMBSHELL REPORT ON EPSTEIN FILES Trump sues Murdoch, WSJ

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump sued media magnate Rupert Murdoch and The Wall Street Journal for at least \$10 billion Friday over publication of a bombshell article on his friendship with the infamous alleged sex trafficker of underage girls, Jeffrey Epstein.

The defamation lawsuit, filed in federal court in Miami, saw the 79-year-old Republican hitting back at a scandal threatening to cause serious political damage.

“We have just filed a POWERHOUSE Lawsuit against everyone involved in publishing the false, malicious, defamatory, FAKE NEWS ‘article’ in the useless ‘rag’ that is, The Wall Street Journal,” Trump posted on Truth Social late Friday.

The Journal reported Thursday that in 2003, the then-real estate magnate wrote a suggestive birthday letter to Epstein, illustrated with a naked woman and alluding to a shared “secret.”

The lawsuit, which also names two reporters, the Dow Jones corporation, and Murdoch’s parent

company News Corp. as defendants, claims that no such letter exists and that the paper intended to malign Trump with a story that has now been viewed by hundreds of millions of people.



“And given the timing of the Defendants’ article, which shows their malicious intent behind it, the overwhelming financial and reputational harm suffered by President Trump will continue to multiply,” it said.

Dow Jones, the Journal’s longtime publisher, responded to Trump’s libel suit Friday saying it is standing by the story.

“We have full confidence in the rigor and accuracy of our reporting,

and will vigorously defend against any lawsuit,” a Dow Jones spokesperson said in a statement.

In another bid to dampen outrage among his own supporters about an alleged government cover-up of Epstein’s activities and 2019 death, Trump ordered US Attorney General Pam Bondi to seek the unsealing of grand jury testimony from the prosecution against the disgraced financier.

In a filing in New York, Bondi cited “extensive public interest” for the unusual request to release what is typically secret testimony.

Epstein, a longtime friend of Trump and multiple high-profile men, was found hanging dead in a New York prison cell while awaiting trial on charges that he 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 supercharged the narrative.

## INDO-PAK ‘WAR’ Trump says 5 jets shot down

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Friday up to five jets were shot down during recent India-Pakistan hostilities.

Trump, who made his remarks at a dinner with some Republican US lawmakers at the White House, did not specify which side’s jets he was referring to.

“In fact, planes were being shot out of the air. Five, five, four or five, but I think five jets were shot down actually,” Trump said without elaborating.

Trump has repeatedly claimed credit for the ceasefire between India and Pakistan that he announced on social media on May 10 after Washington held talks with both sides.

## China starts building dam on Brahmaputra

AFP, Beijing

China started building a mega-dam yesterday on a river running through Tibet and India, with Premier Li Qiang attending the commencement ceremony, state media said.

Beijing approved the project in December on the river — known as Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet and Brahmaputra in India — linking it to the country’s carbon neutrality targets and economic goals in the Tibet region.

“The electricity generated will be primarily transmitted to other regions for consumption, while also meeting local power needs in Tibet,” state news agency Xinhua reported after the groundbreaking ceremony in southeastern Tibet’s Nyingchi.

Once built, the dam could dwarf the record-breaking Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River in central China — and have a potentially serious impact on millions of people downstream in India and Bangladesh.

The project will entail constructing five hydropower stations, with the total investment estimated to be around 1.2 trillion yuan (\$167.1 billion), Xinhua said.

India said in January it had raised concerns with China about the project in Tibet, saying it will “monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests”.

China “has been urged to ensure that the interests of the downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in



upstream areas”, India’s foreign ministry said then.

In December, Beijing’s foreign ministry said that the project would not have any “negative impact” downstream, adding that China “will also maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches” of the river.

Besides downstream concerns, environmentalists have also warned about the irreversible impact of such mega projects in the ecologically sensitive Tibetan plateau.

Both India and China, neighbours and rival Asian powers, share thousands of kilometres of disputed borders, where tens of thousands of soldiers are posted on either side.

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## Start judicial probe into deaths in Gopalganj

FROM PAGE 12

citizens’ safety, constitutional rights, and fundamental human rights.

Citing media reports, HRFB noted that violence broke out following a political rally organised by the National Citizen Party (NCP) at Gopalganj Municipal Park on Wednesday. After the rally, a section of a local political party reportedly attacked the gathering. The situation escalated, and members of law enforcement allegedly used “excessive force”, including opening fire on the crowd.

As a result, five individuals — Dipto Saha, 25, Ramzan Kazi, 18, Sohel Molla, 41, Imon, 24, and later Ramzan Munshi, 28, who died from gunshot wounds at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 18 — lost their lives. Many others, some critically injured, are undergoing treatment in various hospitals.

HRFB stated that the decision to fire on citizens in public is not only inhumane but also a violation of Article 31 of the Constitution of Bangladesh and international human rights standards.

“Such disproportionate use of force is unjustifiable under any circumstances and reflects a serious lack of state accountability,” it said.

Recent footage circulating on social media clearly shows law enforcement officers firing toward the crowd, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, the inspector general of police has claimed that police did not use lethal weapons.

On the other hand, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement said the military intervened “to bring the situation under control” and “was compelled to use force in self-defence,” but did not clarify whether any lethal weapons were used.

HRFB also demanded that those arrested in the aftermath of the incident be promptly produced before the court and be treated in accordance with legal procedures, ensuring that no innocent individuals are harassed.

It also urged reconsideration of any prolonged curfew or indefinite restrictions on public transport and movement, which could paralyse daily life.

Emphasising that each death and incident of torture is unacceptable and must be addressed under existing laws, HRFB referred to a media report where a victim’s family claimed they were forced to bury the body without a post-mortem due to the lack of cooperation from hospital and police authorities.

HRFB termed this allegation alarming and said it reflects serious negligence and breach of legal obligations.

HRFB called for the immediate formation of a judicial probe into the deaths and the overall incident, including a review of the failure to ensure safety at the political rally and a thorough investigation into its root causes.

The organisation urged all parties to act with restraint and responsibility to protect the country’s

stability, peace, and democratic environment.

It stressed that incidents of violence, excessive force, and fatalities pose serious threats to democracy, human rights, and public safety.

HRFB demanded a full, impartial, and fair investigation; justice for the victims; compensation for the affected; and necessary steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future.

The statement was signed by Dr Hameeda Hossain, Advocate Sultana Kamal, and Raja Devasish Roy, all experts at HRFB; Advocate ZI Khan Panna, chairperson of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and acting convener of HRFB; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik Udd yog; Sara Hossain, honorary executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST); Ranjan Karmakar, executive director of Steps Towards Development; Saleh Ahmed, executive director of Bandhu Social Welfare Society; Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum; Dr Iftekharuzaman, executive director of

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB); Dr Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP); Shamsul Huda, executive director of the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD); Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori; Sardar Jahangir Hossain, executive director of Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF); Shipon Kumar

Robidas, general secretary of Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM); Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS); Dewan Zaman, executive director of FAIR; Pallab Chakma, executive director of Kapaeng Foundation; Rokeya Rafique Baby, executive director of Kormojibi Nari; Geeta Das, president of Naripokkho; Abdus Sattar Dulal, president of the National Alliance of Disabled People’s Organisations (NADPO); and Ashrafun Nahar Misti, executive director of Women with Disabilities Development Foundation.

### Rush on

FROM PAGE 12

He also submitted three additional applications for dealing, believed to involve refinancing, on other London properties.

Shafiat Sobhan filed two such applications in the past year, suggesting attempted sales, refinancing, or ownership transfers under legal scrutiny.

One of these properties is an £8 million mansion in Virginia Water, Surrey, according to The Guardian. Shayan and Shahryar Rahman submitted three applications for dealing as well.

Among these is the £35 million apartment in Mayfair, jointly owned by the two, which was frozen last month by the NCA, indicating ongoing legal intervention.

All five are currently under investigation by Bangladesh’s Anti-Corruption Commission.

<div></div> <div>ট্রেডিং কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ (টিসিবি) আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, মৌলভীবাজার। www.tcb.gov.bd</div>				
০১টি ০৭ সীটের (MPV) গাড়ী ভাড়া করণের লক্ষ্যে দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (অভ্যন্তরীণ)				
১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়		
২	এজেন্সি	ট্রেডিং কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ (টিসিবি)		
৩	ক্রয়কারীর নাম	উপ-পরিচালক (অফিস প্রধান), টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, মৌলভীবাজার।		
৪	ক্রয়কারীর কোড	প্রযোজ্য নহে		
৫	ক্রয়কারীর জেলা	মৌলভীবাজার		
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বিশেষ তথ্য				
১১	প্যাকেজ নং	টিসিবি/মৌলভীবাজার/ভাড়া কৃত গাড়ী ২০২৫-২০২৬		
১২	প্যাকেজের নাম	দায়িত্ব কালের প্রয়োজনে ০১টি গাড়ী ভাড়া করণ		
১৩	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	২০-০৭-২০২৫		
১৪	দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল বিক্রির শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ: ০৩-০৮-২০২৫	সময়: বিকাল ০৫:০০ টা	
১৫	দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল দাখিল করার শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ: ০৪-০৮-২০২৫	সময়: বেলা ১২:০০ টা	
১৬	দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণের তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ: ০৪-০৮-২০২৫	সময়: অপরাহ্ন ১২:১৫ টা	
১৭	অফিস(সমূহ)-এর নাম ও ঠিকানা	ঠিকানা (১) টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, মৌলভীবাজার। (২) পূর্বালী বাংক পিএলসি, শেরপুর শাখা, মৌলভীবাজার।		
সেবার দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল জান পার্শে বর্ণিত ব্যাংক ও অফিস থেকে ক্রয় করা যাবে।				
- দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল গ্রহণের স্থান - দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল উন্মুক্তকরণ/খোলার স্থান				
টিসিবি'র অফিস কক্ষ, টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, মৌলভীবাজার। টিসিবি'র অফিস প্রধানের কক্ষ, টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, মৌলভীবাজার।				
দরপত্র প্রদানপত্রের অন্য তথ্য				
১৮	দরপত্র প্রদানতার যোগ্যতা	প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান। বিস্তারিত শর্তসমূহ দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউলে উল্লেখ করা আছে।		
১৯	সেবার সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	০১টি ০৭ সীটের MPV গাড়ী (Toyota Noah square/ Mitsubishi Expander/ Hyundai Staria অথবা সমতুল্য)। Model: Minimum ২০২৩ or Newer		
২০	দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউলের মূল্য	প্রতিটি ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা।		
২১	লট নং	লটের শনাক্তকরণ	স্থান	দরপত্র জামানতের পরিমাণ (টাকা)
	১	০১টি ০৭ সীটের (MPV)	মৌলভীবাজার	৩৭,০০০/- (সাতত্রিশ হাজার) টাকা
			ট্রেডিং কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ (টিসিবি) এর নামে জমা পে-অর্ডার করতে হবে।	চুক্তির সময়কাল
				১২ মাস চুক্তি
দরপত্র গ্রহণকারীর বিবরণ				
২২	দরপত্র আদানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	মোঃ সোহেল রানা		
২৩	দরপত্র আদানকারীর পদবি	উপ-পরিচালক (অফিস প্রধান)		
২৪	দরপত্র আদানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, শেরপুর, মৌলভীবাজার।		
২৫	দরপত্র আদানকারীর সহিত যোগাযোগের জন্য	মোবাইল নং-০১৭৬৬৯৩৩৭৯৪	ফ্যাক্স নং--	ই-মেইল: tcbsyl@tcb.gov.bd
২৬	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা			
	ক) এ দরপত্র পিপিআর-২০০৮ অনুযায়ী পরিচালিত হবে।			
	খ) দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় শর্তাবলী এবং পণ্যের বিবরণ দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে।			
	গ) অসম্পূর্ণ, শর্তযুক্ত এবং বিকল্প দরপত্র কোন প্রকার বিবেচনায় আসবে না।			
	ঘ) কোন কারণ দর্শনো ছাড়াই যে কোন দরপত্র সম্পূর্ণ/আংশিকভাবে গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিলে ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।			
	ঙ) কোন দরদাতা নোটিফিকেশন অব এ্যাওয়ার্ড (NOA) পাওয়ার পর যথাসময়ে পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি (কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত) প্রদান না করতে পারেন তাহলে তার দায়িত্বকৃত দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে এবং দরপত্র জামানত বাজেয়াপ্ত হবে।			
	চ) কোন কার্যবিশেষ পূর্বে নোটিফিকেশন অব এ্যাওয়ার্ড (NOA) পাওয়ার পর কোন দরদাতা যথাসময়ে পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি (কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত) প্রদানে ব্যর্থ হলে অথবা পূর্বে কোন দরদাতার পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি (কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত) আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণরূপে বাজেয়াপ্ত হয়ে থাকলে, তাহলে তিনি দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন না।			
	<div></div> <div>(মোঃ সোহেল রানা) উপ-পরিচালক (অফিস প্রধান)</div>			
GD-1608				

## A UN office can make law enforcers accountable

Three-year MoU paves way for UNHRO to open mission in Bangladesh

The interim government's decision to host a mission of the UN Human Rights Office in Bangladesh to promote and protect human rights is a positive step. The decision, one may recall, follows a UN fact-finding mission (OHCHR) investigation conducted not long after the July-August uprising, which documented widespread abuses by state forces under the Awami League regime. Generally, OHCHR country offices are invited by national governments during periods of significant transition, vulnerability, or post-conflict reform.

