



"We continue to call for sustained, safe, and unhindered access for medical aid into and across Gaza... Peace is the best medicine."

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

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REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 188

SRABAN 17, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SAFAR 6, 1447 HIJRI

20 PAGES: Tk 15.00

## NAT'L CONSENSUS COMMISSION

# Accord reached, dissent noted

Final day sees 7 issues settled, 6 with reservations

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MD ABBAS

Marking a crucial step in the reform initiative, political parties yesterday reached consensus on seven key issues, including the appointment of the caretaker government chief, formation of an upper house, and election of the president.

However, six of the agreements carried notes of dissent, mostly from the BNP and allies.

Over two months of negotiations led by the National Consensus Commission, parties have now agreed on 19 reform issues including those aimed at balancing executive power, restructuring state institutions, and restoring public trust in governance.

The issues include the procedure for appointing an election-time caretaker government, imposing a 10-year term limit for the prime minister, barring party chiefs from holding the prime minister's post, and establishing a bicameral legislature.

After the final day of talks at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka yesterday, National Consensus Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz said, "Today, the majority of political parties reached an agreement on seven issues, although several parties, including the BNP, expressed dissent on six of them."

The commission said most of the parties have agreed to form a committee to select the chief adviser to the polls-time caretaker government, while the BNP and its allies have partially agreed to the proposal.

The parties also agreed to form a 100-member upper house of parliament through the proportional representation system based on total votes obtained by parties in lower house polls.

During the talks yesterday, the participants agreed to incorporate constitutional provisions for appointing the heads of four constitutional and statutory bodies.

These are the Public Service Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the Ombudsman's office.



Our target was to conclude discussions by July 31, and we have successfully done so. We will prepare the full version of the July Charter soon and share it with political parties.

PROF ALI RIAZ, vice president, consensus commission

## INJURY CATEGORIES & COMPENSATION DISBURSED



FILE PHOTO

NOTE: Figures likely underestimate total injuries.

### DHAKA DIVISION

**6,545** injuries (highest recorded)

### CHATTOGRAM

**1,826**

### RANGPUR

**1,301**

### KHULNA

**1,282**

### RAJSHAHI

**1,191**

### SYLHET

**794**

### MYMENSINGH

**441**

### BARISHAL

**431**

#### CATEGORY A - Severe disabilities

Total affected: 602 individuals

Types of injuries: Loss of eye/hand/leg, full blindness, critical impairment preventing independent living

Entitlement: One-time grant of Tk 5 lakh

Disbursed so far: Tk 2 lakh per person

Total payout: Tk 9.86 crore

#### CATEGORY B - Serious but partial impairments

Total affected: 1,118 individuals

Types of injuries: Partial visual impairment, serious brain injuries

Entitlement: Tk 3 lakh grant

Disbursed so far: Tk 1 lakh per person

Total payout: Tk 9.08 crore

#### CATEGORY C - Recovered victims

Total affected: 12,080 individuals

Condition: Injured but recovered ability to work

Entitlement: Tk 1 lakh per person

Total payout: Tk 106.42 crore

SOURCES: DGHS MIS, LIBERATION WAR AFFAIRS MINISTRY

## JULY UPRISING

# The wounds that are yet to heal, one year on

NILIMA JAHAN

This week marks one year since 15-year-old Md Shahin Alam's life was forever changed -- not by illness or accident, but by a bullet that tore through his left leg during a rally on August 5, 2024.

He was unarmed and part of a jubilant crowd outside Uttara East Police Station during the Victory March that followed the fall of the Awami League government.

Today, Shahin lies bedridden at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR), his leg still held in external fixators after eight surgeries. With no clear timeline for recovery, his future is clouded by pain, poverty, and uncertainty.

A 10th grader from Mymensingh, Shahin had been visiting his parents in Dhaka during school holidays. His father pulls a rickshaw. His mother, a domestic helper, quit her job to care for him full time.

"It was around 4:00pm," Shahin recalled. "They fired tear gas first. I couldn't move. Then a policeman shot me just below the knee. I collapsed on the spot."

Doctors say the fixator may be removed soon, but will likely be replaced, possibly more than once.

Shahin spends his days mostly idle, scrolling through short videos on his phone. "I can stand a

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### THE CULTURAL FLAMES OF JULY

When tyranny tightened its grip and blood stained the streets, the country's cultural vanguards rose. Artists from film, music, theatre, and television didn't stay silent -- they stood tall and united. As the regime unleashed internet blackouts, mobile shutdowns, curfews, and a storm of fear, these voices of resistance lit a fire. They marched with placards, defied the silence, and turned art into defiance.

SEE STORY ON PAGE 10

## Jamaat banned, protests surge, death toll mounts

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

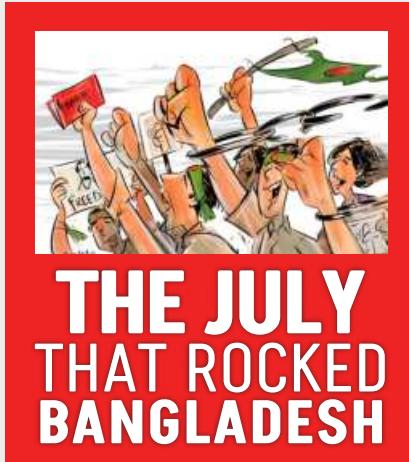
The day marked a turning point in Bangladesh's deepening political crisis, as the government officially banned Jamaat-e-Islami and all its affiliated organisations, including Islami Chhatra Shibir. The decision, formalised through a home ministry gazette notification, came amid escalating public unrest, growing demands for justice over student killings, and continued mass demonstrations across the country.

In a separate development, then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the media that both the United Nations and any interested country were welcome to send experts to Bangladesh to investigate recent incidents of violence. "I want all incidents to be investigated because it should be found out what was behind those incidents and how those happened," she said.

It may be noted that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk had earlier offered to deploy an independent fact-finding team to help restore public trust and de-escalate tensions. "In these challenging times, my office is ready to support your efforts in resolving the current crisis," he wrote in a letter to the Prime Minister dated July 23.

Meanwhile, six coordinators of the quota reform movement who had been in Detective Branch custody were released around 1:30pm. Badrul Islam, father of one of the organisers, Nahid Islam, confirmed their release to this newspaper.

On campuses across the country, teachers and students staged demonstrations under the



AUGUST 1, 2024

"Remembering Our Heroes" campaign. At least five public universities saw teachers organising human chains, silent marches, and rallies demanding justice for the victims of state violence and an end to the harassment of both students and faculty.

At Rajshahi University, teachers intervened to prevent the detention of students during a protest. However, in Barishal University, police detained 12 students during a demonstration. In the capital, the Bangladesh University Teachers' Network held a rally near the Raju Sculpture, demanding the immediate release of arrested students, the withdrawal of law enforcement from campuses, and the reopening of educational institutions.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir issued a strong statement accusing the government and pro-



University teachers under the banner of "Teachers Against Repression" held a rally at the base of the Raju Bhaskarja on August 1, 2024, demanding the immediate release of students detained during block raids, justice for those killed, and an end to the ongoing harassment of students and educators.

ruling party officials in law enforcement agencies of spreading misinformation to obscure the truth about the student killings. He urged government officials, including those in the administration and police, to refrain from following "unjust and illegal" instructions. He also warned that as the repression intensified, so too would public resistance.

Tragically, one more life was lost to the violence. Selim Talukder, a 31-year-old factory worker from Narayanganj, succumbed to his injuries at Popular Hospital in Dhammandi. He had suffered 56 shotgun pellet wounds to his chest and 18 to his head after being caught in clashes between police and protesters on July 18 while on his way to work. With his death, the confirmed death toll since July 16 rose to at least 201.

Amid growing outrage, a group of eminent citizens demanded the

immediate release of all detainees within 24 hours. Speaking at a human chain in front of the Detective Branch office on Minto Road under the banner of Aggrieved Citizens' Society, they noted that while the six student leaders had been freed, many teachers, students, and civilians remained in custody.

Later that evening, Abdul Kader, a coordinator of the anti-discrimination student movement, announced fresh programmes for the following day. These included prayers at mosques, temples, and churches, followed by a mass procession after Juma prayers to press home their nine-point demand. Kader urged citizens from all walks of life—teachers, workers, professionals, cultural activists, human rights defenders, intellectuals, and madrasa students—to support the initiative.

## Accord reached, dissent noted

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panel. This body will choose a chief adviser from a pool of 12 nominees, submitted by the ruling party, the main opposition, and the second-largest opposition.

If the committee fails to finalise a chief adviser within 120 hours, the ruling party shall propose three names, the main opposition three, and the third-largest party two names within the next 48 hours.

If this process fails, the ruling party and the main opposition will each propose three eligible candidates, while other parties with representation in parliament will propose two more names.

The ruling and opposition blocs will each select one candidate from the other's list. They will also choose one nominee from the smaller parties' list. The nominee receiving the highest number of selections will be appointed chief adviser.

To resolve potential deadlocks, the commission proposed that if no consensus is reached, a nominee backed by any four of the five panel members will be selected. If that fails, two senior judges—one from the Appellate Division and one from the High Court—will be added to the panel, expanding it to seven members. The panel will be empowered to resolve the matter through ranked-choice voting.

If a chief adviser still cannot be selected, the appointment process will default to the system outlined in the now-defunct 13th amendment to the constitution. However, under the current proposal, the president will not be eligible to serve as chief adviser.

In the event that the position of chief adviser becomes vacant, the president will appoint the most senior adviser by age. If the senior-most adviser declines, the next in seniority will be appointed.

Several parties, including the BNP, Jatiyatabadi Samamana Jote, the 12-Party Alliance, the NDM, Labour Party, and Khelafat Majlis, formally submitted notes of dissent against the inclusion of judges in the selection process and the use of ranked-choice voting.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed proposed that in case of a stalemate, the matter be referred to parliament for resolution through a vote by MPs.

### UPPER HOUSE

The BNP, Jatiyatabadi Samamana Jote, the 12-Party Alliance, the NDM, LDP, and the Gano Forum expressed dissenting views on the idea of forming an upper house through proportional representation based on share of votes obtained by the parties.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BASAD), and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh withdrew entirely from discussions on the proposed upper house, citing the country's economic and social realities.

### AGREED DURING FIRST ROUND

Appointing a deputy speaker from the opposition

Removal of article 7A and 7B of the constitution

Ratification of international treaties in parliament

Separate secretariat for Supreme Court

Formation of permanent public admin reform commission

NBR to review affidavits of candidates in national polls

While the BNP supported basing representation on lower house seats, Jamaat, NCP, and others favoured the PR-based model.

As division deepened, the commission on July 14 proposed an alternative: an upper house comprising 76 elected representatives—one from each of the 64 districts and one from each of the 12 city corporations. It had also suggested abolishing the reserved seats for women in the lower house. Elections for both houses would be held simultaneously, the commission had said.

### PRESIDENT'S POWERS

The commission proposed increasing the powers of the president by granting him or her direct authority to appoint the chiefs of the armed forces and the directors general of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and the National

Security Intelligence (NSI).

It has also proposed giving the president direct authority to appoint the attorney general; the governor of Bangladesh Bank; the chairperson and members of the National Human Rights Commission, the Information Commission, the University Grants Commission, the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC); and the chairperson of the Bangladesh Press Council and the Law Commission.

Under the current system, the president needs to follow the prime minister's advice when performing duties except when appointing the prime minister and the chief justice.

During the discussion, BNP's Salahuddin and Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher opposed the idea of giving the president direct authority to appoint the chiefs of the armed forces, DGFI, NSI, Bangladesh Bank governor and attorney general.

Salahuddin added that the appointment of the chairperson and members of the BERC and BTRC should not be given under the president's direct authority.

NCP Joint Convenor Javed Rasin opposed the commission's proposal to grant the authority to appoint the Attorney General, the chiefs of the three forces, and the DGs of DGFI and NSI without consulting the prime minister.

After the discussion, the political parties agreed that the president can appoint the governor of Bangladesh Bank,

the chairman and members of NHRC, the Information Commission, and the chairmen of the Press Council, the Law Commission, and BERC.

### BOYCOTT ON BASIC PRINCIPLES

Most of the parties agreed on the consensus commission's proposal that regardless of which fundamental principles remain in the constitution, "equality, human dignity, social justice, democracy, and religious freedom and harmony" must be included as core constitutional principles.

Protesting against the commission's proposal, the CPB, Basad, Basad (Marxist) and Bangladesh Jashod boycotted the proceedings while Gano Forum expressed its dissent.

The four leftist parties demanded that the commission propose new basic principles by retaining the existing four principles—nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism—which were adopted in 1972.

CPB General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said they cannot compromise on fundamental principles of the state that emerged through the 1971 Liberation War.

### HEATED DEBATE

During the discussion, BNP leader

Salahuddin said his party had

first floated the upper house idea, envisioning a chamber of experts and distinguished individuals. He opposed the commission's version, arguing that no unelected body should have constitutional authority. "Without a sovereign parliament, no one has the authority to amend a nation's constitution," he said.

After his speech, NCP's Javed Rasin responded, "If the upper house is formed based on proportional representation of votes, it reflects the representation of the people." He then sought Salahuddin's attention.

Tension flared as Syed Ehsanul Huda, chairman of Jatiya Dal and coordinator of the 12-Party Alliance, then interjected without the microphone, "Where were you when we were protesting in 2023?"

The exchange escalated,

prompting intervention from commission Vice-President Ali Riaz and Salahuddin. Riaz reminded the room, "There's no need to question anyone's locus standi. Everyone has a locus standi—that's why we are here today." And Salahuddin urged Huda to apologise.

Huda then took the microphone and clarified, "What I meant was that we proposed the idea of the upper house back in 2023, and I was wondering where the PR proposal was at that time. Still, if anyone felt hurt, I am sorry."

Meanwhile, Jamaat's Taher warned at the lunch break that his party would sue both the commission and the government if the July Charter lacked legal grounding. "We believe relying on mere promises isn't enough. If

the charter lacks legitimacy, it will be meaningless. That's why we will file a compensation case against both the commission and the government," he said.

The commission has drafted the charter with reform proposals agreed upon by the parties during the consensus talks. The parties

are expected to sign the document,

pledging to carry on the reforms.

They also agreed to regulate presidential clemency, involve an expert body in delimiting constituencies, establish permanent High Court benches in every division,

and cap the chief justice appointment to the most senior judge, unless a party wins an election on a manifesto pledging otherwise.