In Bangladesh, however, its opening with the signing of a three-year MoU between Bangladesh and UN officials has been preceded by protests from certain religious groups. The government has also acknowledged their concerns, particularly about the perceived ideological orientation of UN human rights bodies, and sought to address them through a press statement. In that, it stated that the OHCHR mission will "focus on addressing and preventing serious human rights abuses, such as those perpetrated by the previous government, and ensuring accountability for violations," adding that it will not serve to promote any social agenda that falls outside the country's established legal, social and cultural framework. Bangladesh also retains the sovereign authority to withdraw from the agreement should it "determine that the partnership no longer aligns with national interests," the statement says.

That said, Bangladesh's horrific track record of human rights violations demands that such an international, independent body be set up to act as a watchdog over the government and state machinery in their treatment of citizens. The Sheikh Hasina regime is an example of how a government can abuse its power by using various institutions and agencies to clamp down on citizens whenever it wants to, without facing consequences. Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and gender-based violence were some of the persistent human rights abuses of the AL regime. During the July-August crackdown, the state's use of excessive force resulted in over 1,400 deaths.

The OHCHR, following its fact-finding mission, made some important recommendations which its office in Dhaka can help implement. Among other things, it called for independent investigations and prosecutions for killings, torture, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, and gender-based violence. Under the police and security sector reforms, it called for reducing use of lethal force, banning certain types of ammunition, reforming police training, establishing an independent police oversight commission, disbanding RAB, etc. Other recommendations include ending unlawful surveillance of journalists, activists, and political opponents, and holding independent inquiries into surveillance practices.

Going forward, we also hope that the UN rights office can help raise the bar for local watchdogs like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which currently has no binding or enforcement powers and cannot compel government agencies or law enforcement to take specific actions. The NHRC cannot even independently investigate abuses by police, military, or other agencies. We must acknowledge that the UNHRO's increasing presence of late signals Bangladesh's increasing willingness to be transparent and to remove the culture of impunity that has long become entrenched within state institutions. We must ensure this journey towards protecting rights continues apace.

## RAJUK still mired in corruption, bribery

Govt must ensure transparency, accountability in this institution

We are quite disappointed to see that RAJUK continues to fail in delivering its services in a transparent and accountable manner. Over the years, the organisation has earned a bad reputation for subjecting service-seekers to various forms of irregularities and unethical practices, including bribery. While city dwellers had hoped that things would improve during the interim government's tenure, old practices have reportedly remained unchanged. From allotment letters and plot transfers to building design approvals and land-use clearances, irregularities persist across the board. While RAJUK is entrusted with the responsibility of restoring Dhaka's liveability, there have been no visible steps taken towards fulfilling that mandate. This state of affairs is unacceptable.

According to a report by *Banik Barta*, service-seekers face the greatest challenge while seeking land-use clearance and design approvals. Apparently, getting building designs approved is nearly impossible without paying hefty bribes. Landowners and developers claim it may take anywhere from Tk 5 lakh to upwards of a crore to get a design approved. To address such irregularities, RAJUK had launched the Electronic Construction Permitting System (ECPs) in 2022 but it remains allegedly non-functional, as all processes continue through manual, desk-based dealings. Often, building designs submitted online through RAJUK-approved engineers are rejected without explanation. To learn the reason for rejection, applicants must visit RAJUK office in person, where they end up being compelled to pay bribes. RAJUK's inefficiency and irregularities are also reflected in its new Detailed Area Plan (DAP), which has drawn criticisms from experts.

We urge the government to eliminate corruption and bribery from RAJUK to ensure the smooth delivery of services to citizens. Currently, securing even a single service requires submitting numerous documents, many of which are unnecessary. This burdensome practice also must end. RAJUK should streamline all its services to alleviate public suffering.

In 2020, the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) recommended some critical reforms to curb corruption and promote accountability within the institution. These include amending outdated laws and regulations, transferring RAJUK's housing and real estate functions to a separate authority, dedicating RAJUK solely to planning and development, decentralising its services, and strengthening oversight, among others. We call on the government to seriously consider these recommendations and take decisive steps to transform RAJUK into a transparent, efficient, and citizen-friendly institution.

# July uprising and the rise of collective power



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ANU MUHAMMAD

The July people's uprising was the result of many years of built-up grievances. Through this movement, the people of Bangladesh expressed their protest using a language shaped by long-standing discontent. We have seen many times before that when people's dissatisfaction reaches a breaking point, they rise up. This was evident during the Language Movement of 1952, which eventually led to the fall of the Muslim League in 1954. In 1969, another mass uprising helped pave the way for the Liberation War in 1971, which ultimately brought down Pakistan's rule. In 1990, a people's movement ended General Ershad's long military dictatorship. In the same way, the mass uprising of 2024 brought down an autocratic regime that had held on to power for over 15 years.

Localised uprisings have also carried deep significance in Bangladesh. For example, the people of Dinajpur rose up after police raped and murdered a teenage girl named Yasmin in 1995. This ignited a new phase in the anti-rape movement in the following years. In 2006, a massive uprising in the northern part of the country forced the cancellation of a destructive multinational open-pit coal mining project in Phulbari. Similarly, a government plan to build an airport by destroying Arial Beel was also halted due to local resistance.

These events show a clear pattern: when people are pushed to the edge—when their voices are ignored, their demands dismissed, their hopes silenced, and their protests crushed—they rise together, sooner or later. This was the same path that led to the 2024 mass uprising.

In fact, the ground for the latest countrywide uprising had been laid over the 15 years of Sheikh Hasina's autocratic rule. During this time, people resisted in different ways at different levels. In 2008, Awami League returned to power with a large majority of public votes. But soon after, it took steps to remain in power permanently without holding credible elections. The constitution was amended, and the caretaker government system was abolished. At the same time, to gain favour with countries like India, China, Russia, the United States, and Japan, the government partnered with their companies on various mega-projects against the people's interests. These steps effectively built a global alliance of plunder and opened the door to



Through the 2024 July uprising, Bangladeshis expressed their protest using a language shaped by long-standing discontent. This photo was taken on August 2, 2024.

FILE PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

widespread corruption, irregularities, and a system where authoritarian rule and looting of wealth went hand in hand.

Since 2014, the government shut down all meaningful avenues for electoral change. Alongside this, democratic rights were increasingly attacked. Surveillance intensified—both online and offline—and repression reached alarming levels, with "crossfire" killings and enforced disappearances becoming commonplace. At the same time, harmful projects and deals that endangered people's lives and the environment continued to be pushed forward.

Naturally, protests and resistance grew in response. The movement demanding elections under a caretaker government saw ups and downs; many political parties were vocal on this issue. There were also significant people's movements to protect natural resources, the environment, and public rights. Among these, the movement to protect the Sundarbans stood out. It brought people from all walks of life in a nationwide campaign that lasted nearly a decade. This movement revealed the government's increasingly authoritarian nature and its dependence on India. It was

measures, all these protests gradually built up the energy that fuelled the 2024 uprising. So, the July uprising cannot be understood solely through the lens of what happened that month or in early August. It is the outcome of various struggles carried out over the past 15 years. This is one key feature of this movement.

The second key feature of the 2024 uprising is that it differed from the ones in 1952, 1969, and 1990. In those earlier uprisings, there were declared political goals, leading organisations, and widely known political leaders. Their aims and messages were clearly communicated to the public. But in 2024, there were no central or familiar leaders guiding the movement. The Students Against Discrimination (SAD) began the movement for parity in access to jobs, but it turned into an anti-government uprising after the authorities unleashed atrocities on the students. The rage that had been building for years—against economic exploitation, plunder, oppression, and torture—reached a new level. When the government responded with indiscriminate killings, people from all walks of life joined in: workers, students, teachers, journalists, writers, artists, activists from different political camps. At that stage, people did not

no formal manifesto, but a vision for a humane Bangladesh became clearer through the protests. One of the most powerful forms of expression came in the form of graffiti. These writings and illustrations on walls reflected the calls to end class injustice, ethnic oppression, gender inequality, and religious discrimination. The idea of a discrimination-free Bangladesh, shared mostly by young people, began to take shape through this uprising.

Those who uphold discriminatory ideologies—who seek to widen class divides, reinforce gender inequality, impose religious divisions, or promote ethnic discrimination—stand against the spirit of this movement. The July uprising was born out of people's desire to end these forms of oppression and discrimination. Therefore, its most important task is to build the ideology, politics, and people's power needed to establish a Bangladesh free from inequality and repression. The institutions and ideological support needed to realise that vision must now be strengthened.

This is the challenge of our time. On the first anniversary of the July mass uprising, it is our responsibility to deepen and expand all cultural, political, and social efforts toward that goal.

# Students who didn't pass SSC exams deserve a way forward



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SIBBIR AHMAD

This year, nearly six lakh students failed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in Bangladesh. That number alone should spark a national conversation, not just about the shortcomings of our education system, but also about how we treat those who fall through its cracks. For a country striving for progress, keeping such a large portion of our youth idle for an entire year is not only wasteful, it is self-defeating.

Among these failed students, many have only fallen short in one or two subjects. Yet the system gives them no option but to sit out the entire year, retake their failed subjects the following year, and then wait again to resume regular education. In the process, they lose not just time, but confidence, social standing, and, in some cases, even the motivation to continue. A year of forced inactivity

often results in psychological stress, exposure to negative influences, and, at times, involvement in crime. Many become victims of social bullying and

complete their education without delay and enter the labour force a year earlier, the economy would benefit significantly. Consider this: if each of these six lakh students were to earn even a modest monthly income of Tk 10,000 upon joining the workforce, then by graduating a year earlier, their combined contribution to the economy would be around Tk 7,200 crore in a year. That's Tk 72 billion in GDP loss, simply because we let six lakh young people sit idle instead of studying.

There is a simple fix to this

**We should consider reforming our entire high school education structure to a semester-based system spanning classes 9 through 12. Instead of the current model, where students are assessed in a single high-stakes examination after years of study, we could adopt a modular approach.**

family pressure. What should have been a temporary academic setback too often spirals into a permanent life detour.

But this year-long academic purgatory is not merely a personal loss for students, it is also an economic loss for the entire country. If these six lakh students had the opportunity to

problem. We can easily allow students who have failed in one or two subjects to begin college studies on a conditional basis. They would enrol in college, begin attending regular classes, and simultaneously prepare to retake the failed SSC subjects the following year. If they pass, they move forward with their batchmates. No

year lost, no future derailed.

Even better, we should consider reforming our entire high school education structure to a semester-based system spanning classes 9 through 12. Instead of the current model, where students are assessed in a single high-stakes examination after years of study, we could adopt a modular approach. Students would complete courses in blocks, with opportunities to retake failed subjects in subsequent semesters without losing an entire year. Such a system already exists in many developed countries and allows for flexibility, second chances, and more personalised academic paths.

This is not a radical overhaul; it is a rational, humane, and economically sound proposal. We are not talking about lowering standards. We are talking about updating an outdated system to reflect the realities of our society and the potential of our youth. When six lakh students fail at once, it is the system, not just the students, that has failed. And that system needs to adapt.

Bangladesh cannot afford to waste a year of six lakh young lives. The cost is too high—socially, economically, and morally. Let's give these students a second chance, and in doing so, give our nation a better future.

# It is time for a citizens’ petition law



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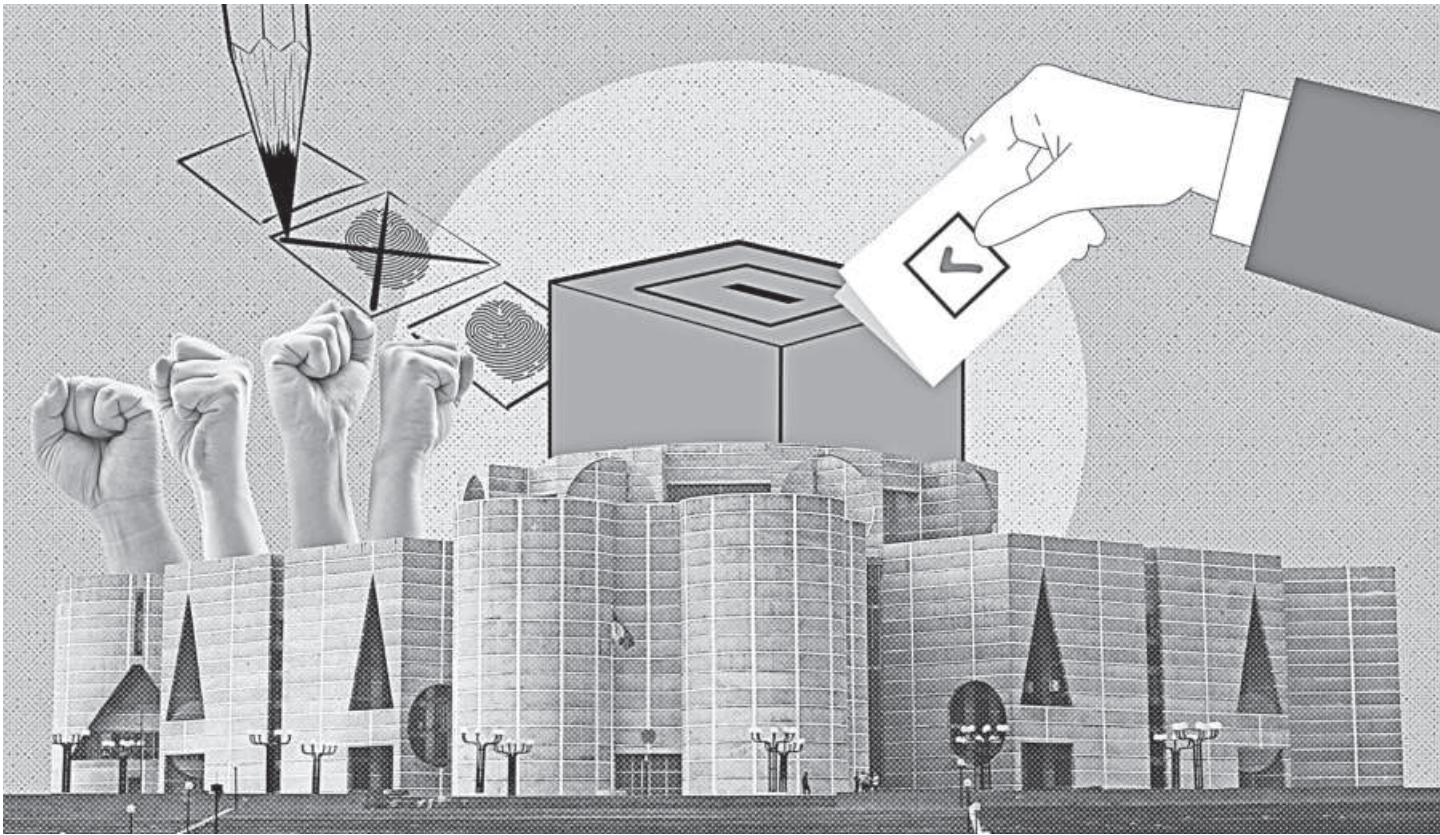
APON ZAHIR

A year ago, blood was shed on the streets of our country. Thousands of people, especially the youth, joined a mass movement with anger in their hearts and hope for change. They demanded more than a change of leadership; they called for reform in the very process of governance. That movement, which we now remember as the “July Uprising,” revealed two powerful truths. One, it demonstrated the political awareness and courage of our youth. Two, it exposed a fundamental weakness in our democracy: that ordinary citizens, particularly young people, have no institutional mechanism to communicate directly with the state.

One cannot expect civic participation in governance under a fascist regime. However, even if Bangladesh manages to return to democracy through the ongoing efforts of the interim government, reform commissions, and the activities of all political parties, the means of exercising a citizen's fundamental rights will remain largely limited to the ballot box. Citizens are effectively confined to casting a vote once every five years. Beyond that, they have no meaningful way to participate in the state's decision-making processes. Ironically, citizens who are now under the age of 32 have never even had the chance to vote in a real election, due to bad politics. And yet, decisions made by the state affect every aspect of their lives, including the job market, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and the legal system.

This policy vacuum is also felt by practically every person whenever there is a strike due to political unrest, when schools and workplaces are forced to close down, or when people spend hours in traffic due to road blockages by yet another protest over yet another issue.

People often ask, “How can our voices reach the parliament?” The truth is, there is no defined process through which the voice of the common citizen can reach the legislature. Even if a matter is occasionally raised in parliament, either out of goodwill by a



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

politician or through the efforts of an NGO or journalist, no law or convention in Bangladesh allows citizens to formally initiate a matter of public concern. Under the current system, there is also no mechanism to obligate or hold MPs accountable to the demands of their constituency. This institutional void has time and again led to unrest and violence. When there is no peaceful avenue to be heard, people are left with no choice but to block roads and protest, often risking their lives.

In many countries, particularly developed democracies, clear constitutional and legal

frameworks exist that allow citizens to bring their voices into the halls of power. These mechanisms are known as “citizens’ petitions” or “citizens’ initiatives.” In countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Finland, citizens can propose legislation or policy changes by collecting a required number of signatures. This process creates an institutional bridge between the people and the state, a platform where citizens

Germany goes even further in upholding civil rights. Article 17 of the German Basic Law guarantees the “right to petition,” allowing any citizen to submit a proposal to the parliamentary Petitions Committee. If a petition receives over 50,000 signatures, the petitioner is entitled to present their case directly before the committee. This is more than just an administrative process; it confers political legitimacy. The thoughts

exists. Our parliament does not have a citizens’ petitions committee. There is no concept of a public hearing, nor is there an official online platform for petitions. Even if a citizen sends a formal proposal to parliament, there is no obligation to consider it.

Therefore, a citizens’ petition act should be introduced. This law should establish a clear framework: how many signatures must be gathered for a proposal to be submitted to a parliamentary committee? At what threshold does the proposal become eligible for formal debate in parliament? Such a law would also align perfectly with the vision of a “digital Bangladesh.” It would require a neutral, government-backed online platform through which citizens could—securely, transparently, and inclusively—submit proposals and gather support through digital signatures.

This law would not merely offer young people a platform to speak; it would strengthen the very foundation of our democracy. A citizen petition system would allow for opposition views and alternative ideas to be aired, not suppressed. It would compel our political leaders to acknowledge that citizens are not just voters, but also active participants and thought leaders in national development.

A common counterargument is that the people of Bangladesh are not yet ready for such a system. But is this view truly credible? If anything, the July uprising has shown the opposite: people are ready; they are simply denied institutional access. If people are prepared to voice their demands by shedding their blood, surely they are also willing to speak through pens and signatures. What’s missing is the path, and it is our responsibility to clear it.

If we wish to move away from an era of instability, unrest, and reactionary politics towards a democracy that is inclusive, participatory, and transparent, a citizens’ petition act is essential. It is more than just legal reform; it is a transformation in mindset. The state must no longer say, “We will decide whether or not to hear you,” but rather, “We are here to listen.”

A society matures only when it chooses reason over violence. Citizens’ petitions are a path to reason. Let us build that path so that our brothers and sisters need not speak through blood, but rather shape the future of Bangladesh with information, argument, and signatures. A future where even the most ordinary citizen can proudly say: “This state listens to me.”

# The future of Bangladesh depends on trust



Ashfaq Zaman is the founder of Dhaka Forum and a strategic international affairs expert.

ASHFAQ ZAMAN

In Bangladesh, we often talk about roads, bridges, export zones, and shiny digital systems. These are the signs we look to when we speak of progress. But there's one kind of infrastructure that we've quietly left behind. We don't debate it on talk shows. We don't measure it in megawatts or kilometres. Yet without it, everything else struggles to stand. That missing piece is social trust.

Right now, Bangladesh is rising in numbers. Our GDP is growing. Our global partnerships are expanding. Our cities are full of cranes and construction. And yet, for all this growth, we seem to be shrinking in another way. People do not seem to trust one another. They don't trust institutions. They don't trust the process. We are moving forward on paper, but drifting apart in spirit.

Political scientist Francis Fukuyama once called social trust the glue that holds society together. He meant the basic belief that others will act fairly, that institutions will serve everyone, and that public life is not a game rigged in advance. In countries where this kind of trust exists, people pay their taxes more willingly. Governments spend more effectively. Citizens work together

more easily. Trust, it turns out, is not just a moral value. It is a foundation for prosperity.

Here in Bangladesh, that foundation is weakening. The December 2024 pulse survey by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) indicates this deterioration of trust. It's a warning sign. When people believe that success depends on connections rather than competence, it becomes hard to dream and hard to believe that rules matter at all.

When people feel cheated, they often start to cheat, not out of malice, but to survive. You hear it all the time. “Everyone's doing it. Why shouldn't I?” In this way, mistrust becomes contagious. One small betrayal leads to another. Before long, a quiet cynicism seeps into everyday life.

This isn't just a Bangladeshi problem. Many countries have gone through similar phases. South Korea, for example, faced a major trust crisis in the 1970s. Their response wasn't limited to economic planning. They made public budgeting more transparent so people could see where every won, the South Korean currency, was going. They introduced tools so that citizens can directly

provide the government with feedback. And they reimagined education, emphasising ethical citizenship, not just grades and ranks. Bit by bit, that changed how people felt about the system. It became more open, more accountable, more human.

Malaysia also went through a period of deep division after the ethnic riots of 1969. In response, they introduced “*Rukun Negara*,” a five-point national philosophy

**Bangladesh is stepping into a more complex world, trying to balance relationships with China, India, and the West. At the same time, we're rolling out digital systems like e-filing, online land records, and AI-based services. None of these will succeed if people don't trust them.**

focused on unity and justice. These weren't empty slogans. They were taught in schools, repeated in civil service training, and reflected in how the government communicated. Later, they even set up citizen feedback mechanisms within their policy labs, making people feel part of the process rather than subjects of it.

There's a lot Bangladesh can learn from these examples because trust is not something that appears on its own. It has to

be designed and consistently practised.

And right now, we need it more than ever. Bangladesh is stepping into a more complex world, trying to balance relationships with China, India, and the West. At the same time, we're rolling out digital systems like e-filing, online land records, and AI-based services. None of these will succeed if people don't trust them.

An investor won't stay in a market where the rules change without warning. Young people won't believe in democracy if it feels like a show where the outcome is the same as before.