BNP's Salahuddin said, "We accept the seniority rule but will submit a note of dissent. Our manifesto will include the option of appointing one of the top two senior judges."

The parties endorsed an amendment requiring a two-thirds parliamentary majority and a national referendum for constitutional changes affecting key articles, including those on the caretaker government, president's powers, and amendment procedures.

Though the BNP, LDP, Labour Party, NDM, and 12-Party Alliance opposed separating the posts of party chief and prime minister, the majority supported it. A provision allows dissenting parties to record their objections in the final July Charter.

They unanimously agreed on forming the Election Commission via a five-member search panel comprising the Speaker, deputy Speaker (from the opposition), prime minister, and Leader of the Opposition.

Additionally, parties consented to fielding women in at least 5 percent of constituencies in the next election while retaining 50 reserved seats for women.

## Inflation, tariff risks keep Bangladesh

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sustained.

Speaking at a press briefing, Governor Ahsan H Mansur underscored the central bank's policy philosophy. "Controlling inflation is crucial, and macroeconomic stability is a prerequisite for sustainable growth. You can boost growth artificially by printing money and increasing expenditure, but that's not sustainable," he said.

While food inflation has broadly moderated, the governor pointed out that rice prices have remained elevated. "Despite record production, rice prices are still rising, perhaps because affluent farmers are stockpiling. But we don't expect prices to rise much further," he said. He also noted a silver lining: "Farmers are happy because they're getting good prices at the farm level. So, there's a positive side to this, too."

Mansur credited market stability for recent inflationary relief. "We were able to manage the supply side. Currently, except for rice, most other prices in the market are stable. If we can maintain this situation, inflation will likely come down. We believe that if other countries can achieve this, Bangladesh can too," he said.

He outlined a long-term target for price stability: "Once inflation drops to single digits, lending rates will no longer be in double digits, and

everything can be kept in real positive terms."

Private sector credit growth has slowed significantly, registering just 6.4 percent in June, the lowest in recent history, as tighter liquidity and elevated borrowing costs continue to bite. The governor acknowledged the strain being placed on businesses. "Those who took loans at 8-9 percent in 2016-17 are now paying 16 percent, despite being regular payers. It's unfortunate, but we can't artificially lower rates without restoring macro stability first," Mansur said.

### GROWTH OUTLOOK

Although the economy grew by only 3.97 percent in FY25, well below initial projections, the central bank struck an optimistic tone on recovery prospects.

The government has revised its FY26 growth target to 5.5 percent, broadly in line with forecasts from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank, which project growth between 4.9 percent and 5.4 percent.

Mansur defended the current growth rate in a regional context. "Our current growth rate is actually solid given the circumstances. In contrast, countries like Pakistan had negative growth. Our figures are clean, no manipulations," he said.

He expressed hope that political calm would continue to support

investor sentiment. "We've survived the crisis, and now that stability is returning, investors will feel more confident, especially post-election, if the political environment stays stable," Mansur added.

The monetary policy statement highlighted emerging risks to the external sector, particularly from newly imposed US tariffs on Bangladeshi exports, especially ready-made garments. "A risk to sustaining export growth in the period ahead could emerge from new US tariffs imposed on Bangladeshi products, particularly on RMG products," the statement said.

With the United States being Bangladesh's largest export market, trade disruptions could dent earnings and add pressure to the exchange rate. Nonetheless, Bangladesh Bank reiterated its commitment to a fully flexible, market-based exchange rate regime, adding that it would intervene only to curb excessive volatility.

Gross foreign exchange reserves climbed to \$26.7 billion by June 2025, buoyed by steady remittance inflows and modest export gains. "During the crisis, we focused on ensuring the availability of foreign exchange. Now, raw material imports have increased, so has production capacity. Exports are growing even without new investments," Mansur said.

## Tk 3 lakh seized from Dhaka flat used by Riyad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Police yesterday recovered around Tk 3 lakh in cash from a flat in the capital's Badda, allegedly used by Abdur Razzak Riyad, an expelled leader of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), who was recently arrested on extortion charges.

Haifur Rahman, officer in charge of Gulshan Police Station, confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

Another police official, requesting anonymity, said they suspect the cash was obtained through extortion and are working to determine its exact source.

Riyad and four others were arrested on July 26 from the Gulshan residence of former AL lawmaker Shammi Ahmed after allegedly demanding Tk 50 lakh from her family.

Shammi's husband, Siddique Abu Zafar, alleged that the group, identifying themselves as members of SAD, first visited their home on July 17 and reportedly threatened to hand the family members over to police if the money was not paid.

The family, under duress, paid them Tk 10 lakh.

When the group returned to the former AL MP's flat to collect the remaining amount, the family informed law enforcers, who arrested the five from the scene. Later, an extortion case was filed with Gulshan Police Station.

Riyad and three of his associates—Ibrahim Hossain Munna, convener of SAD's Dhaka city unit; and members Sakadon Siam and Sadab—are now on a seven-day remand each in connection with the case. The other arrestee, a minor, was sent to a juvenile correction centre.

During interrogation, police learned the group had also targeted another former AL lawmaker, Abul Kalam Azad, about a month ago. Following this, law enforcers recovered cheques worth Tk 2.25 crore from another flat in Dhaka linked to Riyad.

Police said the cheques were among those forcibly signed by Azad.

Speaking to The Daily Star earlier, Azad said a group of 10-12 individuals, led by Riyad, had stormed

# DHAKA

Need effective leadership to address key challenges  
**Says army chief**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman yesterday called for effective leadership and a shared understanding among all stakeholders to address Bangladesh's key challenges related to security, development, and strategic governance.

He made the remarks while addressing the closing ceremony of the Capstone Course at the National Defence College (NDC) in Dhaka.

Highlighting the role of the NDC, Waker said the institution was established as a national centre of excellence for issues relating to defence, security, strategy, and development.

He said the Capstone Course offers a unique platform for senior professionals to develop a

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Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman in a photo session during the closing ceremony of the Capstone Course at the National Defence College in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Must tackle internal divides to navigate global rivalry

**Speakers tell CGS dialogue**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign policy experts and politicians have called for addressing divisive politics, economic vulnerabilities, and human rights concerns to safeguard Bangladesh's strategic autonomy in an increasingly bipolar world.

They said many developing countries are struggling to maintain balanced foreign relations amid the growing rivalry between US and China-led blocs.

The observations were made at a dialogue on Bangladesh's foreign policy

## SUGGESTIONS

- Build political consensus on foreign policy
- Diversify export basket beyond RMG
- Reduce reliance on imported energy
- Strengthen Bangladesh missions abroad
- Balance relations with US, China, and India

organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital yesterday.

"The world is certainly getting bipolar. How we will navigate it will depend on our internal strength," said Bangladesh Enterprise Institute Chairman and former ambassador M Humayun Kabir.

He said Bangladesh suffers from a tendency toward internal conflict, which hampers the formulation of a strong foreign policy. Political actors often use foreign alliances to undermine their opposition, he added.

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## MILESTONE TRAGEDY 'Why would we hide bodies of children?'

Army refutes allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brig Gen Nazim-ud-Daula, director of Military Operations Directorate (MOD) at the Army Headquarters, yesterday rejected allegations that army personnel beat up teachers or attempted to hide bodies of the victims during the rescue operation at Milestone School and College following the July 21 fighter jet crash.

"Some say we beat up teachers, or hid bodies. Why would we hide the bodies of innocent children? Their parents were there. Wouldn't they have asked where their children were?" he told reporters during a briefing at Dhaka Cantonment.

He said if anyone was pushed amid the chaos, it was never deliberate.

"We had to clear the way for ambulances. In doing so, some jostling may have happened, but our only objective was to save lives," he said.

Nazim pointed out that the crashed aircraft had created a deep hole in the school building and jet fuel had leaked into the area.

"There was already fuel at the spot where the nose of the plane had hit. If a spark had gone off, those involved in the rescue could have died. Thankfully, that didn't happen. But those who rushed there did so with full awareness of the risk," he said.

He said army personnel were the first to respond and begin rescue operations, as their camp was located just 150 to 200 yards away from the school.

"Our soldiers dropped everything and ran. You'll see in

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In Sylhet's haors, the rhythm of the season beats softly -- farmers transplanting Aman seedlings, others carry them across emerald fields. With the weather in their favour, they labour in hope, hearts set on golden harvests in Agrahayan. The photo was taken in Barni area of Companiganj upazila yesterday.

## Political clashes, mob attacks leave 25 dead in July

Says MSF monthly report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least nine people were killed and 584 injured in 48 incidents of political violence across the country in July, according to a report by rights organisation Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF).

Of the nine, three were killed in internal feuds within the BNP, one in clashes involving the BNP and Jamaat, and five during clashes between law enforcers and Awami League members and supporters centring a programme of the National Citizen Party (NCP) in Gopalganj, the report said.

Of the 48 incidents, 27 were related to internal BNP conflicts; two involved clashes between the BNP and Awami League; two were internal NCP disputes; one involved the NCP, AL, and law enforcers; four were between BNP and Jamaat; one between Jamaat and AL; and another between supporters of adviser Asif Mahmud and the BNP.

"The rise in mob violence has raised serious concerns, shaking the public's sense of security, and it is the state's responsibility to identify the culprits and take legal action," said MSF.

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## Protesters block Shahbagh, demand July Charter Commuters suffer in daylong traffic chaos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of demonstrators under the banner of "July Warriors" staged a protest at the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday, demanding the immediate finalisation of the proposed July Charter.

The blockade began around 11:00am and was ongoing as of 10:00pm, the time of filing this report.

The demonstration caused severe traffic congestion in the surrounding areas. Commuters were stuck on the roads for hours, while many were forced to walk long distances to reach their destinations.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

"Traffic movement in and around Shahbagh came to a halt, resulting in severe congestion across adjacent roads," said Khalid Mansur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

Saad Ahmed, a private firm employee, said it took him over two and a half hours to reach Karwan Bazar from Jatrabari.

"I went to Jatrabari in the morning for official work but later learned about the Shahbagh blockade through social media. Fearing heavy traffic, I boarded a bus which takes a route via Basabo, Kamalapur, and Malibagh -- but the roads were still jam-packed," he said.

"When I finally reached Karwan Bazar, I realised

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## 27 more pushed in from India

STAR REPORT

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) detained 27 individuals early yesterday after they were pushed into the country allegedly by India's Border Security Force (BSF) through the borders in Panchagarh and Naogaon.

According to BGB officials, 17 of them were held in Panchagarh and 10 in Naogaon.

Lt Col Monirul Islam, commanding officer of BGB-18 Battalion in Panchagarh, said seven individuals were picked up from near border pillar No. 739/20-S after being pushed into Bangladesh by the BSF.

Maj Kazi Asif Ahmed, deputy commanding officer of BGB-56 Battalion in Nilphamari, said 10 others were detained near border pillar No. 755/2-S.

According to BGB officials, all 17 detainees claimed during primary interrogation that they were Bangladeshi nationals who had illegally crossed into India years ago in search of work and had been living in various parts of the country. Recently, they were detained by Indian police from several locations, including Odisha, and later handed over to the BSF, who then allegedly pushed them into Bangladesh.

Later in the day, the detainees were handed over to Tetulia and Panchagarh Sadar police stations. Police officials from both stations said they were verifying their identities.

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## Push for 'regime change' in Russia

Zelensky urges allies as Russian drone, missile attacks on Kyiv kill 8

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday urged his allies to bring about "regime change" in Russia, hours after a Russian drone and missile attack on Kyiv killed eight people including a six-year-old boy.

The overnight strikes reduced part of a nine-storey apartment block in Kyiv's western suburbs to rubble and wounded dozens more in the capital, according to authorities.

The Russian army meanwhile claimed to have captured Chasiv Yar, a strategically important hillside town in eastern Ukraine where the two sides have been fiercely fighting for months.

Moscow has stepped up its deadly aerial assaults on Ukraine in recent months, resisting US pressure to end its nearly three-and-a-half year invasion as its forces grind forward on the battlefield.

Speaking virtually to a conference marking 50 years since the signing of the Cold War-era Helsinki Accords, Zelensky said he believed Russia could be



Ukrainian emergency workers operate amid the rubble of a residential building following an airstrike in Kyiv yesterday, part of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

## War of words escalates between US, Russia

Medvedev reminds Trump of Russia's Doomsday nuclear strike capabilities

REUTERS, Moscow

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev yesterday told US President Donald Trump to remember that Moscow possessed Soviet era nuclear strike capabilities of last resort after Trump told Medvedev to "watch his words".

Trump, in a post on his Truth social network in the early hours of yesterday, singled out Medvedev, who is deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, for sharp criticism after Medvedev said that Trump's threat of hitting Russia and buyers of its oil with punitive tariffs was "a game of ultimatums" and a step closer towards a war between Russia and the United States.

"Tell Medvedev, the failed former President of Russia, who thinks he's still President, to watch his words. He's entering very dangerous territory!" Trump wrote, in his second warning to the close ally of President Vladimir Putin in recent weeks.

Trump on July 29 said Russia had "10 days from today" to agree to a ceasefire in Ukraine or be hit, along with its oil buyers, with tariffs. Moscow, which has set out its own terms for peace, which Kyiv says amount to demanding its capitulation, has not so far indicated it will comply with Trump's deadline.

Trump in his post yesterday said he didn't care what India - one of Russia's biggest oil buyers along with China - did with Russia.

"They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care. We have done very little business with India, their tariffs are too high, among the highest in the World. Likewise, Russia and the USA do almost no business together. Let's keep it that way," he said.

Medvedev said that Trump's statement showed



that Russia should continue on its current policy course.

"If some words from the former president of Russia trigger such a nervous reaction from the high-and-mighty president of the United States, then Russia is doing everything right and will continue to proceed along its own path," Medvedev said in a post on Telegram.

Trump should remember, he said, "how dangerous the fabled 'Dead Hand' can be," a reference to a secretive semi-automated Russian command system designed to launch Moscow's nuclear missiles if its leadership had been taken out in a decapitating strike by a foe.

Medvedev has emerged as one of the Kremlin's most outspoken anti-Western hawks since Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in 2022. Kremlin critics deride him as an irresponsible loose canon, though some Western diplomats say his statements give a flavour of thinking in senior Kremlin policy-making circles.