Part of our problem is that we often try to build consensus without first rebuilding trust. That's why reform commissions and national dialogues so often fall flat. When people come to the table already suspicious of one another's motives, no agreement lasts long. Consensus cannot be forced. It has to be rooted in good faith.

So, what can we do? For starters, we need to make transparency a right, not a favour. Every ministry should publish its spending, projects, and results so that people can understand them. Digital dashboards. Open tenders. Public feedback. In some places, technologies like blockchain can help track things like land transactions or local budgets in a way that's tamper-proof and clear.

We also need to rethink education. Our students need more than math and memorisation. They need to learn how to think critically, how to listen, and how to disagree without attacking. Subjects like design thinking, media literacy, civic responsibility, ethics, and even patriotism

should be woven into the curriculum. Our schools and universities should be the spaces where young people learn to trust each other and build together.

We also cannot avoid the issue of inequality. When people feel left behind, they also stop believing in the system. Reducing inequality is not just about fairness. It's about social stability. It's about giving everyone a reason to invest in the country's future.

Media, too, plays a role. We need journalism that informs rather than inflames and holds power accountable without becoming a tool of power. Independent media councils and fact-checking bodies can help restore faith in what we read and hear.

And perhaps most importantly, our politics must lead by example. We need moments where leaders from different sides come together, for education, for climate, and national wellbeing, not just for show, but as a genuine signal that disagreement doesn't have to mean disunity.

According to an article published on the World Bank Blogs, trust in institutions is one of the strongest predictors of a country's ability to grow and transform. Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom found that even the most fragile communities can thrive when trust is present and respected.

Imagine a Bangladesh where a student believes that the public exam was fair, where a small business owner knows that policy won't change overnight. That is not a dream. That is a plan.

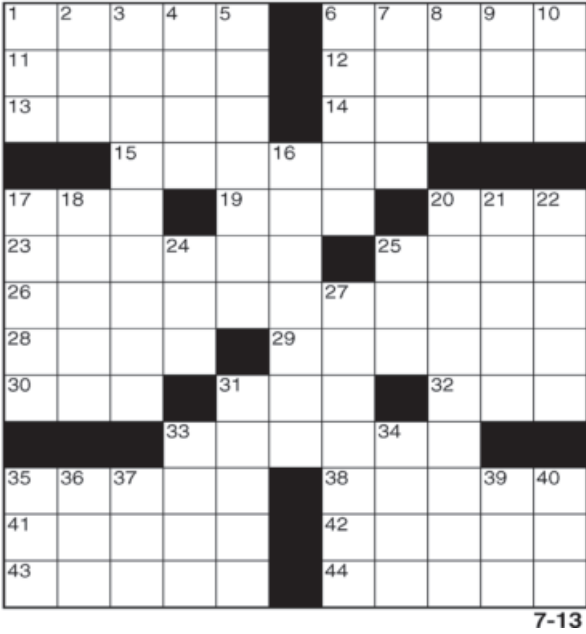
We don't need more slogans. We need more trust.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS

1 Pool fill  
6 Asimov forte  
11 Mindful  
12 Donut-shaped  
13 Freezing  
14 Speak  
15 “The Apartment” star  
17 Before today  
19 Snaky swimmer  
20 Spree  
23 Home to Duke  
25 Band sample  
26 Custom  
28 Singer Burl  
29 Forking over  
30 Pitch’s kin  
31 Hotel feature
- 32 Pindar work  
33 Soap opera  
35 Poisonous  
38 Gold-loving king  
41 Bold way to solve crosswords  
42 Game setting  
43 Clamorous  
44 Hardly cool
- DOWN

1 Funny fellow  
2 Really impress  
3 Tough challenge  
4 Buffalo’s lake  
5 Carnivore’s craving  
6 Bar seat  
7 Hokey stuff  
8 Lyricist Gershwin  
9 In shape
- 10 Bar rocks  
16 Jotting spot  
17 Let on  
18 Tropical fruit  
20 Force studiers  
21 Improve, in a way  
22 Canyon  
24 “a Rebel”  
25 Parched  
27 Crew member  
31 Baseball’s Dent  
33 Confession list  
34 Cork’s country  
35 Light metal  
36 Lennon’s love  
37 Clock numeral  
39 Plus  
40 Utter



7-13

## YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

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

ONI HASAN

electrifies Dhaka



PHOTOS: KHALAD BIN WALID

**Guitarist Oni Hasan made his long-awaited return with *Let's Vibe* – Oni Hasan featuring All Stars, held at Aloki Convention Centre yesterday, July 19. The event brought together some of the country's most prominent rock musicians for a night charged with a fascinating display of musical prowess. The daylong event featured both a guitar masterclass and a full-scale evening concert. The masterclass began at 3:30pm, followed by the concert at 7:50pm.**

NAVEEN ISLAM TOREE

The day opened with a special masterclass that offered more than just technical instruction – it became an interactive space where fans and musicians connected on a personal level. Zubair Hasan from Indalo led the session, breaking down the chord structures of his popular songs. He explained the progressions, answered questions, and gave aspiring guitarists a behind-the-scenes look at his creative process.

When Oni Hasan entered the scene, the admiration and craze was immediately evident by the way he got surrounded by fans. Despite the crowd, Hasan remained engaged and approachable. He answered a wide range of questions – from gear choices to practice habits – and even joined one attendee on stage for an impromptu jam.

By 7:50pm, the concert stage came alive. The venue was filled with fans eager to see the former Warfaze and Vibe guitarist headline. He was joined by an all-star lineup including Jamshed Chowdhury (Powersurge), Raef Al Hasan Rafa (AvoidRafa), Taawkir Tajammul, Zohad Yazdani (Bagdhara), Fardin Fayeze Omece, Minhaj Ahmed Mridul, and several others. Wali Muhammad Akbar (Vibe) also made a surprise appearance. Each artist brought their own sound and following, turning the event into a kind of unofficial summit of Bangladesh's rock scene.

The show opened with fan favourites like *Amar Shongbidhan*, *Sesher*


*Opashe*, *Bidhatari Ronge Aka*, and *Odhora* – all featuring Zohad on vocals, with Wali on keys for selected tracks. Interspersed between vocal performances were instrumental pieces showcasing Oni's solo work: *Blissful Youth*, *Until We Meet Again*, *The Himalayas is Where My Heart Rests*, and *Shrine Revisited*.

The tone of the evening shifted mid-show with a blistering Pantera tribute. Jamshed took on vocals while Rafa handled the drums for *Mouth for War*, *Walk*, and *Cowboys from Hell*. One of the night's standout moments came when Rafa took the mic for *Cemetery Gates*, delivering a powerful performance. The set wrapped up with *Fucking Hostile*, ramping up the energy in the room.

Two Megadeth classics – *Dread and the Fugitive Mind* and *Tornado of Souls*— followed, with Jamshed leading vocals.

The concert's final part returned to local originals, with Zohad performing *Shopnodeb* and *Chena Jogot*. The night concluded with all three frontmen – Zohad, Rafa, and Jamshed – sharing the stage for *Naa* and *Purnota*.

Despite some early delays, *Let's Vibe* delivered everything fans came for: tight performances, memorable collaborations, and a deep sense of nostalgia. For Oni Hasan, it marked not just a return to the Dhaka stage, but a reaffirmation of his place in the country's rock scene. Whether this marks the beginning of more solo work or new projects, one thing is certain – the audience is still listening, and they're ready for more.

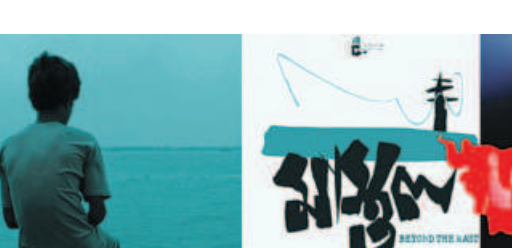


**‘Captain Planet and the Planeteers’ live-action series underway at Netflix**

Netflix is developing a live-action adaptation of the iconic 1990s animated series *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, with Greg Berlanti and Leonardo DiCaprio serving as executive producers.

Tara Hernandez, known for *Mrs Davis* and *Young Sheldon*, is writing the script. Warner Bros Television is producing the new version under Berlanti Productions and Appian Way.

The show follows Gaia and five young Planeteers who summon Captain Planet to fight global issues like pollution and deforestation, while also addressing themes such as bullying and drug abuse.



**‘Mastul’ invited to World Film Festival Kolkata**

Bangladeshi film *Mastul*, directed by Mohammad Nuruzzaman, has been officially invited to the fourth edition of the World Film Festival in Kolkata.

The festival, organised by the Eastern Region of the Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI), will be held from August 15 to 21 at Nandan, Kolkata's prominent cultural venue, with daily screenings from 12pm to 8pm.

The list of selected films, including *Mastul*, was recently shared by the organisers on their official social media platforms. FFSI, founded in 1959 under the leadership of legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray, continues to promote meaningful cinema. This year's festival is also being held in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific wing of the International Federation of Film Societies.

# NEWS

## Parties call for fair polls at Jamaat rally

FROM PAGE 12

and justice. There is no alternative,” he added.

“Mujibism” must be defeated politically, economically, and culturally, said Sarjis Alam, chief organiser (north) of the National Citizen Party (NCP).

“We may have political differences, but in resisting Mujibism and authoritarianism, all forces of the uprising must remain united.”

He warned that pro-India elements were reactivating across the country and remarked that no foreign power, including India, should dominate Bangladesh.

He went on to demand a new constitution as there can be no “pro-Bangladesh system” as long as the “Mujibist 1972 constitution” is in place.

He also called for a fresh constituent assembly election.

“We don’t want the interim government to play a civil society role. It must act like a post-uprising government. Killer Hasina must be tried, and the verdict carried out.”

He also stressed the need to ensure the rights of women and minorities, uphold judicial independence, and prevent the misuse of law enforcement agencies for political

purposes.

Addressing the broader opposition alliance “Birodhi 24”, Sarjis said: “Unity does not mean blind loyalty. If anyone engages in extortion or syndicate politics, we must speak up. Let our political rivalry be based on values, rather than turning into personal attacks.”

The interim government has no right to decide on setting up a UN Human Rights Commission office while ignoring political parties, said Akhtar Hossen, member secretary of the NCP.

He accused the Awami League and its allies of committing mass killing and crimes against humanity.

Failing to bring these atrocities to justice would betray the spirit of the July uprising, he said.

“People of all religions — Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians — must be able to live peacefully in this country. That is what the July uprising stood for.”

Referring to the July Charter and Declaration, Akhtar said these must be implemented as the official roadmap for Bangladesh’s liberation.

These documents should be enforced through legal order based on fundamental reforms.

He ended his speech by calling on all anti-fascist forces to unite

in defence of Bangladesh’s independence and sovereignty.

Islamic forces must stay united, said Mahiuddin Rabbani, Hefazat-e-Islam’s central Nayeb-e-Amir.

He went on to demand a commission to investigate the 2013 killings involving Hefazat and the withdrawal of cases against Hefazat.

He also criticised the role of the current government.

“The caretaker has now become the owner of the house. And now they want to bring in the UN Human Rights Commission? We will never accept this. Where were you for the last 16 years? What did you do in Gaza? Were you able to uphold human rights there? In the name of human rights, we will not tolerate any activity that goes against the Qur’an and Sunnah in this country.”

The Qadlanis must be officially declared non-Muslim by the state, he said, adding that no law that goes against the Qur’an and Sunnah can be enacted.

“So long as you carry the flag of truth for humanity and Islam, Islami Andolon will stand by your side, In Sha Allah,” said Maulana Yunus Ahmad, secretary general of Bangladesh Islami Andolon.

Gono Odhikar Parishad President

Nurul Haque Nur demanded fundamental changes to the constitutional framework before moving towards elections.

“The historic change we achieved through blood must be made sustainable — the people have called for constitutional reform.”

He also called for a qualitative shift in student politics by holding all student union elections, including DUCSU, as the first step.