Trump also rebuked Medvedev in July, accusing him of throwing around the "N (nuclear) word" after the Russian official criticised US strikes on Iran and said "a number of countries" were ready to supply Iran with nuclear warheads.

"I guess that's why Putin's 'THE BOSS'", Trump said at the time.

Meanwhile, the governor of Russia's Penza region said yesterday that Ukrainian drones had struck a local industrial facility.

Separately, Russia's state railway company said that drone debris had hit railway infrastructure and temporarily halted trains in the southern Volgograd region.

Russia's Defence Ministry said that it had downed 32 Ukrainian drones over several Russian regions.

Tehran dams may run dry within months

Warns Iran president

AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian warned yesterday that dams supplying the capital could run dry within months unless water consumption was curbed.

"If we in Tehran cannot manage the situation, and if people do not cooperate with us and we fail to control consumption, there will be no water left behind our dams," Pezeshkian said during a visit to Zanjan in the northwest.

The president said reserves may be depleted by October -- the first month of autumn in the Persian calendar, when schools reopen and demand typically rises before the start of the rainy season.

According to an infographic shared by state news agency IRNA, reservoirs serving Tehran are at just 20 percent capacity.

Nationally, the average reservoir level stands at just 44 percent.

According to the Tehran Provincial Water Supply Company, levels in the reservoirs supplying the city have fallen to "their lowest in a century".

Authorities have urged residents to install water tanks and pumps to cope with disruptions to supply.

EXTREME RAIN, FLOODS

## Death toll in north China rises to 60

REUTERS, Beijing

Extreme weather killed at least 60 people in northern China over the past week, with 31 deaths in an elderly care home in Beijing's hilly Miyun district in one of the deadliest floods to have hit the Chinese capital in years.

In Beijing, 44 people were killed and nine were missing as of midday yesterday, deputy mayor of Beijing, Xia Linmao, said at a press conference.

Heavy rains began a week ago and peaked around Beijing and surrounding provinces on Monday, with Miyun experiencing rainfall of up to 573.5 mm (22.6 inches) - levels local media described as "extremely destructive." The average annual rainfall in Beijing is around 600 mm.



In the nearby province of Hebei, 16 people died as a result of the intense rainfall, authorities said.

At least eight were killed in the city of Chengde just outside Beijing, with 18 unaccounted for.

The deaths occurred in villages within the Xinglong area of Chengde in Hebei province, state-run Xinhua reported late on Wednesday citing local authorities, without specifying when or how the people died.

The deaths in Chengde occurred in villages which border Beijing's Miyun about 25 km (16 miles) from the Miyun reservoir, the largest in China's north.

## Buddhist gem collection returns to India after 127 years

REUTERS, Hong Kong

A collection of hundreds of jewels linked to Buddha's remains has returned to India after 127 years following an auction planned for earlier this year that drew threats of legal action from the government in Delhi.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the return of the collection, known as the Piprahwa Gems of the Historical Buddha.

"A joyous day for our cultural heritage!" Modi wrote in a post on X on Wednesday. "It would make every Indian proud."

The collection of more than 300 gems including amethyst, topaz and pearls dates from the Mauryan Empire, Ashokan Era, around 240-200 BCE.

The collection, first unearthed by a Briton in northern India, was originally scheduled to be auctioned by Sotheby's in Hong Kong in May but the sale was postponed after India's government threatened legal action and demanded the jewels be returned.

Sotheby's subsequently identified Indian conglomerate Godrej Industries Group as the buyer and secured a sale that saw the permanent return of the gems to India, where they would be placed on public display. "Sotheby's is delighted to have facilitated the return of the Piprahwa Gems to India," the auction house said.

India's Ministry of Culture said it was an exemplary public-private partnership and the initiative aligned with Modi's broader mission to reclaim and celebrate India's ancient cultural and spiritual heritage from across the world.

## Fakhrul warns repeat of 1/11, urges timely election

FROM PAGE 1

Rahman said the upcoming polls are extremely important for every citizen in establishing the kind of Bangladesh a mother would envision. He urged all, including women, to remain alert so that fascism and extremism can never rise again.

Fakhrul told another programme, "You know better than me, keep your eyes and ears open. You will see that many incidents are happening, and the signs of these incidents are not good. Everyone needs to pay attention."

He made the remarks at the "March for Justice" programme organised by the Bangladesh Nationalist Lawyers Forum in memory of the July martyrs, held at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium.

The 1/11 government in Bangladesh refers to the military-backed caretaker government that came to power on January 11, 2007.

Fakhrul said, "If you read newspapers and watch television, then things will become a bit clear to you. Everything can't be said openly everywhere. But I fear that if we are not united, if we are not alert, then an incident like 1/11 is not unlikely."

He said, "I think any further delay

will not be right for Professor Yunus's government. February should be the deadline. If the election takes place after February, the honour with which you [Yunus] came, the respect you have around the world ... there will be a possibility of it being damaged."

The BNP leader said issues like Proportional Representation (PR) system and other controversial topics are being brought forward on purpose to create debate and obstruct the democratic process.

"Why are these topics being created? Why are these debates being made? If you think they are just happening for no reason, that's not true. There is a special purpose behind this."

"That purpose goes back to 1/11. That purpose takes you back to the time when Ershad Saheb grabbed power. They don't want democracy to continue in this country."

Fakhrul said there is a group who repeatedly harms democracy, and even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did that by introducing one-party rule.

Calling upon patriotic people and all political parties, he said, "Let's unite and complete the reforms, trials, and all these things, and move towards democracy."

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will not be right for Professor Yunus's government. February should be the deadline. If the election takes place after February, the honour with which you [Yunus] came, the respect you have around the world ... there will be a possibility of it being damaged."

At another programme held at the Jatiya Press Club, Fakhrul urged all political parties to build mutual understanding and stop the blame game, saying that continued mudslinging will only feed bitterness and make politics toxic.

He suggested that a national election held in mid February next year could help resolve the current crisis and dispel confusion surrounding the country's future.

Addressing an event virtually, Tariq said the BNP has designed all its future action plans keeping in mind the hopes and aspirations of women as the party believes the country cannot move forward without ensuring the dignity, security, and active participation of women in every sphere of life, reports UNB.

Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal organised the programme titled "Women's Contribution to the Anti-Fascist Movement" at the Shaheed Abu Sayed International Convention Centre of Bangladesh Medical University, marking the first anniversary of the July-August mass uprising.

The law adviser said the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) has been

## Polls date 'within a few days'

FROM PAGE 1

while 90 percent said they hadn't voted at all. There will be no such regret this time," he added.

He also reaffirmed the government's commitment to conduct a free and fair election.

"I can only speak about our government's intention, and that is to hold the best election in the history of Bangladesh. Our sir [Prof Yunus] always says it."

When asked how the upcoming election would gain international acceptance, given past controversies, he disagreed with the question's suggestion.

"Even the 2008 election had issues. If journalists look into it, they'll find many troubling facts about that election too," he added.

Calling false cases and mob violence the "most unfortunate" incidents under the interim government, Prof Nazrul said both

"I keep saying that two very unfortunate things have happened during our time -- one is false cases, where people are wrongly accused and harassed; the other is mob violence. These two incidents have hurt us a lot," he said.

The law adviser said the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) has been

amended to help prevent false cases or to release those falsely accused.

He explained that police will now submit a preliminary report to the court instead of waiting for the final report. If the court finds that a case was filed against 400 people but

Calling false cases and mob violence the "most unfortunate" incidents under the interim government, Prof Nazrul said both

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"We'll know in the coming five or six days where we are going. These days are very crucial," he said while speaking at the "BSRF Dialogue" organised by the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum (BSRF) at its office in the Secretariat.

He also mentioned that the timeframe announced in London for holding the 13th national parliamentary election will not be delayed.

Shafiqul said, "The next four or five days will be crucial for Bangladesh's political settlement. Work is underway on the July Declaration and July Charter."

"He [Prof Yunus] initially mentioned early April [2026]. Later, we said in London that if substantial reforms take place... if progress is made, then it [election] might happen in February. That's still where we stand -- the election will be held on schedule."

"We hope the upcoming election will be a festive one. There are always incidents of violence during elections, but we will make our utmost efforts to reduce it to zero," he said.

Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday

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## Pak opposition leader given 10 yrs for Imran Khan protests

AFP, Islamabad

The opposition leader in Pakistan's parliament was among more than 100 people convicted yesterday over nationwide protests in support of Imran Khan in 2023, his party said.

A statement from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) said six members of parliament, a senator, and a provincial MP, were given 10-year sentences, a week after several others were also convicted.

Among them was Omar Ayub Khan, the opposition leader in the National Assembly, who did not attend the protests.

He was convicted at an anti-terrorism court in the eastern city of Faisalabad of abetting violence and conspiring to incite riots and arson. "We are going to challenge this in the upper court," PTI chairman Gohar Ali Khan told reporters.

## 2008 BOMBING Indian court acquits ex- MP, six others

AFP, Mumbai

An Indian court yesterday acquitted a firebrand Hindu nationalist nun and former lawmaker, and six others accused of participating in a deadly bombing near a mosque in 2008.

The attack killed six people and wounded more than 100 others when a bomb strapped to a motorcycle exploded close to the mosque in Malegaon in the western state of Maharashtra.

Seven people were tried on terrorism and criminal conspiracy charges, including former MP from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sadhvi Pragya Thakur, in a case that dragged on for years.

The prosecution claimed Thakur's motorbike was used to carry the explosives used in the attack, and that she took part in a key planning meeting before it was staged.



Palestinian men gather beside a burnt car following an attack by Israeli settlers in the village of Silwad, near Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## OCCUPIED WEST BANK VILLAGE OF SUSIYA Israeli settlers cut off water, power sources

Say Palestinians; Israeli minister hints at annexing parts of Gaza

REUTERS, Susiya

Palestinians in the village of Susiya in the Israeli occupied West Bank thought life could not get worse as Jewish settlers were attacking them repeatedly and ripping apart their precious olive groves.

Then settlers armed with knives set upon their water sources, villagers said.

"They want us to live without water, and here they also cut the electrical wires," said Mousa Mughnem, 67, who lives with his 60-year-old wife Najah in the village near the town of Hebron.

Palestinians in the West Bank have reported growing Israeli settler violence since war erupted between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza on October 7, 2023.

Palestinian authorities who exercise limited self-rule in parts of the West Bank say the settlers are trying to force Palestinians off their lands in order to seize them.

Emboldened by some far right Israeli government ministers who seek to annex the West Bank, settlers have assaulted Palestinian farmers, cut down trees and set fire to precious olive groves.

Jihad Al-Nawajaa, the head of the Susiya village council, said the water shortages have become unbearable. "If we do not have water here, we will not survive. They make us thirsty in order to expel us, and their aim is to expel people," he said.

Residents of Susiya accuse Israeli settlers of severing water pipes and electricity wires, chopping down their olive trees and preventing them from herding their sheep.

In response to a Reuters request for a comment on settler attacks in Susiya, the Israeli military said soldiers have been dispatched to deal with any troubles and have removed Israeli citizens involved.

"As for the most recent incident

that occurred on Monday (July 28), same protocol was used, and no injuries were reported," the army said.

Palestinians have cultivated olive trees for generations and regard them as an enduring symbol of their national identity.

Some villagers, like Najah Mughnem, are defiant and say they will remain attached to their land and their olives no matter what the settlers do.

Meanwhile, an Israeli minister said on Wednesday Israel could threaten to annex parts of Gaza to increase pressure on Hamas, an idea that would deal a blow to Palestinian hopes of statehood on land Israel now occupies.

Accusing Hamas of trying to drag out ceasefire talks to gain Israeli concessions, security cabinet member Zeev Elkin told public broadcaster Kan that Israel may give the group an ultimatum to reach a deal.

## 25 PERCENT TARIFF Modi faces opposition fury after Trump threat

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian opposition parties yesterday criticised the government, describing US President Donald Trump's threat of a 25 percent tariff as a diplomatic failure for New Delhi, while the rupee currency tumbled and equity indexes slid in response to the news.

The 25 percent rate would single out India more harshly than other major trading partners, and threatens to unravel months of talks, undermining one of Washington's strategic partners in the region, viewed as a counterbalance to China.

Trump said the tariff on imports from India would start from today, in addition to an unspecified penalty for Russian dealings and involvement in the BRICS grouping of nations.

## Return soldiers taken in border clashes

Cambodia urges Thailand as truce holds

REUTERS

Cambodia yesterday accused Thailand of detaining 20 of its soldiers and killing another in post-ceasefire incidents, as a fragile peace held for a third day along their disputed border.

Five days of intense clashes between the Southeast Asian neighbours that began last week killed at least 43 people, many of them civilians, and displaced more than 300,000, until a truce brokered in Malaysia on Monday halted the fighting.

Thailand has since accused Cambodian troops of violating the ceasefire multiple times, a charge denied by authorities in Phnom Penh, who instead allege that the Thai military has wrongfully detained a number of its soldiers.

"We appeal to the Thai side to promptly return all 20 of our forces, including other forces if any are under Thai control," Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said yesterday.

In a statement, senior Cambodian defence official Lieutenant General Rath Dararoth said one Cambodian soldier had died in Thai custody since the ceasefire and his body had been returned. He did not provide further details.

## Pacific tsunami warnings lifted Millions return home

AFP, Puerto Ayora

Countries across Pacific rim lifted tsunami warnings earlier yesterday, allowing millions of evacuees to return home.

After one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded rattled Russia's sparsely populated Far East, more than a dozen nations -- from Japan to the US to Ecuador -- warned citizens to stay away from coastal regions. Storm surges of up to four metres were predicted for some parts of the Pacific, after 8.8 quake struck off Russia's Kamchatka peninsula.

The tsunami warnings caused widespread disruption. Peru closed 65 of its 121 Pacific ports and authorities on Maui cancelled flights to and from the Hawaiian island. But fears of a catastrophe were not realised, with country after country lifting or downgrading warnings and telling coastal residents they could return.

In Japan, almost two million people had been ordered to higher ground, before the warnings were downgraded.



This handout photo, released yesterday by Spain's Military Emergency Unit (UME), shows firefighters battling a wildfire near Caminomorisco in the Extremadura region of western Spain.

PHOTO: AFP

## TRIAL OF ALLY BOLSONARO Trump punishes Brazil with tariffs, sanctions

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump ordered massive tariffs on Brazil Wednesday and sanctions against the judge overseeing a trial of his far-right ally Jair Bolsonaro, who is accused of attempting a coup in Latin America's biggest economy.

The announcement of 50 percent tariffs saw Trump make good on his threat to wield US economic might to punish Brazil -- and its Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, in particular -- for what he has termed a "witch hunt" against former president Bolsonaro.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva hit back at the move,

saying he would defend "the sovereignty of the Brazilian people in the face of measures announced by the president of the United States."

Unlike other tariffs Trump is slapping on economies around the world, the measures against Brazil have been framed in openly political terms, sweeping aside centuries-old trade ties and a surplus that Brasilia put at \$284 million last year.

The moves dramatically increased the pressure on Moraes, who has emerged as a powerful and polarizing thorn in the far-right's side, after clashing repeatedly with Bolsonaro and others over disinformation.

Trump's executive order added a 40 percent tariff on Brazilian products,

bringing total trade duties to 50 percent, the White House announced.

The order said the new duties would not come into effect for seven days, and listed exemptions on some of Brazil's major exports -- including planes, orange juice and pulp, Brazil nuts, and some iron, steel and aluminum products.

The Brazilian government's "politically motivated persecution, intimidation, harassment, censorship, and prosecution of (Bolsonaro) and thousands of his supporters are serious human rights abuses that have undermined the rule of law in Brazil," the White House said in a fact sheet announcing the tariffs.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
প্রধান উপদেষ্টার কার্যালয়  
জাতীয় দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (এনএসডিএ)  
বিনিয়োগ ভবন (১১-১২ তলা)  
ই-৬/বি, আগারগাঁও, শের-ই-বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২০৭  
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### বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে জাতীয় দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (এনএসডিএ) পর্যায়ক্রমিক ১২ (বারো) ক্যাটাগরিতে (দক্ষতা প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান, শিল্প দক্ষতা পরিষদ, শিল্প সমিতি, এনজিও, গবেষক প্রত্নতি) অর্থ বিভাগের আওতাধীন জাতীয় মানব সম্পদ উন্নয়ন তহবিল (এনএইচআরডিএফ) হতে আর্থিক সহায়তা প্রদানের নিমিত্ত সুপারিশ করবে।

২। এ লক্ষ্যে এনএসডিএ কর্তৃক নিবন্ধিত ও বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় যোগ্যতা কাঠামো (বিএনকিউএফ) অনুযায়ী সরকারি-বেসরকারি দক্ষতা প্রশিক্ষণ প্রতিষ্ঠান (এসআর্টিপি) হতে ১-৬ লেভেলভিত্তিক দক্ষতা প্রশিক্ষণ পরিচালনায় আর্থিক সহায়তার নিমিত্ত সুপারিশ করবে।

৩। আর্থিক সহায়তা পেতে আগ্রহী দক্ষতা প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে এনএসডিএ-এর অনুমোদনপ্রাপ্ত অকুপেশনে ১২ (বারো) মাস সময়ে বাস্তবায়নযোগ্য প্রশিক্ষণ কর্মসূচির জন্য আর্থিক সুবিধা প্রাপ্তির লক্ষ্যে ন্যাশনাল স্কিল্স পোর্টালে (<https://www.skillsportal.gov.bd/#/>) আবেদন করতে হবে।

৪। এনএসডিএ কর্তৃক আবেদন গ্রহণ ও যাচাইবাছাই শেষে সুপারিশসহ আর্থিক সহায়তার প্রক্রিয়া সম্পর্কের জন্য জাতীয় মানব সম্পদ উন্নয়ন তহবিল (এনএইচআরডিএফ) কোম্পানি বরাবর প্রেরণ করা হবে।

৫। আগামী ৩০ আগস্ট ২০২৫ তারিখের মধ্যে আবেদন দাখিল করতে হবে।

৬। আবেদন-সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাদি ও শর্তাবলি এনএসডিএ-এর ওয়েবসাইটে ([www.nsda.gov.bd](http://www.nsda.gov.bd)) পাওয়া যাবে।

৭। জাতীয় দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ এ-সংক্রান্ত সকল আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ/যাচাই/বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

১০/০৮/২০২৫  
মোহাম্মদ মাহমুজুর রহমান  
পরিচালক (অর্থ)

dir.accounts@nsda.gov.bd

GD-1699



# SWISS NATIONAL DAY, 2025

The Daily Star  
DHAKA FRIDAY AUGUST 1, 2025  
SRABAN 17, 1432 BS

S1

## Message from THE AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND



**RETO RENZLI**  
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

**Switzerland is also a dynamic, multicultural and multilingual nation. Direct democracy and federalism, with a strong local government system, are essential hallmarks of my country, which allows citizens to have the final say in most matters, from the local to the national level.**

Today is the National Day of Switzerland. On this special occasion, I convey my warm greetings to all the fellow Swiss citizens living in Bangladesh, as well as our Bangladeshi friends.

Our national day commemorates an event which took place more than seven centuries ago. In August 1291, according to popular legends, delegates from three Alpine cantons swore the oath of unity that laid the foundation of the Swiss Confederation. From that historic moment, through the adoption of our federal constitution in 1848 and to modern Switzerland in its current shape and form, our political and social journey has been guided by our respect for dialogue, diversity, inclusivity and a strong commitment to democracy. Therefore, our national day celebration is not just about remembering those historic events. It is also about reaffirming and standing up for the core values that have shaped Switzerland.

Beyond the snow-capped mountains

and picturesque meadows, today's Switzerland boasts an advanced and export-oriented economy, which is driven by research and development, innovation and technology. Switzerland's private sector and manufacturing industry blaze a trail when it comes to quality, precision and reliability. In this newspaper supplement, you can explore several articles highlighting the forte of the Swiss private sector and how it champions innovation and competitiveness.

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Since the beginning of our bilateral relations, my country has remained a relevant, effective, and reliable development partner of Bangladesh. Even as Switzerland will gradually, responsibly and sustainably phase out its bilateral development cooperation programme by 2028, it will remain engaged with Bangladesh in addressing key challenges, with a continued focus on humanitarian aid—especially in response to the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis—as well as climate change and migration issues.

A year ago, Bangladesh experienced historic moments. The country stands currently at a crossroad: it is on the cusp of a dual transition—both in terms of its

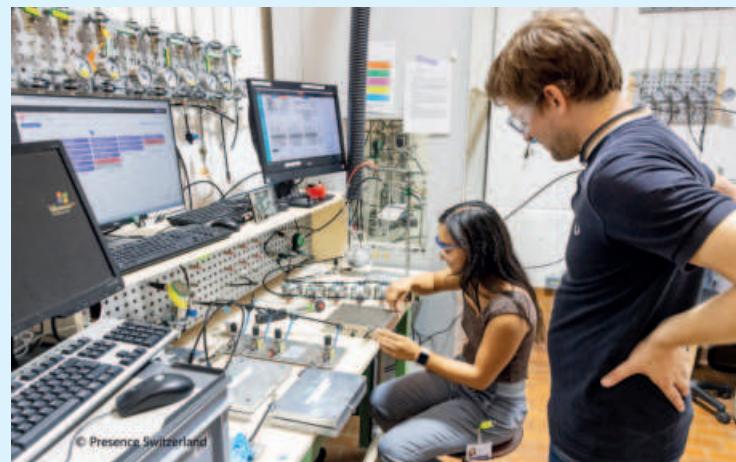


democratic journey and in view of its graduation from the LDC status. Switzerland supports Bangladesh and its people during this transition and their quest for a just, prosperous and tolerant society—one that undergirds free, fair and inclusive democratic processes for everyone. As Bangladesh aims to revise its

playbook to transform the economy into one that is anchored in innovation and a skilled workforce, the Swiss private sector is well-positioned to partner with its Bangladeshi counterparts in facilitating this transition.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate that Switzerland immensely values its friendship and cooperation with Bangladesh and will continue to further deepen its diplomatic and economic cooperation with the country, as well as the business to business and people to people exchanges.

## How Switzerland's Private Sector Works



In celebration of Switzerland's national day, we examine key sectors, the role of SMEs, and the strengths and challenges of Switzerland's export economy.

The Swiss economy is a diverse and stable one, with key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, financial services, precision engineering and the watch industry. These industries are major contributors to the country's GDP and are globally recognized.

### SMEs: The Backbone of the Economy

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up about 99% of all companies and are crucial for driving innovation and creating jobs. They specialize in niche markets and are known for their adaptability.

Switzerland benefits from a highly skilled workforce, a strong education system, and a stable political and economic environment. These factors

create a favorable business climate.

### Strengths and Challenges

Switzerland has a strong export economy, with around two-thirds of its goods being exported. Major export destinations include the EU, the USA, and China. Key exports are pharmaceuticals, machinery, chemicals, and watches. The high quality and innovation of Swiss products give the country a competitive edge in the global market.

However, the Swiss private sector also faces challenges. High labor costs and a strong Swiss franc can make Swiss products more expensive and less competitive internationally. Additionally, the country's strict regulations and high standards, while ensuring quality, can sometimes lead to increased production costs and slower market entry for new products.

SEE PAGE S2

**SBCCI**

Heartiest Felicitations on

# Swiss National Day

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ABB Limited

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Excellent Corporation

Fashion Steps BD Ltd.

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Industries Ltd)

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IMR METALLURGICAL RESOURCES AG

Index Accessories Ltd.

Kuehne+Nagel Ltd.

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Nestle Bangladesh PLC

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Sika Bangladesh Ltd.

SwissChroma Bangladesh Limited

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Syngenta Bangladesh Limited

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Textile Associates Limited

TEXXIT BD

Texcorp Trading Limited

The Analyst Limited

Turbocharging Bangladesh Limited

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## SWISS SECRETS FOR SUCCESS

### Innovation, Science and Research

#### WE ARE COMMITTED TO INNOVATION

<b>3.4%</b> of GDP is spent on research and development by the private sector accounting for two-thirds of this expenditure.	<b>LEADER</b> Switzerland topped the Global Innovation Index for the 14th consecutive year in 2024.	<b>PATENTS</b> By global comparison, Switzerland has the most patent applications per million inhabitants: in 2020, it had 155 patent families.
<b>UNIVERSITIES</b> Switzerland is home to some of the most internationally renowned higher education institutions, with ETH Zurich among the world's top 10 universities.		<b>NOBEL</b> 25 scientists holding Swiss citizenship have received a Nobel Prize in natural sciences.

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In the Global Innovation Index, published by Cornell University, the INSEAD business school and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), Switzerland has come in first each year for over ten years. In the period from 2018 to 2022, Switzerland came in third on the global ranking list of all scholarly publications – after the UK and the Netherlands. How does a country with a population of 8.7 million people, divided into 26 cantons, each with its own unique cultural diversity, where four official languages are spoken, and where mountains occupy 70% of the land, manage to achieve such remarkable success?

Switzerland attaches great

importance to science and research, providing more funding as a percentage of GDP than the majority of OECD countries. Its funding for research and development amounted to around 3.4% of GDP in 2021. Such spending levels place it among the countries with the highest such percentages. In the OECD, it comes in at 6th place in this regard.

Higher expenditure is not the only reason why world-class research has taken hold so deeply in Switzerland. Excellent international networking, high educational standards, stable political and legal conditions, outstanding infrastructure and societal appreciation make this

possible. Many of the universities based in Switzerland are ranked quite high, internationally. Thanks to their achievements in the natural sciences, the two federal institutes of technology (ETH Zurich and EPFL) have earned an excellent reputation worldwide.

Yet most research and development does not take place at public institutions, but rather at private companies. As a sum, Switzerland spends around CHF 24.6 billion on R&D. Private companies finance (73%) and conduct (53%) the largest share.

International research collaboration is also a top priority for Switzerland. In addition to participating in numerous international research organisations and programmes, it cooperates bilaterally with selected priority countries. Switzerland's outstanding international academic networking is indispensable for its top notch research landscape. The country is home to pioneering international research projects, including CERN.



*This article is sourced from <https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/en/home.html>*

### How Switzerland's Private Sector Works



FROM PAGE S1

#### Swiss investments in Bangladesh

Switzerland is also a leading foreign investor in Bangladesh. Major Swiss investors operate in all crucial economic sectors, providing the Bangladeshi market with best-in-class quality, and advanced products, technologies, and services and creating jobs.

#### Trade Relations with Bangladesh

Switzerland and Bangladesh share a dynamic trade relationship. Swiss exports to Bangladesh mainly consist of machinery, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals, while Bangladesh exports textiles, garments, and agricultural products to Switzerland. Swiss companies are increasingly becoming advanced technology suppliers for the local market and businesses, enabling the expansion of the latter. This bilateral trade has been growing steadily.

#### Support for Export Activities

Switzerland Global Enterprise (S GE), the official Swiss organization for export and investment promotion, plays a crucial role in supporting Swiss companies in their export activities. S GE provides consulting services and market analysis to help companies access new markets and enhance their international competitiveness. By offering expert guidance and resources, S GE helps Swiss businesses navigate the complexities of international trade, ensuring they remain competitive on a global scale.

For more information, visit <https://www.s-ge.com/en>.

## Skills Success, Swiss Made

Switzerland has one of the world's most productive and skilled workforces. But how is that achieved in practical terms?

In Switzerland, around two-thirds of young people learn a trade after compulsory schooling. These apprenticeship-style Vocational Education Training (VET) programmes at upper-secondary level begin at the age of 15 and are usually completed at 18 or 19. With this practice-oriented education, Switzerland differs from education systems abroad, which typically see most young people on a general academic route for all of their secondary schooling.

#### The dual system: a student and an apprentice at the same time

The predominant form of VET in Switzerland is the dual system: the young people work three to four days a week in a company as apprentices, learning the trade in practice; the rest of the time, they are students attending a vocational school to acquire the theoretical knowledge. They also attend inter-company courses. Throughout their training, they receive a salary from the company where they are employed.

Programmes for around 250 officially recognised professions are available. In 2023, the most popular were:

- Commercial Employee
- Healthcare Assistant
- Retail Specialist
- Social Care Worker
- Information Technologist

The programmes last for two, three or four years, depending on the profession. After passing their final examination, the young people receive a Federal VET Diploma or a Federal VET Certificate, both of which are recognised throughout Switzerland.