Expressing frustration over the delay in justice even after six years, Barkat Ullah, father of BUET student Abrar Fahad, said, “His only crime was that he spoke for the country. He posted a Facebook status opposing Indian dominance, aggression, and illegal agreements between the then government and India.”

Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, secretary general of the Bangladesh Hindu Mohajote, has voiced strong support for Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami’s demands, describing the party as a “universal university” and calling for separate elections for religious minorities alongside the introduction of proportional representation.

Several other political party leaders, as well as the injured and family members of the July uprising martyrs, also spoke at the rally.

## Journalism under siege

FROM PAGE 12

extend beyond the newsroom. “When journalism weakens, civil society suffers. And without a strong civil society, politics becomes fragile. No economy can thrive without political integrity.”

Bhattacharya said meaningful reform in Bangladesh remains elusive, with progress slow, uneven, and often blocked by entrenched interests. “Reforms will happen, some partially, some incomplete, and some not at all. Yet new reforms will always be needed,” he noted.

He also said that power remains concentrated among the few. “A responsible government must prioritise those without voice, agency, or visibility.”

He underscored the critical role of the media in making the invisible visible and empowering the marginalised. “Only the media can turn the voiceless into full citizens with dignity and rights.”

On social protection, he acknowledged increased coverage but cautioned against complacency. “Nearly 40 percent are now included, but 56 percent of the vulnerable population remains outside. Much of the expansion happened under authoritarian rule, driven by political motives.”

He criticised recent budget allocations, saying the poor, especially in rural areas, received inadequate support.

He said, “Those who needed the most support, the rural poor, received very little.”

According to him, a large portion of last fiscal year’s public expenditure was directed toward the urban middle class. “This was likely a strategy to control public memory and suppress dissent, while rural poverty remained largely unaddressed,” he added.

Despite setbacks, Bhattacharya said, Bangladesh has made significant progress over five decades, driven by the productive force of ordinary citizens.

Referring to the White Paper Committee’s report, Professor Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), pointed out the persistence of a “close-knit, reform-resistant coalition” within Bangladesh’s governance system.

This informal alliance, comprising

political, bureaucratic, and military actors, blocks essential reforms, he said.

Despite proposing 14 tax reform recommendations, Raihan said, none have been implemented because of a lack of initiative from relevant ministries and a tendency to prioritise crisis management over structural change.

He emphasised that institutional dysfunction predates the last 15 years but has intensified recently. Future political contenders, he said, must outline concrete plans to address systemic misgovernance.

Raihan also criticised the absence of a strategic vision for diversifying an economy overly reliant on garments and remittances.

He also warned that Bangladesh was drifting into “crony capitalism”. Citing Bhattacharya, he described a “sycophant economy” where informal influence trumps institutional rules.

Talking about the book, “The Economy of Scandal”, he said the omission of tax policy from the book was a major flaw. The book asks important questions, but the big question is: will these ideas help bring real change, or will they just stay as talk, hidden behind closed doors, he added.

Sharmin Neelormi, professor, department of economics, Jahangirnagar University, said this book is not just for students of economics or policymakers. It is equally for the everyday citizen who takes a rickshaw to the office, goes to the market, reads the newspaper, and quietly wonders.

She also said the “Economics of Scandal” is not just a book. “It is a long journey of reflection, self-criticism, and a challenge to look ahead with clarity and courage. For those who have not yet read it, I urge you—read it. Then ask yourself: What have you given to the state? And what has the state given you in return?”

The book’s author Masum said he tried to reflect his long career experience in economic reporting in it.

Radia Tamim, adviser of the Global Centre for Innovation and Learning, moderated the event.

Mahrulk Mohiuddin, managing director of the University Press Limited, also addressed the event.

## No land, no death record

FROM PAGE 12

or grandfather. When families are willing to divide property, that’s when death registration becomes necessary. But in our case, there were no such property issues, and that’s why I didn’t do it.”

The study also identified additional barriers to death registration, including low awareness of its benefits, especially in rural areas; the lack of essential documents such as digital birth certificates; and institutional hurdles like understaffing and poor inter-agency coordination.

Factors that encourage registration include better access to registration offices, higher digital literacy, and active involvement of community figures such as teachers and local leaders who assist families through the process.

Speaking at the event, Mamunur Rashid, joint secretary at the Health Services Division of the health and family welfare ministry, acknowledged the gender gap and its

consequences.

“The data clearly show significant gaps — particularly in female death registration. In Rangpur, for instance, only 32 percent of the recorded deaths in 2023–2024 were female. That’s 6,537 out of 20,202 deaths.

“One of the main barriers is that very few women in rural areas own land or property, so families often don’t see a reason to register their deaths. But this must change. These gaps have serious implications for equity and public health.”

Zahid Hossain, registrar general at the Office of the Registrar General (Birth and Death Registration) of the LGRD ministry, in his speech emphasised the urgency of coordinated action.

“There is a clear and persistent disparity between male and female death registration, and this is now becoming a public policy issue... While we’ve made good progress with digitisation, strong collaboration among authorities is critical. Civil

society, NGOs, and government agencies must coordinate more effectively at all levels to ensure no one is left out of the civil registration system.”

Professor Dr Farhana Dewan, president of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh, spoke about the medical community’s role.

“We still have a long way to go if we want to meet our SDG targets by 2030. As doctors, we are often the first point of contact when a woman dies. It’s not just about raising awareness among patients; we also have a responsibility. Health professionals can play a pivotal role by informing and guiding families to complete the death registration process.”

The study recommends enhancing public awareness around death registration, with a focus on gender-sensitive messaging to ensure families understand its importance for women.

It also calls for simplifying the

process and removing costs that discourage families from registering female deaths, particularly in low-income and rural communities.

Building human resource capacity at registration offices was identified as a priority to improve service delivery and reduce delays.

The study also suggests expanding the legal and administrative utility of death certificates, linking registration to essential services and legal processes.

Other recommendations include providing targeted legal incentives and strengthening grassroots-level communication strategies to support families through the process.

Researchers and participants at the study’s unveiling stressed that ensuring women are counted in both life and death is essential to building an equitable society. Strengthening gender-responsive civil registration systems, they noted, is key to meeting Bangladesh’s development and human rights goals.

# Unsafe and unrepaired

Pothole-ridden Palbari-Manihar road in Jashore puts lives at risk

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Days of rainfall have left the Palbari-Manihar road in Jashore riddled with potholes, turning one of the busiest stretches into a hazardous route.

The Palbari-Manihar road is a key link for thousands of commuters travelling daily between Jashore town and other districts like Jhenaidah, Narail, and Khulna.

Mamun Rahman, a local, said, “The road in front of the BRTC office has not been repaired for a long time. With no drainage system in place, the rainwater has made the road almost impassable.”

Others, including Muslimuddin and Mostadjur Rahman, said the situation is even worse in front of the Jashore Education Board office, where large potholes on the northern lane have made it impossible for buses, trucks, and rickshaws to move. Most vehicles now use the southern lane, further worsening the pressure on the already damaged road.

Contacted, Roads and Highways Department Executive Engineer Golam Kibria said a Tk 14 crore tender has been floated to repair the road. It has been sent to the ministry for approval.



The Palbari-Manihar road remains riddled with potholes. The road is a key link for commuters between Jashore town and other districts. It is also the primary route for many students and teachers who visit the Jashore Education Board. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## EC flags six

FROM PAGE 3  
and Sylhet district offices failed to mention the party's name.

The list of all upazila and thana-level offices with addresses was missing from the application. Furthermore, in 25 upazilas or thanas, the minimum requirement of 200 registered voters as party members was not met.

The EC also noted that the rental agreement for the party's office in Itna upazila, Kishoreganj, did not include the party's name, while the agreement for the Halaughat upazila office in Mymensingh lacked both the party's name and office address.

The EC letter further said the application did not mention the amount of party funds, nor was the fund amount specified in the attached financial source breakdown. The final page of the party's executive committee resolution on registration was also unsigned.

It added that the party's constitution does not include any provision authorising the central parliamentary board to

finalise nominations for parliamentary elections from panels prepared by members of the ward, union, thana, upazila, or district committees.

Lastly, the EC noted that the application lacked a certification confirming that the party's documents and activities do not violate the Constitution. It also did not include confirmation that individuals convicted under the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order, 1972, or the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1972, are not affiliated with the party.

NCP is among 144 political organisations that applied for registration after the EC opened the process on March 10. While the initial deadline was April 20, it was later extended to June 22 following requests from 46 parties, including NCP.

All 144 applicants failed to pass the preliminary scrutiny for registration, the EC said on July 15. The EC granted the new parties an additional 15 days to submit the required documents and information.

## ACC probing 15yrs of financial

FROM PAGE 3  
during their tenure, all loan policies issued during that period, information on loan disbursements, money laundering, notices regarding US dollar disbursement from reserves to businesses, and copies of any internal investigation reports by BB concerning these matters.

Additionally, the ACC asked for policies issued since 2009 regarding the regularisation of default loans, and details of companies that benefited from these policies, including: Beximco Group, MR Group, Ratanpur Group, Keya Group, Jamuna Group, Thermax Group, Sikder Group, BBS Group, Abdul Monem Ltd, AnonTex Group, and others.

The commission has sought names of these companies and their owners, permanent and current addresses, loan amounts, and current loan statuses.

The ACC also demanded approval-related notices, documents, and circulars for nine banks approved after the AL came to power

in 2009, namely: Meghna Bank, Midland Bank, Madhumati Bank, NRB Bank, NRB Commercial Bank, NRB Global Bank, South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank, Union Bank, and The Farmers Bank, currently named Padma Bank.

In response to a letter from Salman F Rahman, the commission has also asked for the notice and documents related to the 2015 policy on loan restructuring; attested copies of policies issued after 2009 regarding bank inspections; and documents related to the formulation and issuance of those policies.

Furthermore, the ACC has sought attested copies of notices and circulars regarding the acquisition and ownership control of Islami Bank and Social Islami Bank.

If the central bank has conducted any internal investigations on these matters, the commission wants those reports as well.

Contacted, BB spokesperson Arif Hossain Khan said, “Recently, the ACC has issued several

letters requesting various information. We are trying to provide all the required data to the best of our ability.”

## One martyr

FROM PAGE 4  
The programme was jointly organised by the District Administration and the Coastal Forest Division.

In Bagerhat, trees were planted in memory of nine martyrs – Alamgir, Alif, Mahfuzur, Nuru, Sabbir, Jasim, Shahriar, Biplob, and Shahin – at Circuit House. District Administration and the East Sundarbans Forest Division organised the event.

In Patuakhali, DC Abu Hasnat Mohammad Arifin inaugurated the programme on his office premises.

A total of 24 trees were planted. The programme was jointly organised by the District Administration and the Coastal Forest Division.

Meanwhile, tree plantation programme was also held in Chandpur.

According to BSS, similar programmes were held in Magura, Rajshahi and Khulna.

## Misinformation rises

FROM PAGE 3  
followed, with 311 instances recorded and a 51 percent rise towards the end of the six-month period.

Misinformation also spread via domestic media outlets. Rumour Scanner fact-checked 90 claims from Bangladeshi media, uncovering false statements, doctored images and misleading videos.

During the same period, 38 pieces of false information about 25 incidents in Bangladesh were shared by 31 Indian news outlets.

Aaj Tak Bangla topped the list with nine confirmed cases.

C o m m u n a l misinformation remained a concern, though false claims originating in India declined. There were 78 such cases in the first quarter of 2025, dropping by around 64 percent in the second quarter.

In total, 106 instances were recorded, with 63 traced to Indian-linked social media accounts and pages.

Despite a government ban on its activities in May, the Awami League was the most mentioned political party in disinformation during the first half of 2025, with 241 cases.

Of these, 59 directly named the party, and 86

percent were favourable. Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina appeared in 85 cases, 80 percent of which portrayed her positively.