**Federal vocational baccalaureate:** paving the way to a university of applied sciences

A federal vocational baccalaureate (FVB) course can supplement vocational education and training with a broader academic education. The extra lessons it entails typically last an additional half day per week and start in the first year of

Low youth unemployment thanks to close links with the job market

A major feature of Swiss VET is its close links with the job market. Education and training is geared to the actual demand for vocational qualifications and to the jobs available. These direct links mean that Switzerland has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates compared to other countries.



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the apprenticeship. Admission is subject to a number of conditions, such as school grades, entrance examinations and the consent of the employer. The course leads to the FVB examination. Passing this examination, and thereby obtaining a FVB qualification, grants the given student access to a related field of study at a university of applied sciences.

Switzerland's system of vocational education and training is characterised by a high degree of permeability: students may decide to pursue different directions during their basic and advanced education and training and even change career with relative ease.

*This article is sourced from <https://www.aboutswitzerland.eda.admin.ch/>*

*Swiss state-of-the-art technology and equipment to create the next generation of made-in-Bangladesh foods.*

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#### Savory snacks



#### Meals



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**BÜHLER**



From Tarua Theatre's re-enactment of the murder of Abu Sayed.

**On July 31, they issued a signed statement. MP Ferdous wanted to attend, but was asked not to, since his presence could have resulted in conflict. Later, he and others 'protested' in front of BTV.**

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Last year, we witnessed a movement that changed Bangladesh forever. What began as a Quota Reform Movement quickly turned into an uprising, a cry of anguish, and ultimately, a national tragedy. The previous regime tried everything to crush the spirit of the awakening, starting with internet blackouts, mobile network shutdowns, curfews, and fearmongering. However, even silence has a breaking point, and at a certain junction in history, celebrities and cultural activists took to the streets with placards, voices, and an indomitable spirit. When the people saw their favourite actors, musicians, and directors marching in rallies, a new kind of courage manifested itself.

On July 19, 2024, theatre artistes from across Bangladesh united under the banner of *Bikkhubdho Theatre*

citing safety concerns. Eventually, they dispersed. "I couldn't return home. Gulshan was shut down, and I took shelter in Niketan. From the rooftop, people were watching others being chased from both directions," she said.

Bakar Bakul, founder and creative director of Tarua, shared, "We staged a performance titled *Bullet and Blood*. The night before, a few of us were sitting in our Mohammadpur studio, planning something simple. We decided to use red paint to recreate the final moments of Abu Sayeed and others who were killed. We showed ourselves being repeatedly shot. We repeated that motif throughout the protest. The message was simple: bullets don't silence truth."

Organising the protest near Sangsab Bhaban was not easy as Awami loyalists were nearby. Kazi Roksana Ruma recalled how one of their members was assaulted. "Phones were being searched,

for speaking his mind, even under pressure. He consistently protested against the injustices of the former government. He raised his voice when cartoonist Kishore was arrested, when writer Mushtaq Ahmed died in jail, and when journalist Kajol disappeared. Ashfaque stood out as one of the few media figures who actively resisted oppression.

"I faced regular threats. The police came to my house. During the shooting of *Mohanagar*, officers visited my family homes. Many security agencies took me in and interrogated me as well," said Ashfaque. "When the July Movement began, I wasn't alone anymore."

"When they saw me becoming active in the movement, DB contacted my colleagues and producer. They asked my wife Elita to stop me. My name was on a list—but none of it scared me. I had already been through worse. The whole country was united. The fear barrier had broken. Even memes mocking Sheikh Hasina started circulating. For me, July wasn't about fear—it was about celebration. After 15 years of speaking out, others were finally joining in."

He added, "The true July Movement started around July 14 or 15, when Chhatra League attacked students at Dhaka University. I was probably one of the first to post in support of the students. News channels picked it up, and more people became aware of the social injustice happening in the country."

and only call for justice. But we disagreed. We stood fully with the students."

A z m e r i Haque Badhan shared, "We each donated Tk 500 to make banners and placards. The youth formed a group of 1,500 overnight, all united under the nine-point demand. But some senior artistes were hesitant to endorse the list publicly. All materials—mic, placards, banners—were distributed. I kept some in my car. That night, I couldn't sleep. I was worried about my father's car. I was worried about my daughter and my parents. But once I gave my speech at the event, all my fears disappeared."

On July 31, they issued a signed statement. MP Ferdous wanted to attend, but was asked not to, since his presence could have resulted in conflict. Later, he and others 'protested' in front of BTV.

On August 1, about 50 to 60 people gathered near Farmgate. Police barred them from the Sangsab Bhaban premises, so they chose Farmgate.

"*The Drissho Madhyam* team mostly included directors, assistant directors, and new filmmakers, and not stars," said Ashfaque. "At the same time, BTV held a 'star-studded' protest. But intent matters. Our protest had more spirit."

"Despite heavy rain, we tried to return to Sangsab Bhaban. People were scared. But unity made fear bearable. We stayed in Farmgate until noon. Each protest sparked a counter protest. When we were at Farmgate, a rival group gathered near Krishi Bhaban. We even heard they

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BAKAR BAKUL

especially women.

"People called me an agent. They said I supported BNP or Nur or Hasina, just because of old photos. They cursed me. When I posted, 70 percent of accounts reacted with 'Haha'. These weren't random. They were organised trolls," said Badhan. "Some threatened to kill me. But I never turned off the comments. I've been questioning this society for years. I've built immunity."

Neel Hurerzahan, who had previously worked in government programmes, also faced online abuse.

"I began protesting online while I was abroad. When the internet was shut down, I was shocked. I returned to Bangladesh around July 23 or 24, and joined the protest. I was on the frontlines. The police didn't threaten us directly, but the bullying online was severe. Awami League activists distorted and spread doctored photos of mine."

The nation hoped that after the July protest, Bangladesh would move toward a new era—a united country free from repression. But when corruption is so deeply embedded in every layer of the state, is it truly possible to turn things around in just a year? Is it fair to expect people who were never part of the political system to fix its deepest flaws?

"After the July Uprising, public expectations were very high," said Ashfaque Nipun. "The spirit was so pure, no one cared about your religion, hometown, or class. Everyone stood together."

"But as someone who has studied political movements globally, from the French Revolution to Iran to post-WWII Germany, I knew the real work starts after the revolution. We need to work united to bring changes in our country," he said.

Badhan echoed a similar thought.

"Yes, of course, it will take some time. Maybe eventually they'll be able to do



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**Drissho Madhyam Shilpi Shomaj protests at Farmgate's intersection.**

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

**Kormi.** Groups like Prachyanat, BotTala, Tarua, Opera, Desh Natok, Anushwar, Aranyak Natyadal, and Theatre 52 stood in solidarity. People from other cultural fields also joined. They were searching for a platform to express dissent, and the human chain gave them that space.

Writers and activists like Rahnuma Ahmed, Samina Luthifa, Saydia Gulrukha, Kazi Toufiqul Islam Emon, Mohammad Ali Haider, Faiz Jahir, Kazi Roksana, and Bakar Bakul were present. Filmmaker Shankha Dasgupta and actors including Imtiaz Barshon, Mostafa Monwar, Safa Kabir, Shohel Mondol, and Khairul Basar also participated.

"We were following everything closely," said theatre activist Bakar Bakul. "When the attacks started, we posted online. But once bullets were fired, we knew that Facebook wasn't enough. We had to act. People from different groups came together through WhatsApp and decided to protest."

"It was Sajid Sabir from Opera who first proposed a call for protest against these killings," added theatre activist Kazi Roksana Ruma. "We all knew silence in the face of murder was no longer an option. As artistes, we had a responsibility to speak up."

A poster with Abu Sayed's image was made, calling for a protest at Sangsab Bhaban on July 19. But on the evening of July 18, the government imposed a nationwide internet blackout. News of the event spread through word of mouth.

"From the 17th, I couldn't stay home anymore," recalled Safa Kabir. "Students were being killed, and the silence became unbearable." She continued, "I went to the Sangsab Bhaban with friends. Around 7:30am, we saw a burnt car in Gulshan—it was terrifying. As someone who suffers from anxiety and panic attacks, it was overwhelming."

Despite the fear, they made it to the protest site. "We saw artistes there, even senior ones. A street play reenacting Abu Sayed's killing was performed—I had goosebumps," said Safa.

The police tried removing them,

We were looking for a mic. A member had one, and changed its battery in public. That drew suspicion from Awami League men in front of Aarong," she said.

"They dragged him behind the building and beat him. I got a call—he was bleeding. We ran to him. They finally let him go, realising they had crossed a line. His mouth and nose were blood-soaked—he had been kicked and punched. A doctor helped us over the phone. His neck stayed sore for days."

Actor Shohel Mondol, who joined both *Bikkhubdho Theatre Kormi* and *Drissho Madhyam Shilpi Shomaj*, said, "When an establishment turns its guns on students, staying silent and safe



**On July 31st, Drissho Madhyam Shilpi Shomaj mobilised to create banners.**

at home is not the right response. Even if I weren't an artiste, I would still have joined the protest. That day in front of Sangsab Bhaban, we saw groups aligned with the former government gathered near Aarong, armed with sticks. Despite the fear, we found strength as human beings. Theatre colleagues, artistes, and people from across the creative community stood united—to raise our voices against injustice."

Throughout its 15-year regime, the fascist government imposed inhumane laws such as the Digital Security Act. It led to massive breaches of freedom of speech, and people were falsely jailed for speaking out.

Director Ashfaque Nipun was known



**Ashfaque Nipun speaks against the regime on August 1.**

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



**From Tarua Theatre's re-enactment of the murder of Abu Sayed.**

PHOTO: COURTESY

A new wave of protests emerged. *Drissho Madhyam Shilpi Shomaj* was formed by artistes uniting against injustice. Filmmaker Akram Khan Asaduzzaman Asad's speech went viral. He spoke clearly and directly about the atrocities.

"When I called for action, many joined. It was not just me. We felt the urge to speak out," said Akram. "We decided to support the students' nine-point demands."

The collective included Akram Khan, Amirul Rajiv, Taslima Akhter, Jaheen Faruque Amin, Dhrubo Hasan, Munem Wasif, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Reetu Sattar, Probar Ripon, Tanvir Ahsan, Yasir Al Haq, Amitabh Reza Chowdhury, Piplu R Khan, Krishnendu Chattopadhyay, Sakib Fahad, Tamim Noor, Naim Ul Hasan, Hasan Aether, Elita Karim, Edila Farid Turin, Kabir Ahmed, Tanha Zafreen, and Kazi Roksana Ruma.

On July 30, a private meeting was held with around 20 participants, including members of *Get Up, Stand Up*. Jaheen Faruque Amin said, "We decided not just to form a human chain. We drafted a press briefing. There was debate—some artistes with ties to the ruling party wanted us to be less confrontational and wanted to avoid nine-point demands

were heading our way," said Shohel Mondol.

During the protest, actor Asaduzzaman Asad's speech went viral. He spoke clearly and directly about the atrocities.

"When I was heading to Sangsab Bhaban, a police officer stopped me and said I couldn't go that way, because Jamaat had been banned that day. I told him I was a citizen and had every right to walk. He tried to stop me again. Things escalated. Reporters filmed it. Within 15 minutes, the footage went viral. I was being interviewed by every outlet."

"So many celebrities had 'protested', but few had said anything of consequence. I was furious. I thought, this can't go on. If something must be said, it must be said now, without fear."

Raka Noshin, a protester and filmmaker, said, "They were killing so many students, even though protesting is a human duty. But after the movement, I saw women's voices being sidelined. Girls from Rokeya Hall made headlines, yet the focus remained on men."

"Some women may have stayed quiet due to threats. So, I decided to make a documentary called *July Women* to highlight women's impact in the uprising."

Awami League lobbyists used social media to harass and troll many artistes,

better," she said.

"These new leaders are not traditional politicians. Political leaders have experience. They've been doing this since they were young. They know how to survive and how to operate systems like these," she explained.

For Bakar Bakul, the issue is even broader than governance or leadership. "Whether it's Awami League, BNP, or Jamaat, people seem to have forgotten that beyond party politics, human rights exist," he said.

He continued, "The state cannot kill its own citizens. But years of political conditioning have blinded many of our so-called intellectuals. They're stuck in a form of intellectual servitude."

Rooted in July, exhibitions and special theatre performances are being staged to honour the movement. *Drissho Madhyam Shilpi Shomaj* will hold a day-long programme tomorrow, titled *Koita Kapano 36 Din*—looking to ensure that people remember the brutality of the former government and remain aware of the ongoing extortion, violence, and harassment faced by civilians today. In the face of such challenges, we can only hope that people will unite once more, rise against corruption, and prove that we will not allow our country to be dragged backwards again."

OFF-SCREEN TO FACE BULLETS

# How artistes flamed cultural defiance in July



and only call for justice. But we disagreed. We stood fully with the students."

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## Army acted to save lives

FROM PAGE 16

"We didn't protect any particular group or individuals. In Gopalganj, just like in previous operations, we responded to life-threatening situations. Life comes before political identity ... Be it Gopalganj or elsewhere, our response has been uniform. If anyone's life is in danger, we will not stand idle, regardless of which party they belong to."

About use of lethal force, Col Shafiqul Islam, colonel staff at the MOD, said, "It was an unexpected situation. It wasn't just brickbats being thrown -- cocktails [improvised explosives] were also hurled. There was a threat to lives. In such a situation, law enforcement personnel were compelled to use force in self-defence. No lethal weapons were used there."

Regarding security being provided to leaders of the National Citizen Party, he said, "We did what we have always done -- protect civilians under threat."

On July 16, day-long clashes broke out between Awami League activists and law enforcers, following an attack on the venue of a pre-scheduled NCP rally in Gopalganj Poura Park. Four people died from gunshot wounds during the incident.

Another person with bullet injuries later died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 18.

At least 15 cases were filed against 16,212 people in this regard. So far, 336 individuals have been arrested across the district.

**CHT SITUATION**  
At the briefing, Col Shafiqul said that between July 3-31, at least 10 firearms, nine rounds of ammunition, gunpowder, walkie-talkies, and other items were recovered from different locations in the Chattogram Hill Tracts.

"Seven were arrested, including three UPDF members and two Yaba smugglers. A significant recovery operation on July 29 in Bagailhat uncovered SMGs, rifles, pistols, and walkie-talkies."

On July 30, an abandoned training camp of the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) in Bandarban's Ruma upazila was destroyed.

He added that armed clashes continue between the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS) over territorial control, with grenade explosions reported.

In this regard, Brig Gen Nazim said criminal activities in the CHT have increased. "The regional political parties in the CHT, groups we refer to as UPDF, JSS, and similar outfits, have always sought to maintain their control through acts of extortion and kidnapping. They continuously strive to expand their sphere of influence, and in doing so, clashes and gunfights occur often."

"The army is working on this issue and is making every effort to keep the situation under control. It's important to note that the army is not the sole stakeholder in the Chattogram Hill Tracts; the civilian administration and the police are also integral parts of this effort."

He added, "If everyone works in a coordinated manner, I am confident that we can transform the situation to a more secure environment, which is absolutely necessary."

### KNF NOT GAINING GROUND

Asked if KNF is receiving arms from the Arakan Army, Brig Gen Nazim said, "Yes, the Kuki-Chin National Front is receiving weapons, possibly from the Arakan Army, but that is not surprising given the shared ethnic and ideological links. However, it isn't true that they are gaining dominance in the region."

"Since their emergence, KNF's operational capability has significantly declined. Though eight army personnel were killed in earlier confrontations, we haven't seen such casualties in recent months."

He added, "Instead, many KNF operatives have been killed, arrested,

and their weapons seized. Several of their bases and training camps have also been dismantled."

Nazim noted that army operations are ongoing and gaining success.

About operational procedures in the CHT, Shafiqul said, "We're effectively operating from our existing camps. We establish Temporary Operating Bases wherever needed. There's no operational deficiency."

### COUNTRYWIDE OPERATIONS

Col Shafiqul Islam began the press briefing with a summary of the army's operations in recent weeks, including anti-crime, anti-drug, and anti-smuggling drives across the country.

From August 2024 till yesterday, the army recovered 9,729 of 12,190 missing firearms and 287,000 rounds of ammunition from across the country. In the past four weeks alone, 37 illegal firearms and 179 rounds of ammunition were seized, he said.

Meanwhile, 16,459 people were arrested since August last year, including 813 in the last four weeks. Arrestees include listed criminals, members of juvenile gangs, drug dealers, and extortionists.

"The army has arrested 5,576 individuals for drug-related crimes since last August, including 55 in the past month from areas like Rampura, Mohammadpur, and Uttara in Dhaka, and Faridpur," he said.

Responding to a query about law and order, he said, "All law enforcement agencies must work together to maintain law and order. And those who need to take the lead must become more effective."

"If you refer to us in particular, the army has been granted magistracy powers, but the clauses under which we are empowered allow us only to conduct searches and arrest suspects. Once we arrest someone and hand them over for judicial processing, we don't have any further role to play."

from security agencies, with evidence reportedly destroyed or withheld.

Several senior officials fled abroad after the interim government took office.

The New York-based rights group urged the interim government to end arbitrary detention, prosecute abusive security personnel and disband Rab.

The HRW called on foreign governments and the UN to support the interim government through targeted sanctions on alleged abusers.

The other governments should prosecute individuals allegedly implicated in serious abuses who have left Bangladesh, including under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

And they should make clear that Bangladeshi participation in UN peacekeeping operations is contingent on ensuring accountability for grave violations of international human rights law, HRW said.

"No one is in any doubt that Yunus's interim government faces enormous challenges, but more needs to be done now to ensure a real and lasting change in Bangladesh's human rights situation," Ganguly said.

"As in most other cases, the authorities have not filed charges.

Detainees in other high-profile political cases have also cited baseless grounds for arrest and accused the authorities of denying them medical care and bail.

The first high-profile trial, involving

Hasina and two others, is set for August 3, but thousands remain in jail without evidence or trial dates.

Many cite arbitrary arrest, denial of bail and lack of medical care, HRW said.

A commission formed in August 2024 to probe enforced disappearances during Hasina's rule has received 1,800 complaints, but faces resistance

from security agencies, with evidence reportedly destroyed or withheld.

Several senior officials fled abroad after the interim government took office.

The New York-based rights group urged the interim government to end arbitrary detention, prosecute abusive security personnel and disband Rab.

The HRW called on foreign governments and the UN to support the interim government through targeted sanctions on alleged abusers.

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arbitrary detention, prosecute

## Political extortion, thuggery must stop

Parties must show zero tolerance to crime within their ranks

In recent months, we have watched with increasing alarm as reports of extortion by political activists have continued to emerge from across the country. What makes this more unsettling is the boldness with which such crimes are being carried out under a supposedly neutral interim government. If politically affiliated criminals feel this audacious now, one shudders to think what they might do if their party assumes full or even partial control of the state post-elections.

Part of the reason for this situation is a still lingering sense of a "security vacuum"—a perception that security forces remain either overstretched or hesitant to act decisively—despite efforts by the government. This has led to a freefall where not only politically connected individuals but also unaffiliated, opportunist, or all-weather criminal groups feel like they can get away with it. According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police, at least 70 extortion cases were filed every month in the capital during the first half of 2025. In the same period, police also recorded many cases involving robbery, mugging, theft, rape, murder, etc. While official figures are often unreliable, it is safe to say the law-and-order situation has been similarly volatile in many other parts of the country as well.

However, the threat of political extortion and thuggery has been of particular concern after reports frequently implicated grassroots members of major parties. Take, for example, the gruesome murder of scrap metal trader Lal Chand alias Sohag in Dhaka's Mitford area by men linked with BNP. Or the case of the group led by Abdur Razzaq Riyad, a leader of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD), who extorted an ex-MP's family and pressured another ex-MP into signing cheques worth crores. Or take the leaked list of 123 alleged extortionists that has caused a stir in Rajshahi recently. These alleged criminals—among whom 44 were tied to BNP, 25 to Awami League, and six to Jamaat—were accused of everything from land grabbing and criminal intimidation to extorting money from coaching centres, development projects, and even vendors, showing just how deeply entrenched the culture of political extortion has become.

Political parties, especially BNP, which hopes to form the next government following the upcoming elections, must ask themselves why their disciplinary measures, including expelling those involved in crimes or issuing public denunciations, are proving ineffective in controlling their errant members. They must also address concerns over how many criminals, previously linked with the ousted regime, have managed to rebrand themselves under the patronage of certain parties. Clearly, signalling tough posturing or symbolic distancing is no longer enough. What we need are meaningful steps, both from the parties and the government, to ensure that political crimes are not tolerated under any circumstance.

## Time running out for Palestinians

International community must act to end Israel's genocidal campaign

We are appalled by Israel's relentless bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of at least another 34 Palestinians on July 31. A day earlier, according to Al Jazeera, Israeli attacks killed at least 71 Palestinians who were attempting to access humanitarian assistance amid a deepening hunger crisis in Gaza. Among them, at least 51 people were killed (and more than 648 others wounded) in a single strike while they were heading towards the Zikim crossing point to receive aid from trucks entering northern Gaza. Similarly, in southern Gaza, another 20 aid seekers were killed near the Morag Corridor, close to Khan Younis.

On the one hand, Israel is severely restricting the entry of aid into Gaza to the bare minimum, deliberately starving the Palestinian population. On the other hand, it has consistently targeted those seeking aid and turned distribution sites into dystopian killing fields. Starving and desperate Palestinians have described this brutality as Israel's version of "The Hunger Games" against them. As a result, Gaza is now experiencing "the worst-case scenario of famine," according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), with children being the worst affected. The IPC reports that more than 20,000 children have been admitted to Gaza's hospitals with acute malnutrition since April.

The silence and support Israel has received from its Western allies—even in the face of such war crimes—has been sickening. However, the fact that the majority of the world, including millions of ordinary Western citizens, has raised their voices against Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza may still hold the key to halting this massacre. The governments of France, the UK, and Canada—all of which have blindly supported Israel for decades—have, for example, recently been forced to put some pressure on Israel. France has issued a collective appeal with 14 other countries, expressing their desire to recognise the State of Palestine. British and Canadian prime ministers have made similar announcements, stating that their countries will formally recognise it in September unless Israel takes various "substantive steps", including agreeing to a ceasefire in Gaza.

Although extremely late in coming, these are indeed some positive signs. The international community must build on this momentum now to force Israel to end its genocidal campaign, before it is too late. Conscientious citizens and governments around the world must also use this opportunity to push all relevant parties—particularly the US—to acknowledge that the only way to resolve this crisis is through a two-state solution, which requires the recognition of the State of Palestine.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Oxygen discovered

On this day in 1774, English chemist Joseph Priestley discovered oxygen by isolating it in its gaseous state.



# Kudos for consensus in some vital areas

Victors in the next election must implement them



### THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam  
is the editor and publisher of  
The Daily Star.

### MAHFUZ ANAM

There is enough good news coming out of the National Consensus Commission's (NCC) deliberations to feel cheerful after months of frustrations. As of 7:30pm on Thursday, consensus has been achieved in 16 areas, some of which are extremely significant. Some parties gave the note of dissent, but did not oppose. After 44 meetings with 32 political parties and alliances from March 20 to May 19 and 23 meetings with 30 political parties from June 2 to July 31, the NCC has been able to produce some significant results which, if the political parties don't shift from their commitment, could change the course of our political history and culture.

One of the most significant consensus deals is the approval of the formation of the upper house in parliament through proportional votes received by parties during the election of the lower house. This is likely to bring about a qualitative change in the functioning of our parliament and in our political debates, hopefully moving towards sobriety and in-depth analysis, replacing unabashed sycophancy and cheap rhetoric.

The 10-year time limit for an individual serving as the prime minister is a sign of true negotiation and genuine "give and take" among the political parties. Reaching a consensus on this point is something totally contrary to our political culture, especially as it affects the future of the de-facto party chief. Though the BNP accepted it with a note of dissent, it was a mature concession and hence deserves our praise.

The consensus reached on the election of the president is another milestone achieved by the NCC. Over the years, the election of the president, which in reality was selection by the prime minister, became more and more arbitrary and sometimes whimsical, epitomised by the election of President Mohammed Shahabuddin who said on TV that he did not know as he was never even asked. We also recall how President Baddruddoza Chowdhury was forced to resign from his office because the prime minister had wished so. So we desperately need to institutionalise the election to the position of the head of the state. As we have agreed to curtail the prime

**A crucial issue on which consensus has been reached is setting up a permanent independent commission for the police, that vital state institution whose gross misuse by Sheikh Hasina led to at least 1,400 deaths and thousands more injured. Police is one of the most important institutions of the state, whose quality service has the potential to change the lives of ordinary people, but whose malfunctioning on many fronts has made it a threat to public safety and peace.**

minister's power and share some of it with the president, his or her election must be a transparent and morally acceptable process.

The other issues on which a consensus has been reached include: a change in Article 70 of the constitution to allow MPs to vote freely except on no-confidence motion and finance bills; providing for the opposition to get the position of the chair of four important standing committees; demarcation of constituencies; guidelines for the president's pardoning power; decentralising the High Court; process of appointment of the chief justice; process of selecting the Election Commission to be incorporated in the constitution; setting up an independent police

commission to create a people-friendly and accountable police force; separating the prime minister's and party chief's positions, which cannot be held by the same person; and agreeing to appoint the deputy speaker from the opposition. The parties that disagreed gave a note of dissent.

However, a crucial issue on which consensus has been reached is setting up a permanent independent commission for the police, that vital state institution whose gross misuse by Sheikh Hasina led to at least 1,400 deaths and thousands more injured. Police is one of the most important institutions of the state, whose quality service has the potential to change the lives of ordinary people, but whose malfunctioning on many fronts has made it a threat to public safety and peace.

Bringing the police under an independent commission will help prevent its abuse by the political powerholders of the day. Will our political parties respect this decision after winning the next election? We have deep-seated reasons to feel uncertain. Resistance against constituting an independent police

of the country's voters had practically no representation in formulating our reforms. The Women's Affairs Reform Commission was perhaps the most vilified of the reform commissions, and its recommendations have all but been ignored. If the coming election marks the beginning of our new democratic journey, then it will begin with very few voices of women having

**A topic that did not receive sufficient attention during the reform dialogues is the autocratic nature of the inner workings of our political parties, the concentration of power in the hands of the party head, and the arbitrariness and lack of accountability in using that power, which make our political parties totally undemocratic.**

been heard.

There are two ironies here. First, during the last three decades of our politics, we had an unbroken rule by two powerful women leaders: Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. Yet, women's rights remain unrealised and their contribution fundamentally unrecognised in the country.

The second irony is that Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, whose pioneering microcredit system won global fame and recognition and

diabolical proportions during the Sheikh Hasina regime.

To restore the power balance in our constitution, we need to trim the prime minister's power. That is why the demand that the same person cannot be allowed to hold both the posts of the head of government and head of the ruling party is so important. This power must be split. Otherwise, dominance of the executive branch over the legislative will never cease and the division of power and the practice of checks and balances will never come into play in Bangladesh.

The executive branch's hold over the judiciary, exercised through the law ministry over the years, has crippled the latter. And instead of independent judges, we have ended up with gutless appeasers. The biggest example of this is the way former Chief Justice SK Sinha was literally driven out—first from the court, then from the country.

Thus, we see the prospective ruling party, namely the BNP, trying its best to maintain as many of the old ways as possible so that the executive branch does not have to face accountability from the judiciary as the present constitution envisages.

The other serious issue is that of political culture. Whatever constitutional, structural, procedural and legal reforms we institute, if they are not accompanied with a change in our political culture and of our mindset, then the prospect of positive change—towards democracy, good governance, accountability, transparency, etc.—will be very dim indeed.

A topic that did not receive sufficient attention during the reform dialogues is the autocratic nature of



The National Consensus Commission has been able to produce some significant results by bringing all the political parties to the table to discuss reform proposals.

SOURCE: PROTHOM ALO

commission may come from the home ministry's secretariat as bureaucrats are always averse to losing power. But an independent commission, which will be forward-looking, transparent and accountable to the public and parliament, will have a huge positive impact on our police force as well as the general public.

The disappointing part, however, is the consensus reached on women's seats. The provision of 50 reserved seats remains as before, with a new agreement that five percent of the candidates of a party's total candidates nominated to contest an election will have to be women.

In real terms, it means nothing. Without the provision that there will be specific women-only constituencies, women candidates will have to fight with male contestants, which traditionally results in the victory of the latter. In the overall seat calculation, knowing the likely results, all political parties, especially the big ones, will choose female candidates where they are the weakest.