In contrast, misinformation about the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami was largely negative. The BNP was the second-most targeted party with 183 cases, 47 of which directly named the party. Of these, 94 percent were negative. Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir appeared in 24 cases, 88 percent of which were unfavourable. Tarique Rahman was mentioned in 21 cases, just over half of which were positive.

Jamaat was the subject of 142 disinformation cases, including 55 directly involving the party, of which 93 percent were negative. Party Ameer Shafiqur Rahman was the most targeted figure, appearing in 22 cases, 91 percent of which portrayed him unfavourably.

The report also found 114 instances of disinformation targeting Bangladesh's armed forces and police -- a 78 percent increase from the same period last year. Of these, 74 involved the Bangladesh Army, including 25 that directly named Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman.

## 177 inmates still

FROM PAGE 4  
During the four days following the attack, security at the prison was subsequently bolstered. However, challenges remain.

Narsingdi District Jail Superintendent Md Shamim Iqbal said while the damaged buildings have been made temporarily useable, the prison, originally built to house 344 inmates, is currently holding 839.

More than 200 inmates have since been transferred to Kashimpur Central Jail.

He said the destruction of 29,000 case files has led to chaos in legal proceedings.

“We're struggling to determine the charges and sentence duration for many inmates due to the loss of records. Identifying who is convicted of what crime has become difficult,” he said.

He said the prison infrastructure remains fragile, with low walls and poor drainage. As a result, the facility becomes flooded during heavy rainfall.

Narsingdi Superintendent of Police Md Abdul Hannan said the loss of official documents has delayed the identification and arrest of fugitives.

“We are continuing special operations to recapture the remaining fugitives and recover all missing arms and ammunition,” he said.

Assistant Public Prosecutor of Narsingdi Court Md Lokman Hossain said that “these weapons in the hands of criminals pose a threat to national security. They can be used in hijackings, extortion, and killings. Immediate recovery is essential.”

## One killed

FROM PAGE 4  
repairing the tank when the explosion took place. He was critically injured and was declared dead later at the hospital.

Witnesses and officials said a leak had been detected in the station's main storage tank about a week ago, prompting the closure of the facility pending repairs.

Yesterday, technicians began working on the tank, but around noon, the accumulated pressurised gas inside the chamber caused an explosion.

Mahir Uddin, an eyewitness who was nearby at the time, said, “The explosion was deafening. I was stunned for a while. The station and nearby buildings were heavily damaged. One person died on the spot while several others were seriously injured. It was horrifying.”

Following the explosion, four units of Rangpur Fire Service rushed to the scene to conduct rescue operations.

Authorities halted traffic in the area and asked residents and bystanders to move to a safe distance.

The area was cordoned off by police and army personnel.

“There had been long-standing negligence in the station's gas storage system,” the fire service official said. “Lack of proper maintenance likely led to this tragic incident.”

Senior Warrant Officer of the Rangpur Army Camp, Sobahan Molla, said, “The army has launched an investigation to determine the exact cause. If there is evidence of negligence, the responsible authorities must be held accountable.”

## Funding cuts heighten risks

FROM PAGE 4  
The funding decline is documented in a new UNHCR report that highlights the consequences of the global humanitarian funding crisis on displaced populations.

In Bangladesh, the report notes, the cuts are weakening an already strained aid response, leaving refugees, who rely entirely on external assistance, more vulnerable in terms of food, health care, education, and shelter.

Jahid Alam, a 45-year-old father of two, said he used to spend his earnings from maintenance work on extra food for his children.

“The amount of food we get every month is limited,” he says quietly. “With the extra work, I could buy some variety for my children. Now, that is no

longer possible.”

Jahid and his wife both have disabilities. Participating in maintenance work not only improved their nutrition but also kept them socially connected.

“[This] was never just a programme, it was a vital lifeline,” said Afruza Sultana, who works in Site Management Support for BRAC, a key partner in the refugee response in Bangladesh. “It gave them more than just a wage -- it gave them purpose, dignity, and the means to feed their families and make alternative arrangements for basic needs.”

The funding shortage is also impacting the maintenance of vital infrastructure, especially during monsoon season when upkeep of roads,

bridges, paths, and latrines is essential.

In early 2024, roughly 5,500 refugees worked on over 500 infrastructure projects. This year, activity has declined by nearly two-thirds, leaving the camps increasingly exposed. Eroded roads, blocked drains, and broken bridges are now common.

Beyond infrastructure, the funding crisis is affecting other essential services.

With more Rohingyas arriving from Myanmar, resources are further stretched.

UNHCR warned at a July 11 press briefing that without additional funding, further disruptions are expected in health services, cooking fuel distribution, food aid, and education for children.

Mirpur, was at a standstill, many passengers had to get off at Nawabpur.

Traffic was also reported on the Dhaka Chattogram highway, especially in the Jatrabari area, as buses and microbuses carrying rally participants clogged the road. A tailback stretching several kilometres was created there, according to eyewitnesses.

Juliana Ferdous, a resident of Jatrabari, said she was unable to take her son to a coaching centre in Matuail due to the traffic.

Another local, Monirul Haq, noted the unusually high number of microbuses heading to the rally and said the majority of vehicles on the highway were carrying Jamaat supporters.

ট্রেডিং কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ (টিসিবি)				
আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ				
www.tcb.gov.bd				
০১টি ০৭ সীটের (MPV) গাড়ী ভাড়া করণের লক্ষ্যে দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (অভ্যন্তরীণ)				
১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়		
২	এজেন্সি	ট্রেডিং কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ (টিসিবি)		
৩	ক্রয়কারীর নাম	যুগ্ম পরিচালক (অফিস প্রদান), টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ।		
৪	ক্রয়কারীর কোড	প্রযোজ্য নেই।		
৫	ক্রয়কারীর জেলা	ময়মনসিংহ।		
৬	দরপত্র আহ্বানকৃত পণ্য	০১টি ০৭ সীটের (MPV) গাড়ী ভাড়া করণ।		
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৮	তারিখ	১৭-০৭-২০২৫খ্রি.		
মূল তথ্য		উল্লিখিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (অভ্যন্তরীণ)		
তথ্যের তথ্য				
১০	বাজেট এবং তথ্যের উৎস	টিসিবি'র নিজস্ব তথ্যের		
বিশেষ তথ্য				
১১	প্যাকেজ নং	টিসিবি/ময়মনসিংহ/ভাড়া কৃত গাড়ী ২০২৫-২০২৬		
১২	প্যাকেজের নাম	দাপ্তরিক কাজের প্রয়োজনে ০১টি গাড়ী ভাড়া করণ		
১৩	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	২০-০৭-২০২৫খ্রি.		
১৪	দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল বিক্রির শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ: ০৮-০৮-২০২৫খ্রি.	সময়: বিকাল ০৫:০০টা	
১৫	দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল দখলি করার শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ: ০৮-০৮-২০২৫খ্রি.	সময়: বেলা ১২:০০টা	
১৬	দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণের তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ: ০৮-০৮-২০২৫খ্রি.	সময়: অপরাহ্ন ১২:১৫টা	
১৭	অফিস (সমূহ)-এর নাম ও ঠিকানা	ঠিকানা (১) অর্থ ও হিসাব শাখা, টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ। (২) রূপালী ব্যাংক লি., বাগডহর শাখা, ময়মনসিংহ। (৩) টিসিবি'র অফিস কক্ষ, টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ। - দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল গ্রহণের স্থান - দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউল উন্মুক্তকরণ/খোলার স্থান টিসিবি'র অফিস প্রদানের কক্ষ, টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, ময়মনসিংহ।		
দরপত্র আহ্বানকৃত পণ্যের জন্য তথ্য				
১৮	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান। বিস্তারিত শর্তসমূহ দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউলে উল্লেখ করা আছে।		
১৯	সেবার সর্বোচ্চ বিবরণ	০১টি ০৭ সীটের MPV গাড়ী (Toyota Noah square/ Mitsubishi Expander/ Hyundai Staria অথবা সমতুল্য)। Model: Minimum 2015 or Newer		
২০	দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউলের মূল্য	প্রতিটি ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা।		
২১	লট নং	লটের শনাক্তকরণ	স্থান	দরপত্র জামানতের পরিমাণ (টাকা) ৩৭,০০০/- (সাতত্রিশ হাজার) টাকা ০১টি ০৭ সীটের MPV গাড়ী (Toyota Noah square/ Mitsubishi Expander/ Hyundai Staria অথবা সমতুল্য)। Model: Minimum 2015 or Newer
১	০১টি ০৭ সীটের (MPV)	ময়মনসিংহ	ট্রেডিং কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ (টিসিবি) এর নামে জমা পে-অর্ডার করতে হবে।	১২ মাস চুক্তি
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২২	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	জামাল উদ্দিন আহমেদ		
২৩	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর পদবি	যুগ্ম পরিচালক (অফিস প্রদান)		
২৪	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	টিসিবি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়, আবুদা বাইপাস, মারকাস মসজিদের বিপরীতে, ময়মনসিংহ।		
২৫	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর সহিত যোগাযোগের জন্য	মোবাইল নং-০১৭৫৯২৬৯৭৭৭	ফ্যাক্স নং--	ই-মেইল: tcbmym@tcb.gov.bd
২৬	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা	ক) এ দরপত্র পিপিআর-২০০৮ অনুযায়ী পরিচালিত হবে। খ) দরপত্র সন্দেশে যাবতীয় শর্তাবলী এবং পণ্যের বিবরণ দরপত্র দলিল/সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে। গ) অসম্পূর্ণ, শর্তমুক্ত এবং বিকল্প দরপত্র কোন প্রকার বিবেচনায় আসবে না। ঘ) কোন কারণ দর্শনো ছাড়াই যে কোন দরপত্র সম্পূর্ণ/আংশিকভাবে গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সর্বোচ্চ করবে। ঙ) কোন দরদাতা নোটিফিকেশন অব গ্র্যাওয়ার্ড (NOA) পাওয়ার পর যথাসময়ে পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি (কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত) প্রদান না করতে পারেন তাহলে তার দায়িত্বকৃত দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে এবং দরপত্র জামানত বাজেয়াপ্ত হবে। চ) কোন কারণবশতঃ পূর্বে নোটিফিকেশন অব গ্র্যাওয়ার্ড (NOA) পাওয়ার পর কোন দরদাতা যথাসময়ে পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি (কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত) প্রদানে ব্যর্থ হলে অথবা পূর্বে কোন দরদাতার পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি (কার্যসম্পাদন জামানত) আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণরূপে বাজেয়াপ্ত হয়ে থাকলে, তাহলে তিনি দরপত্রের অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন না।		

জামাল উদ্দিন আহমেদ  
যুগ্ম পরিচালক (অফিস প্রদান)

# WHO recommends injectable lenacapavir for HIV prevention

## STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) released new guidelines recommending the use of injectable lenacapavir (LEN) twice a year as an additional pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) option for HIV prevention, in a landmark policy action that could help reshape the global HIV response. The guidelines are being issued at the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Society Conference (IAS 2025) on HIV Science, in Kigali, Rwanda.

LEN, the first twice-yearly injectable PrEP product, offers a highly effective, long-acting alternative to daily oral pills and other shorter-acting options. With just two doses per year, LEN is a transformative step forward in protecting people at risk of HIV – particularly those who face challenges with daily adherence, stigma, or access to health care.

The new guidelines come at a critical moment as HIV prevention efforts stagnate with 1.3 million new HIV infections occurring in 2024 – with disproportionate impact among key and priority populations, including sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs, people in prisons, and children and adolescents. WHO's recommendation on LEN signals a decisive move to expand and diversify HIV prevention, giving people more options to take control over their health with choices that fit their lives.

### Simplified testing: a major barrier removed

As part of these guidelines, WHO has recommended a public health approach to HIV testing using HIV rapid tests to support delivery of long-acting injectable PrEP, including LEN and cabotegravir (CAB-LA). The simplified testing recommendation removes a major access barrier by eliminating complex, costly procedures and enabling community-based delivery of long-acting PrEP through pharmacies, clinics, and tele health.