This is the biggest injustice that is being done against women in spite of their unquestioned sacrifice and massive and effective participation in the July mass uprising. In this new Bangladesh—"Notun Bondobosto"—there is nothing new for women's representation in parliament. It must also be noted that all political party representatives in the NCC's dialogue sessions were men, and the NCC itself had no women members. There were one or two women who participated, but only for a while. So about 50 percent

the Nobel Peace Prize for him and his institution, and who was almost completely focused on women's real empowerment, now heads a reform process that has so little participation of women and even fewer prospective results for them.

In our view, there are two fundamental reasons why consensus could not be reached on some vital points: a) desire to maintain unbridled power for the executive branch over the legislative and judiciary; and b) the nature and history of our political culture.

From the very start, in 1972, of the three branches of the government, the executive branch always enjoyed more power.

It started with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose overwhelming stature dwarfed every other body regardless of how powerful they constitutionally were. From the president, speaker of the House, chief justice and chief whip, to every other person of position, however powerful, naturally revered Sheikh Mujib and never asserted themselves even when they had the legal and moral grounds to do so.

The executive branch stood above the other two. Then with the military intervention, the concentration of power in the hands of the executive branch continued throughout the tenure of Gen Ziaur Rahman and Gen HM Ershad. When democracy was restored, the emergence of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina as bigger-than-life figures carried on the tradition of powerful leaders, leading the executive branch and minimising the role and importance of the two others.

Needless to say, that trend took

the inner workings of our political parties, the concentration of power in the hands of the party head, and the arbitrariness and lack of accountability in using that power, which make our political parties totally undemocratic. Whatever may be said in the party constitution, in reality, total power is always exercised by the party chief.

The constitution of the Awami League had many decision-making tiers, but lower-tier leaders would meet and "decide" to "request" the party chief to make all decisions, especially selecting people for virtually all posts which were supposed to be elected.

The BNP's constitution gives all powers to the chief without any restraint, including the power to dismiss all committees at all levels, even if elected as per party rules.

The question arises: how can undemocratic institutions implement democracy when in power? Therefore, the political party culture has to change, and their internal operations must become more democratic and accountable. Lower-tier party leaders must have a voice and power.

If our political culture is to change, the functioning of our political parties must change dramatically. We celebrate the success of the National Consensus Commission and congratulate them for their tireless efforts, perseverance and capacity to manage the whole dialogue process. We also congratulate the political parties for reaching consensus on vital issues but strong doubts remain as to how they will behave once elected to power. We have witnessed, over and over again, a political party's transformation once in power.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Oxygen discovered

On this day in 1774, English chemist Joseph Priestley discovered oxygen by isolating it in its gaseous state.



## A few questions over the Dhaka jet crash



WINKERS AWEIGH!

Tanim Ahmed  
is digital editor at The Daily Star.

TANIM AHMED

The recent fighter jet crash at a school campus in Dhaka has led many to question the wisdom of running an airbase in Kurmitola and conducting training flights from there. This is an issue seldom broached in public media, let alone being discussed or debated.

The Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) chief explained why the airbase was necessary during an emotional address a day after the crash, standing on the tarmac of the BAF Base Bir Uttam AK Khandker adjacent to Dhaka's main airport. Then two senior officers, both one-star generals, explained the necessity of an airbase in Dhaka during a press conference on July 28.

On July 27, the government formed a nine-member probe commission to examine the cause of the tragic crash, assess damage and casualties, and determine the responsibilities. The commission has been told to submit a report within four weeks.

The remarks and the formation of the probe commission raise questions that have not so far been answered—perhaps because they have not been asked in the first place.

Let us begin with the airbase and flight training. Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan said, "This is our main base... this is our most important space. All the VIPs live here, our structures are here, and the parliament is here. There is a matter of protection. So, it's very important to have a strong air base here."

His remarks boil down to the air force's overriding priority of protecting the skies over Dhaka. Air Commodore Shahidul Islam, director of air operations, echoed his chief on July 28. He also pointed out that Dhaka was not alone in having an airbase in the capital. This was common around the world, he said. The one-star general explained that flight training was part and parcel of an airbase.

A cursory look at neighbouring countries



Firefighters work to remove the wreckage from the campus of Milestone School and College in Uttara, Dhaka after a Bangladesh Air Force training aircraft crashed into one of the school buildings on July 21, 2025.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

and commonly referred capitals finds that airbases, or even airports, typically lie outside city limits, unlike Kurmitola which is very much within Dhaka city, just over eight kilometres away from parliament.

For instance, the Hindon air force station is about 16 kilometres from the Indian Lok Sabha but outside Delhi city limits. However, Hindon is used for VIP movement and not for fighter aircraft operation. From that respect, the nearest airbase (with fighter aircraft activity) is Ambala, home to the Rafales, about 200 kilometres away in Haryana.

The closest air base to Islamabad is Nur

Khan, which is in the neighbouring city of Rawalpindi almost 13 kilometres away from the Pakistan parliament. The Katunayake airbase in Sri Lanka is integrated with the Bandaranaike International Airport, very much outside Colombo city limits, about 30 kilometres from the parliament building.

The air force base at Andrews is in Maryland, the adjacent state to Washington DC, about 15 kilometres away from the US Congress.

the speed of sound at about 2,465 kilometres per hour. Presuming that it flies at a modest speed of 1,200 kilometres per hour, it would be barely two minutes' flying time away from a base in Arial Beel, for instance, or seven minutes away from the base in Jashore.

It has rightly been pointed out that the airbase was built at a time when there was no such dense settlement in Uttara. The airport was well outside the city limits. But Dhaka has

essential for our sovereignty. Do not weaken this pillar with rumours." Exploring the possibilities of an alternative airbase is not an attempt to weaken it at all. But when responsible air force officers make sweeping statements, it does eat away at the credibility of this integral part of our armed forces and weakens its very foundations.

The decision to run an airbase or conduct training out of Kurmitola, however, rests with the defence forces. It would be encouraging to see relevant experts putting their heads together to re-evaluate their operational and strategic priorities under the current context.

As for the second issue of a probe commission formed by the government, the official notification says that the nine-member body will examine the cause of the crash, assess damage and casualties, and determine the responsibilities.

This commission headed by former Secretary AKM Zafar Ullah Khan also includes a retired air vice marshal, three additional secretaries from three ministries, Dhaka divisional commissioner, an urban planner, and a professor of mechanical engineering from BUET. There have been several accidents involving the F7, but the commission does not include anyone from the manufacturer. One recalls that India included Boeing officials when probing the recent crash in Ahmedabad.

Noting that there are no aviation experts, no aeronautical engineers or anyone with technical knowhow, how is this committee to examine the reason for the crash? Presumably, another investigation by the air force will be delving into that, and the findings may be kept away from the public for security reasons lest they compromise classified information. That is quite understandable. But it should then be clarified by the government. Other than this investigation, there has been no visible initiatives that might lead to some sort of corrective measures, a point of chronic weakness for the interim government.

The jet crash has cost lives. Lives of children who were in school. It would not be unreasonable to expect that all quarters approach this matter with due sincerity and earnestness. Anything less would be an insult to the memory of those we lost.

But so far, it bears all the features of yet another half-baked initiative meant merely to placate, with no real intention to resolve.

## Why the DUCSU constitution needs reform



Mollik Wasi Uddin Tam  
is office secretary of Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chatra Dal's  
Dhaka University unit.

MOLLIK WASI UDDIN TAM

The Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) and hall union elections have long been symbolic of student activism and democratic values within Dhaka University. However, in its 102-year history, DUCSU elections have been held 37 times in total; since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, it has been held seven times between 1972 and 2019, the last one coming after nearly three decades of hiatus. This stark irregularity stands in contrast to the university's legacy as a cradle of democratic movements.

A key reason for this lies in the constitution of DUCSU and hall unions, as well as the Dhaka University Order of 1973, which collectively failed to enforce a mandatory schedule for regular elections. Article 8(e) of the DUCSU constitution gives the vice-chancellor, who also serves as the ex-officio DUCSU president, exclusive power to announce election dates. Thus, the absence of elections, though undemocratic, does not technically violate the constitution.

Moreover, Article 6(c) states that elected representatives will hold office for one year, with a 90-day extension if necessary. After that, their positions are vacated, regardless of whether a new election is held. This legal void enables prolonged inaction, exposing how the DUCSU constitution permits administrative discretion over democratic rights.

According to Article 19 of the Dhaka University Order, 1973, there are 10 governing authorities at DU, including the Senate,

Syndicate, Academic Council, and Finance Committee, but students are allowed representation only in the Senate. Even this participation is limited. Article 20(0)(L) of the same order allows five DUCSU-nominated members to join the Senate, but in practice, these are appointed at the VC's discretion, with no accountability to the student body.

This was starkly evident in 2019 when, after the controversial DUCSU polls, four out of the five Senate nominees were affiliated with the then ruling party's student wing: two unelected and two elected through the widely disputed results. Such unilateral selections defeat the purpose of student representation and reinforce partisan control over student affairs.

Taken together, the above-mentioned articles of the DUCSU constitution and the Dhaka University Order don't necessarily empower the students for decision-making, leaving the power in the VC's hands to appoint and dismiss DUCSU representatives instead.

This concentration of power echoes colonial hierarchies, with the students relegated to a powerless status. While students have historically taken the lead in confronting national crises—from the Language Movement to recent democratic uprisings—DU administrators and teachers often shirk accountability, especially post-crisis. The silence of the DU authorities following the crackdown on students during the July uprising last year, and their complicity

in the government-sponsored violence against protesters, only deepened this credibility crisis.

Similarly, the teachers-turned-administrators overseeing DUCSU reforms have failed to champion the students' rights. Instead of advancing democratic participation, their proposed reforms entrench the existing power dynamics and neglect structural defects, enabling further decay of DUCSU's

administrators, and student leaders, with the VC serving as the chief adviser. This council could guide the union, propose constitutional reforms to the Syndicate, and supervise emergency elections. Such a model would balance oversight with student autonomy and promote inclusive governance.

**Reform before election**

Some voices within the university



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

institutional integrity.

The solution lies in introducing amendments to the very structure that permits undemocratic practices. One of the most pressing demands from student organisations is the removal of administrators from executive roles in student unions. Specifically: i) the VC should no longer serve as the DUCSU president; ii) hall provosts should not be the presidents of hall unions; and iii) treasurers should be elected, not appointed.

Instead, student representatives should be elected directly to all DUCSU and hall union posts. A proposed model includes an advisory council comprising teachers, alumni,

administration as well as certain student circles argue for holding elections first and pursuing reforms later. However, Article 16 of the DUCSU constitution gives the Syndicate the sole authority to amend the constitution. It contains no provision for soliciting suggestions from elected student bodies. Moreover, according to Article 23 of the Dhaka University Order, students are excluded from the Syndicate altogether. Hence, unless these provisions are amended, elected DUCSU members will remain powerless to initiate meaningful changes.

Claims that "essential reforms have already been made" are, in my opinion, either ignorant

or deceptive. The administration has not enacted the foundational reforms required to democratise DUCSU. Therefore, the insistence on rushing into elections without reform only serves to reinforce undemocratic control.

Reforming the constitution of hall unions, often overlooked, is equally vital. Residential halls are at the heart of student life, yet their governing structures remain deeply colonial. Articles 6 through 9 of the hall union constitution retain undemocratic provisions that curtail student agency. Additionally, there is a lack of mechanism to address critical issues such as student health, food quality, dormitory safety, and administrative abuse.

If unaddressed, hall unions will continue to function merely as event organisers (per Article 2) rather than student welfare bodies. The constitution must include provisions for new secretarial posts dedicated to health, food, environment, and human rights to make hall unions truly responsive to students' needs.

To restore DUCSU as a platform for student empowerment and democratic engagement, comprehensive constitutional reforms are imperative. The current circumstance, under the interim administration with relatively neutral oversight, presents a rare opportunity. The DU Syndicate must undertake these reforms consulting with all stakeholders—including the students—to redesign DUCSU as a functioning student parliament.

Even though the schedule for the next DUCSU election has been announced recently, the maladministration and ill-driven actions taken regarding the reform and re-organising of DUCSU and the hall unions will surely create an uncertain environment on the campus. Fear remains that such a situation will hinder the re-establishment of democratic process in DU's student community.

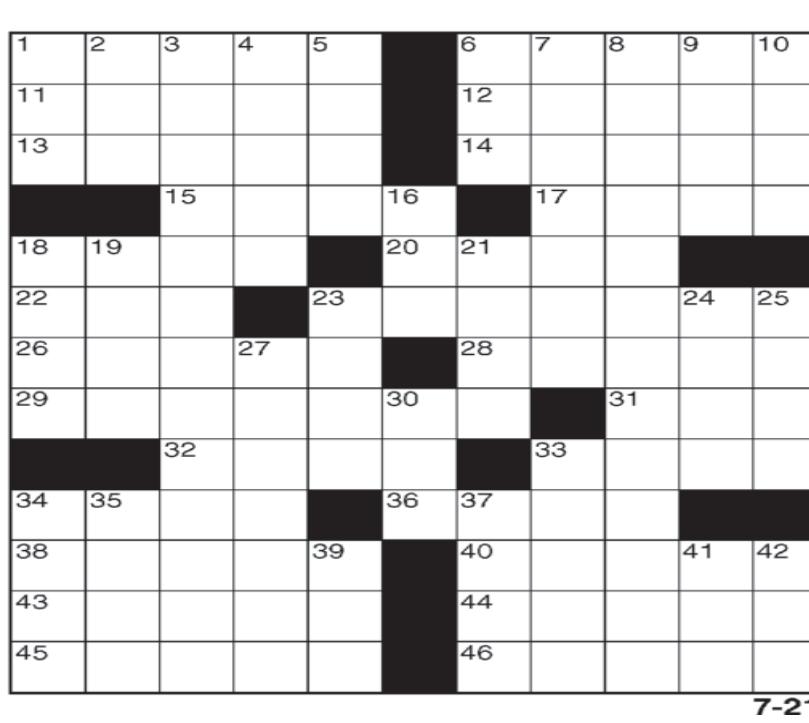
CROSSWORD  
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

- 1 Talked madly
- 2 Play parts
- 3 Spiny plants
- 4 Small stream
- 5 Printer's supplies
- 6 Sentry's cry
- 7 Canyon sound
- 8 Wing
- 9 Breathes out
- 10 Yoga position
- 11 Depiction
- 12 Start, as an engine
- 13 Load unit
- 14 Tablet downloads
- 15 Final, e.g.
- 16 First person
- 17 Kinsey subject
- 18 Require defrosting
- 19 Visitor from afar
- 20 Nemo's creator
- 21 Do research
- 22 Useful skill
- 23 Tombstone name
- 24 They may clash
- 25 Posted
- 26 Triton circles it
- 27 Mex. neighbor
- 28 Stories
- 29 High-maintenance sort
- 30 Good pair
- 31 Fare carrier
- 32 Isaac's father
- 33 Kid's quaff
- 34 Horn sound

**DOWN**

- 10 Bothers
- 11 Kinsey subject
- 12 Crumbling car
- 13 In addition
- 14 China flaw
- 15 Tombstone name
- 16 They may clash
- 17 Mex. neighbor
- 18 Triton circles it
- 19 High-maintenance sort
- 20 Farce
- 21 Arp's art
- 22 Sulky state
- 23 Second person
- 24 Modern



## MONDAY'S ANSWERS

A	R	C	S		S	L	A	T	E	S
F	O	O	T		C	I	C	E	R	O
A	M	M	O		A	V	I	A	R	Y
R	E	M	A		I	N	E	D		
P	A	N	S	Y	S	C	O	L	D	
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# MACHU PICCHU

## Whispers of the Incas



MOHUA ROUF

I was in the ancient city of Cuzco, Peru -- once the capital of the Inca Empire -- standing at the train station with the Andes rising like ancient guardians all around me. My next destination was Aguas Calientes, better known as Machu Picchu town.