### Next steps: call for implementation

LEN joins other WHO-recommended PrEP options, including daily oral PrEP, injectable cabotegravir and the dapivirine vaginal ring, as part of a growing arsenal of tools to end the HIV epidemic. While access to LEN outside clinical trials remains limited at the moment, WHO urges governments, donors and global health partners to begin rolling out LEN immediately within national combination HIV prevention programmes – while collecting essential data on uptake, adherence and real-world impact.

### Additional WHO recommendations at IAS 2025

For the first time, WHO's treatment guidelines include a clear recommendation for the use of long-acting injectable cabotegravir and rilpivirine (CAB/RPV) as an alternative switching option for antiretroviral therapy (ART) for adults and adolescents who have achieved full viral suppression on oral ART and do not have active hepatitis B infection. This approach is designed to support people living with HIV facing adherence challenges to oral regimens.

Updated guidelines on service delivery integration include recommendations to integrate HIV services with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension and diabetes, as well as mental health care for depression, anxiety and alcohol use disorders into HIV services, alongside interventions to support ART adherence. Additionally, new guidelines on management of asymptomatic STIs recommend screening of gonorrhoea and/or chlamydia in key and priority populations.

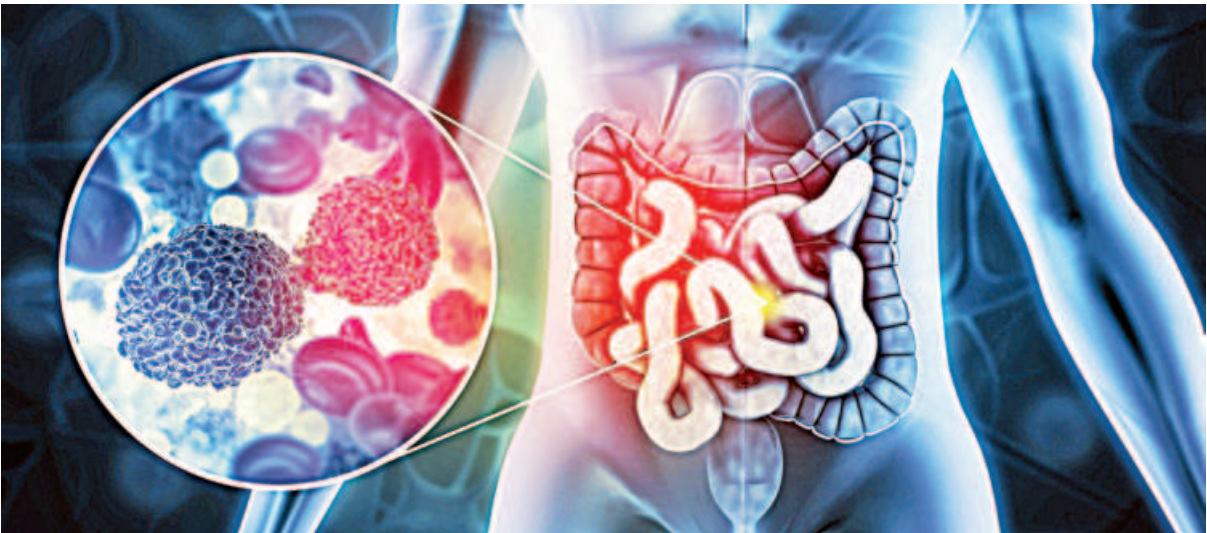
For people living with HIV who have mpox and are either ART naive or have experienced prolonged ART interruption, rapid initiation of ART is strongly recommended. Additionally, early HIV testing is advised for individuals presenting with suspected or confirmed mpox infection. WHO's standard operating procedures further emphasize HIV and syphilis testing for all individuals with suspected or confirmed mpox.

In response to the broader challenges facing HIV programmes, WHO has also issued new operational guidance on sustaining priority HIV services in a changing funding landscape. The guidance aims to provide a stepwise framework to help countries prioritize services, assess risks, monitor disruptions, and adapt systems to protect health outcomes and preserve progress.

"We have the tools and the knowledge to end AIDS as a public health problem," said Dr Meg Doherty, Director of WHO's Department of Global HIV, Hepatitis and STI Programmes and incoming Director of Science, Research, Evidence and Quality for Health. "What we need now is bold implementation of these recommendations, grounded in equity and powered by communities."

HIV remains a major global public health issue. By the end of 2024, an estimated 40.8 million people were living with HIV with an estimated 65% in the WHO African Region. Approximately 630,000 people died from HIV-related causes globally, and an estimated 1.3 million people acquired HIV, including 120,000 children. Access to ART continues to expand, with 31.6 million people receiving treatment in 2024, up from 30.3 million in 2023.

At a time of reduced funding for HIV and health, WHO's new and updated guidelines offer practical, evidence-based strategies to sustain momentum. By expanding prevention and treatment options, simplifying service delivery and promoting integration with broader health services, they support more efficient, equitable, and resilient HIV responses. Now is the moment for bold implementation to ensure these gains translate into real-world



## COLORECTAL CANCER A growing health concern in Bangladesh

### ASHIK MAHMUD

Colorectal cancer is emerging as a significant health threat in Bangladesh. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around 156,775 people in the country are diagnosed with cancer each year, with approximately 108,990 succumbing to the disease. Globally, in 2023 alone, an estimated 153,020 individuals were diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and 52,550 died from it—including 19,550 cases and 3,750 deaths in those under 50.

In Bangladesh, the five-year prevalence rates for colon and rectal cancer are 3.28 and 3.1 per 100,000 population, respectively, and cases are rising steadily. Worldwide, colorectal cancer ranks as the fourth most common cancer among men and the third among women. Alarmingly, in Bangladesh, 90% of patients are diagnosed between the ages of 35 and 54, while the global median age of diagnosis is 64. Younger patients often face more aggressive forms of the disease.

### What is colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer begins in the colon or rectum—both integral parts of the digestive system responsible for waste processing. The disease develops when abnormal cells grow along the lining of the large intestine or rectum, forming cancerous growths.

### Risk factors

Numerous studies have linked lifestyle and environmental factors to an increased risk of colorectal cancer. These include:

- Diets high in red and processed meats
- High intake of saturated fats
- Low physical activity
- Obesity
- Smoking and alcohol use
- Family history of colorectal cancer
- Ageing
- Chronic conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease

### Symptoms to watch for

Early signs of colorectal cancer may include:

- Persistent changes in bowel habits (diarrhoea, constipation, or narrow stools)
  - Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
  - Abdominal pain or cramping
  - Weakness, fatigue, or unintended weight loss
  - A sensation of incomplete bowel evacuation
- In some cases, the cancer may silently cause internal bleeding, leading to anaemia, which may first appear in a routine blood test. Advanced cases may involve symptoms like jaundice, breathing difficulties, or liver enlargement,

indicating the cancer has spread.

These symptoms may also result from less serious conditions, such as haemorrhoids or infections, but any persistent issues should prompt immediate medical consultation.

### Prevention and diet

Making informed dietary choices can help reduce the risk. The American Cancer Society recommends diets high in fibre—particularly from whole fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Foods like whole wheat bread, brown rice, legumes (lentils, soybeans, peas, black beans, kidney beans), seeds, tomatoes, and garlic provide essential nutrients like fibre, protein, vitamin B, and vitamin E. Research from the American Institute for Cancer Research also supports that legume consumption may lower colorectal cancer risk.

### Conclusion

Colorectal cancer is both preventable and treatable when detected early. Raising awareness of the symptoms and risk factors, combined with regular screening and a healthy lifestyle, can significantly improve outcomes. Consulting a healthcare professional for early screening and dietary advice is vital in reducing the burden of this disease in Bangladesh and beyond.

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## Can stem cells cure type 1 Diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes mellitus involves loss of insulin production due to autoimmune destruction of pancreatic islet cells. In the lab, researchers can coax embryonic stem cells to develop into functional islet cells. If these islet cells can be transplanted successfully and safely into people, it would represent a breakthrough for diabetes treatment.

Researchers now report phase 1-2 results from an ongoing, industry-sponsored study of the safety and efficacy of stem cell-derived islet cells (zimislecel) for type 1 diabetes. Zimislecel is a single infusion administered via the portal vein along with a transplant-



based immunosuppression protocol. Of the 22 patients who received zimislecel, 14 (mean age, 44) completed at least 12 months of follow-up. Twelve patients were still alive at the time of the report, and all had endogenous production of insulin and substantial improvements in glycemic control; 10 patients were able to discontinue insulin. Two patients died (at 20 and 30 months of follow-up); one death was related to immunosuppression.

These results represent a remarkable scientific achievement for stem cell research; however, we do not know if zimislecel will hold up to further scrutiny in phase 3 studies and beyond. Although the treatment potentially obviates some issues with pancreatic transplants (e.g., organ availability and surgical complexity), it still requires immunosuppression.

## BUSTING HEALTH MYTHS

# It's time to rethink what we believe

### RAISA MEHZABEEN

For generations, we have inherited health advice packaged as universal truth—some passed down by elders, others stemming from outdated science or popular culture. Phrases like “Avoid salt completely,” “Never skip meals,” or “Eight hours of sleep is enough—no matter when,” are repeated so often that they sound unchallengeable.

But truth evolves—and so should our understanding of health. Modern research shows that many of these long-standing beliefs are not only outdated, but potentially misleading or harmful. Yet, these myths persist in our homes, schools, and even clinics. In a country where non-communicable diseases like diabetes and heart disease are on the rise, misinformation can have serious consequences.

### Salt: A necessary nutrient, not a villain

Salt has long been portrayed as the enemy of heart health. However, newer studies—including those published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)—challenge this narrative. For healthy adults, a moderate sodium intake of 3 to 6 grams per day is both safe and essential.

Consuming less than 3 grams daily may actually increase insulin resistance, heightening the risk of developing type 2



diabetes. When sodium levels fall too low, the body compensates by retaining sodium through the kidneys, disrupting fluid and electrolyte balance. Ironically, this can cause more harm than good. The lesson? Balance, not avoidance, is key.

### Fasting: Misunderstood, not misguided

Intermittent fasting is often misunderstood and feared, especially due to the myth that it causes insulin resistance. However, it is not fasting itself but chronic undernutrition that harms metabolic health.

Insulin resistance can result from prolonged calorie restriction below one's

Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)—roughly 1100–1400 kcal/day for Bangladeshi women and 1400–1800 kcal/day for men. When the body is starved of energy, it slows metabolism and breaks down muscle mass, increasing the risk of dysfunction.

When done properly—ensuring adequate nutrients and caloric intake—fasting can support healing, weight control, and hormonal balance. The key is avoiding starvation disguised as discipline.

### Sleep: More than just eight hours

The old rule of “eight hours of sleep” is not wrong—but it's incomplete. Research from

Sleep journal suggests that sleep timing is as crucial as duration. The body's repair and hormonal cycles are most active between 9 PM and 2 AM. Regularly missing this window can disrupt melatonin production, impair metabolism, and increase insulin resistance.

Just one week of poor or late-night sleep can increase insulin resistance by up to 30%. Over time, this raises the risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Sleeping from 3 AM to 11 AM is not equivalent to sleeping from 10 PM to 6 AM—our bodies follow circadian rhythms, not just clocks.

### Towards a smarter understanding of health

In today's hyper-connected world, health advice comes from everywhere—TikTok, group chats, and well-meaning friends. But not all advice is equal. As science advances, so must our health practices—based on evidence, not inherited beliefs.

Health is not about fear or fads; it's about understanding. By replacing myths with facts, we empower individuals and communities alike—laying the foundation for a healthier, more informed nation.

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## Global childhood vaccination coverage holds steady, yet over 14 million infants remain unvaccinated

### STAR HEALTH DESK

In 2024, 89% of infants globally – about 115 million – received at least one dose of the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP)-containing vaccine, and 85% – roughly 109 million – completed all three doses, according to new national immunization coverage data released by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF.

Compared to 2023, around 171 000 more children received at least one vaccine, and one million more completed the full three-dose DTP series. While the gains are modest, they signal continued progress by countries working to protect children, even amid growing challenges.

Still, nearly 20 million infants missed at least one dose of DTP-containing vaccine last year, including 14.3 million “zero-dose” children who never received a single dose of any vaccine. That's 4 million more than the 2024 target needed to stay on track with Immunisation Agenda 2030 goals, and 1.4 million more than in 2019, the baseline year for measuring progress.

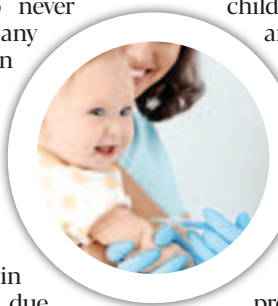
Children often remain un- or under-vaccinated due to a combination of factors, such as limited access to immunisation services, disrupted supply, conflict and instability, or misinformation about vaccines.

### The promise of protecting every child is at risk

Although the community demand for childhood vaccination remains high and protection against more diseases is expanding, the latest estimates highlight a concerning trajectory. National and global funding shortfalls, growing instability worldwide, and rising vaccine misinformation threaten to further stall or even reverse progress which would risk increases in severe disease and deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases.

WHO and UNICEF call on governments and relevant partners to:

- close the funding gap for Gavi's next strategic cycle (2026–2030) to protect millions of children in lower-income countries and global health security;
- strengthen immunisation in conflict and fragile settings to reach more zero-dose children and prevent deadly disease outbreaks;
- prioritise local-led strategies and domestic investment, embedding immunisation firmly within primary health care systems to close equity gaps;
- counter misinformation and further increase vaccine uptake through evidence-based approaches; and
- invest in stronger data and disease surveillance systems to guide high-impact immunisation programmes.



I agree that many players' careers have gone down because of this surface [Mirpur]. If I were a bowler, maybe my career would have improved playing here. Obviously, the Bangladesh team have developed [here] but it's been tough for batters.

Bangladesh captain  
Litton Das.



Most of the [Pakistan team] players have played in BPL. It is very important, obviously, to get their inputs... We have talked, and we have had a chat with them. They have given their inputs, and we have planned accordingly.

Pakistan captain  
Salman Ali Agha



Buoyed by their historic 2-1 T20I series win in Sri Lanka, the Bangladesh team looked upbeat and united during training yesterday, ahead of today's opening game of the three-match T20I series against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO:FIROZ AHMED

## Young Tigers seal YODI series in style

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 men's team clinched the three-match Youth ODI series against South Africa with a game to spare after a commanding 104-run victory in the second match at the Willowmoore Park in Benoni yesterday.

The young Tigers followed up their 130-run win in the first match with another dominant all-round display, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

After being sent in to bat, Bangladesh rode on half-centuries from Zawad Abrar (57 off 53), Rizan Hossan (52 off 71), and captain Azizul Hakim Tamim (67 off 90) to post a competitive 265 for six in their allotted 50 overs.

The hosts struggled in reply, failing to build partnerships as wickets fell at regular intervals. Although Jason Rowles scored a valiant 51 off 48 balls, the rest of the South African lineup crumbled under pressure, eventually getting bowled out for 161 in 30.2 overs.

Al Fahad led the charge with pace while skipper Tamim and Shadhin Islam contributed with spin, each claiming two wickets to dismantle the South African innings.

The third and final match of the series will be held at the same venue on July 22.

# Bangladesh aim to end PAKISTAN HOODOO

SPORTS REPORTER

Fresh off clinching their maiden T20I series over Sri Lanka, Bangladesh will be looking to continue their winning momentum in the shortest format when they take on Pakistan in the first T20I of the three-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur today.

Against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh lost the series opener but bounced back with back-

back T20I series defeats to the UAE and Pakistan in the months prior.

The Tigers would be hoping to use this new-found positivity to end their sorry streak of results against Pakistan in T20Is,



● In 22 T20Is, Bangladesh have managed just three wins against Pakistan, losing the other 19. However, two of those victories came at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur -- the venue for the ongoing three-match series. The other win came in the third-place playoff at the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou, a tournament where both nations fielded second-string squads.

● The Tigers enter the series on a high, having recently sealed a 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka -- their first series triumph in any format this year.

● Monsoon showers threaten to disrupt all three matches, with rain in the forecast for Sunday. This marks only the third time T20Is are being played in Bangladesh in July, after previous instances in 2015 and 2023.

● Bangladesh are returning to Mirpur after nine months. Their last game at the venue was a seven-wicket loss to South Africa in a Test match in October 2024.

to-back victories to seal the three-match series 2-1, clinching their maiden series win over the islanders in their backyard across all formats.

The result was a breath of fresh air in Bangladesh cricket, following the underwhelming performance in the preceding ODI series against Sri Lanka, which they lost 2-1, and also the back-to-

a side they haven't beaten in the format since 2016.

"After losing the first game in Sri Lanka, we made a great comeback. Of course, the players have grown more confident," Bangladesh T20I skipper Litton Das told reporters in Mirpur yesterday before the team's only training session before the Pakistan series, after returning to Dhaka

from Sri Lanka on July 17.

"We will have the same mindset, the same goal -- winning the series. But we need to play good cricket in every game. What happened in Sri Lanka two days ago is already in the past. It's a new place, a new venue, so we need to take in everything afresh," said Litton, who was named the player-of-the-series in the T20I series against Sri Lanka.

Although, on paper, Bangladesh did beat Pakistan in the bronze medal decider of the 2023 Asian Games in Guangzhou, China, it is more of a misnomer, as both countries had sent a second-string team for the tournament, not the national side.

Even with that win, Bangladesh only have three victories over Pakistan in 22 T20I meetings and have lost the remaining 19 matches.

Litton, however, was not fazed by their poor record, saying, "Records are meant to be broken. If we play good cricket, it won't take too long to change this record. Instead of thinking about it, if we think about what we can do, our capabilities, and what quality of cricket we can play, it [record] will change."

On the other hand, Pakistan are banking on their players who have extensive experience of playing in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and want to win all three matches to continue their dominance over the Tigers in this format.

"Most of the [Pakistan team] players have played in BPL. It is very important, obviously, to get their inputs... They have given their inputs, and we have planned accordingly," said Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha.

"We just want to play good cricket in every single game... If we can win 3-0, we'll be more than happy," he concluded.

## Puja hits brace in 5-0 win against Sri Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh brushed aside Sri Lanka 5-0 in their penultimate match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship on Saturday, maintaining 100 percent record in the four-team competition.

Puja Das scored a brace while Kanon Rani Bahadur, Trishna Rani Sarkar and Afeida



Khandaker scored one apiece in this comfortable, albeit a bit laboured victory for Peter Butler's charges at the Bashundhara Sports Ground.

The win kept the hosts top of the table with 15 points from five matches, three more than Nepal, who earlier in the day, thrashed Bhutan 8-0.

Nepal, who had lost 3-2 against Bangladesh in the first meeting between the two sides in this double round-robin format tournament, have 12 points from five outings. Bhutan have three points while Sri Lanka are yet to open their account.

The day's results mean Bangladesh will retain the title with a victory or a draw against Nepal in the last match of the competition on Monday.

If Nepal win by a margin of two or more goals, they will become champions.

Bangladesh coach Butler had opted to keep some of his key players at the bench in this contest, resulting in a rather lacklustre performance from the hosts.

Kanon broke the deadlock in the 25th minute before Puja doubled Bangladesh's lead in the stoppage time of the first half.

Butler brought on four of his key players at the start of the second half, and his side made more impression going forward but missed a few scoring chances. However, Puja's second goal in the 73rd minute, followed by Trishna's 86th-minute strike and a stoppage-time spot-kick from Afeida made sure Bangladesh secured a big victory.



PHOTO: STAR

Khandakar Abdus Swad secured his third consecutive men's singles title at the 39th National Badminton Championship, beating Al Amin Zumar 21-14, 21-04 in the final yesterday. Meanwhile, Urmi Akter's hatrick bid fell short as she lost to teammate Nasima Khatun 12-21, 21-17 in the women's singles final at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium.

# ‘Love for the game’ still drives Rani Hamid at 81

At 81, Bangladesh's chess icon Rani Hamid remains an enduring source of inspiration. On International Chess Day, marking 101 years since FIDE's founding, she reflects with The Daily Star's Atique Anam on her journey, late start, memorable matches, and more.

The Daily Star (DS): You're one of the oldest active players in world chess. How do people react when you compete internationally?

Rani Hamid (RH): The respect I get is always very gratifying for me. Some chess players say, 'I played against you in that year and so on,' and I reply, 'I can't even remember whom I played yesterday -- how would I remember you?'

But the thing is, since I usually wear sarees, everyone remembers me. And I was the only player who used to wear sarees. There was another lady who used to wear sarees, but not a player, though -- she was the mother of Vishwanathan Anand in his early playing days.

DS: Last year, [former world champion] Susan Polgar shared a photo with you on her social media account, highlighting your career during the Chess Olympiad in Budapest. What did it mean to you?

RH: I consider it as my luck. If it wasn't luck, how would I be in Hungary playing the Chess Olympiad? I wasn't supposed to be there. I was not granted a visa here for not having an old passport with me. But someone from the team couldn't go, so I got a second chance to sort my visa issues. And then I went there and

won the first six matches of the event.

DS: Most people your age spend time relaxing with family or enjoying quiet hobbies. What drives you to stay so active and continue playing competitive chess?

RH: The inspiration or strength basically comes from the love for the game. For example, an angler keeps staring at his fishing rod for hours on end. Where do you think this patience and perseverance come from? It's from the love for what he's doing. The same applies for me.

DS: Let's go back to the beginning. You didn't take up chess seriously until later in life. How did your journey with the game first begin?

RH: My chess career is basically a result of the interest and push from my late husband, Lt Col Hamid, who, as you know, was involved in many sporting bodies of the countries in various ways. I was a homemaker with four kids at that time and didn't even go out much. It was due to his insistence that I



became a chess player. I was blessed to have had him as my husband, because not many husbands give their spouses that much freedom.

DS: You began playing seriously at around 33 or 34. Was it a gradual process of falling in love with the game?

RH: Not really. Even when I was five or six years old, I used to sit by my father and watch him play very carefully, even though I was a bit restless. I had this strange attraction to the game, although I hardly understood it at

that time. And there wasn't an opportunity to play formally at that time. But I was very active in school sports -- including carom, basketball, racing, badminton etc. -- and I excelled in most.

DS: Was there a particular moment or event that sparked your transition from homemaker to competitive chess player?

RH: Well, the father of a school friend of my daughter, Dr Akmal Hossain, was the Pakistan champion at that time. So, I asked my daughter to bring him to our house, and one day, he did come. I used to play a little bit at that time but after playing against him, I realised how good he was. Practising with him helped me improve fast.

DS: You've won the national championship 20 times and the British Open three times. Which of those achievements do you value most?

RH: Every title is important. The national title gives you the privilege of getting guest of honour invitations from different chess tournaments around the world. But winning the British Open was a different feeling because of beating our colonisers at their own home.

DS: Are there any particular matches or

moments that you still remember with fondness?

RH: In the past, I had memorable matches against many big players. I can remember once I had kept Anand rooted to his seat for half an hour. He would usually make a move and then roam around -- wouldn't spend more than five minutes on one move. But I kept him thinking for some time. When I went to the washroom, I saw his mum pacing up and down. I told her, "Don't worry, your son is winning. I have just made a wrong move."

DS: Any special performances you look back on with pride?

RH: There was one when I played a Women's Grandmasters tournament in Hyderabad. I beat the women's world No 3. The next day, the Indian chess magazine ran a story on the game, praising me heavily. Then that woman went to the editor of that magazine and verbally attacked him, saying she had let me win the game. Back then, I was in good form -- I also drew against the world No 2 and then I beat the U-18 women's world champion. But that form didn't continue after I suffered a road accident in 1992, and some of my playing partners left the country.