The crisp mountain air made me thirsty. Grabbing a bottle of water from the only coffee shop there, I eagerly waited for the train journey to begin.

The train was like a colourful serpent. Painted dark blue with yellow skirting near the wheels, it slithered along the mountain rails, climbing steadily through misty valleys. As we departed, three passengers -- two women and a man -- hurried aboard and joined the compartment. Their long, tangled hair immediately caught my attention. They looked like modern-day hippies. The man's hair reached down to his knees, much like the wandering bauls in our Lalon Akhras.

We sat facing each other. As is often the case with strangers, the conversation began with the question of nationality. "Are you Peruvian?" I asked. "Not really. We're from Italy," one of the women replied.

"Italy! I've visited your country! The Colosseum, Venice ... Wandering through Venice, I felt like Shakespeare's Portia from *The Merchant of Venice*. And the Vatican? It left me speechless!"

They beamed with pride. To my delight, they spoke fluent English. In this Spanish-speaking part of the world, hearing English is a blessing. Their sudden arrival felt like a sign -- messengers sent by the Inca god Viracocha, guiding me into his ancient realm.

By evening, the train rolled into Aguas Calientes. I checked into my hotel, had dinner, and rested for the

adventure that awaited.

The next morning, after breakfast, I met my local guide, Fevi. Our first stop was the town's Plaza Principal, or Main Square, where a towering statue of the Inca emperor Pachacuti stood with regal defiance. I posed for a picture with him, already feeling like part of the story.

Soon after, we boarded a bus for Machu Picchu. Just as I settled into my seat, a woman with long hair and lively eyes sat next to me. She was from Brazil, her name a musical string of syllables I couldn't manage. "Your name is too heavy to call," I joked. She laughed. "You can call me Didu."

As Didu and I got to know each other, the bus climbed slowly along the narrow, winding road. The higher we went, the more surreal the landscape became.

About 30 minutes later, we reached the entrance to Machu Picchu and began hiking on the famous Inca Trail -- one of the world's most iconic and demanding treks. The path was uneven and rocky, and though I struggled at times, my excitement pushed me forward. The famous ruins of Machu Picchu sit roughly 7,900 feet above sea level.

Walking that ancient trail with llamas and alpacas -- animals sacred to the Andes -- felt special.

Our first stop was a high viewpoint overlooking the Central Plaza of Machu Picchu. The view was stunning -- no wonder why tourists jostle here for the perfect photo. I was lucky to have Didu with me; she gladly snapped a few pictures for me to treasure forever.

Machu Picchu is cradled by three great mountains: Machu Picchu, Huayna Picchu, and Putucusi. The Incas believed these mountains were Apus -- sacred spirits or gods. With three Apus surrounding the site, they believed the citadel was protected by divine forces.

Archaeologists believe that Machu Picchu, often called the "Lost City of the Incas," was built in the 15th century during the reign of Emperor Pachacuti. Hidden among the jagged peaks of the Andes, archaeologists believe it served as a royal retreat, religious site, or perhaps both. Remarkably, the site lay undisturbed for centuries until locals guided American explorer Hiram Bingham there in 1911.

One thing was in my mind and I

They built their cities without cranes, using only human ingenuity and simple tools.

After wandering through stone pathways and doorways, we reached the Sacred Plaza, which resembled the courtyard of a village home. Two temples stood there: the Main Temple and the Temple of the Three Windows. The Incas believed these were gathering places for the gods. Inside the Main Temple were 17 trapezoidal niches --



After hours of walking and wonder, exhaustion set in. Didu and I found a patch of grass and sat down to rest. Across the ruins, we saw a crowd gathering.

"What's going on over there?" I asked.

Fevi smiled. "That's the Intihuatana stone."

Intihuatana, often called the Sun Hitching Post, was believed to serve both astronomical and religious functions. During the winter solstice, the Incas feared the sun might abandon them. They performed rituals around the stone to symbolically "tie" the sun in place, praying it would stay until the harvest.

The most important festival in honour of the sun god Inti was called Inti Raymi -- a grand religious celebration.

Fevi told us the festival is still held every year on June 24, marking the Inca New Year. In Cusco, it's a public holiday. People wear traditional clothes, perform dances, and re-enact Inca rituals.

The sun began to dip behind the peaks as we made our descent. At the base, I said goodbye to Didu, feeling grateful to have shared the experience with someone so full of life.

As I walked toward the train station, the grandeur of the ancient city still echoed in my mind.



couldn't but ask Fevi: "How did this colossal place stay hidden for 500 years?"

"Machu Picchu lies low, hidden by steep mountains," he said. "After smallpox hit the Andes before the Spanish arrived, many died, and the area emptied out. The remoteness of the site helped keep it untouched."

Soon, we reached the ancient walls of the city, built using a technique called ashlar -- stone blocks cut so precisely they fit together without mortar. Even after six centuries, these structures stand firm, a testament to the Incas' mastery of stonemasonry.

small cupboards where offerings were placed. Religious ceremonies were conducted here to honour their deities.

Not far from the temples, we visited the agricultural fields used by the Incas. Carved into the mountainside, the terraces resembled the tiers of the Roman Colosseum when viewed from above. I was astonished by the Incas' systematic farming. Each level received a different amount of sunlight, allowing for different crops to thrive.

Fevi added, "We've adopted this terraced farming technique from the Incas. That's why we have 40,000 varieties of potatoes in Peru."

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PHOTO: MOHUA ROUF



## BCB mulls revisiting the past amid fears and excitement

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials are considering adding some overseas flair in the country's first class competitions – National Cricket League (NCL) and the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) – a move that has already caused some controversy, and brought forward arguments both for and against it.

BCB is considering including two overseas players in each team in the next NCL. It is also tinkering with the idea of bringing in a foreign team in the BCL and as per sources, 'A' teams of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are being considered.

For the local players, who get a maximum of 12 first class matches in a year, inclusion of foreign players in the NCL would mean fewer opportunities.

"I feel the question is, are you bringing players of a higher quality? For instance, someone like Kane Williamson? Foreign players such as [Kumar] Sangakkara and [Tilakratne] Dilshan have played here before. If you aren't bringing quality players, then a local player isn't playing for someone who is not of high calibre... What benefit would come from including a foreign team in BCL?" a veteran domestic player told The Daily Star under conditions of anonymity.

On November 17, 1997, 11 Bangladeshi players made their first-class debut against Northern Conference in The Shell Conference in Hamilton, New Zealand. Seven of them later played in Bangladesh's inaugural Test against India.

In the match, pacer Hasibul Hossain Shanto picked up 6 for 143, becoming the first Bangladeshi to take a five-wicket haul in first-class cricket. Al Shahriar became Bangladesh's maiden first-class centurion in the third game of the tournament at Dunedin. Bashar and Co played seven matches in that 1997-98 tour.

"You can actually invest money on local players instead of bringing in foreign players. We lack facilities," another player opined.

But not all players are against the move, as a young speedster said, "I think the idea of a new team in BCL is a good one. Once we went to India's Bengaluru where our 'A' team played against their first-class team. It can be good as it could provide tougher competition since Sri Lanka 'A' are a good side."

The idea of a foreign team in the country's domestic first class competition may seem without precedence. But Bangladesh's own first-class journey began with such an endeavor.

Just a few months after winning the 1997 ICC Trophy, Bangladesh were invited to take part in the inaugural edition of The Shell Conference – a first-class tournament in New Zealand.

Former Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar, who was part of that series, feels it can be a good move.

"It won't be the first instance since in 1997, we played in New Zealand's first-class competition. The experience was really good," recalls Bashar.

"I don't see a problem. In the English County Championship, one foreign player is allowed per side. Even in Bangladesh, when Biman was champion, Imran Farhat [Pakistan left-handed opener] was playing for us and I actually learned a lot from him before I played international cricket. Shaheed Mahmood was a leg spinner [from Pakistan] who played for Chattogram, and I learned a lot about playing leg spin from him."

"It's not something new and it can help our players a lot. I don't know if it will happen but it can be good," said Bashar, who serves as head of operations in BCB's game development.

While there are doubts over availability of foreign players during the October-November window of NCL, it could significantly help bolster the country's domestic competitions even as arguments exists both for and against it.



Bangladesh captain Afeida Khandoker looks focused during their final practice session at home on Thursday, ahead of leaving for Laos on August 2 to play in the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers.

## What to WATCH

Sony Sports 1  
England vs  
India  
5th Test, Day 2  
Live from 4:00 pm

T Sports  
Zimbabwe vs  
New Zealand  
1st Test, Day 3  
Live from 2:00 pm



On 21, India captain Shubman Gill ran himself out on Thursday's opening day of the fifth and deciding Test against England, coming close to Sunil Gavaskar's national record for runs in a single series. Gill needs just 32 more runs to overhaul Gavaskar's mark (774) for the most runs scored by an Indian batter in a Test series -- achieved against the West Indies in 1971. Gill struck several elegant trademark drives and rarely looked in trouble till he pushed the ball into the offside and set off for a single that was never on. India were 85-3 at Tea after rain stopped play for a second time at the Oval in a game that the tourists must win to square the five-match series at 2-2.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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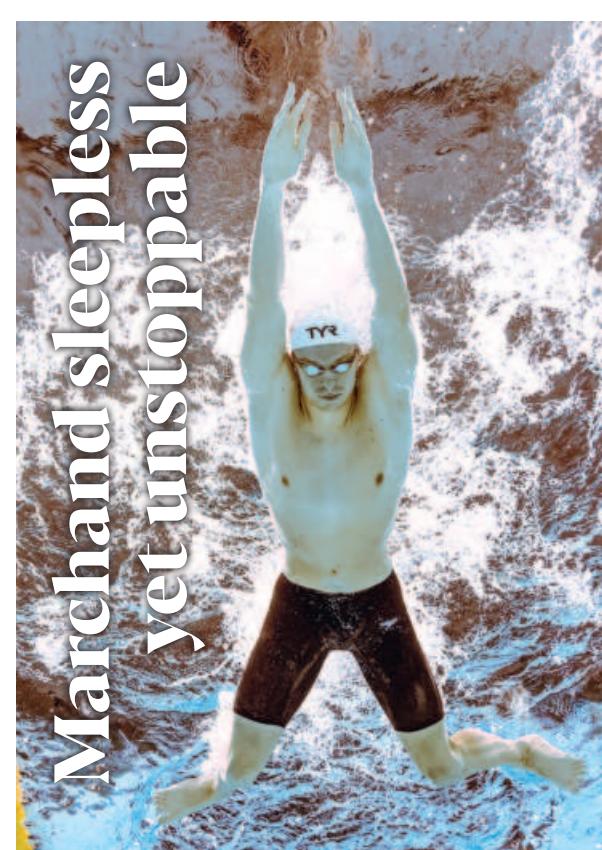
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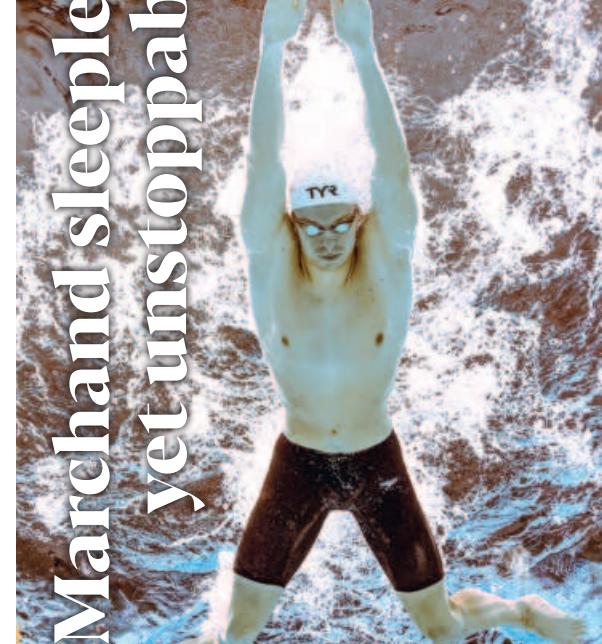
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An underwater view shows French star Leon Marchand powering to 200m medley gold at the 2025 World Aquatics Championships in Singapore on Thursday. A day after shattering Ryan Lochte's record, the Paris Olympics hero admitted: "I felt so excited yesterday that I couldn't sleep." Despite the fatigue, he clocked 1:53.68, the second-fastest ever, sealing his sixth world title.

PHOTO: AFP



ANISUR RAHMAN

"Hit her, hit her hard," shouted Afeida Khandoker, captain of the Bangladesh women's football team, from the stands of the Mohammad Ali Boxing Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

Her presence came as a surprise, even to her elder sister Afra Khandoker, who was in the ring battling Zinnat Ferdous in the 52kg final of the 31st Men's and 7th Women's National Boxing Championships. Afra didn't know until just before the bout that Afeida would make it to the stadium, especially after attending a U-20 national football team practice and press conference earlier in the day.

Afeida arrived with their parents to cheer on Afra, adding energy to a surprisingly lively crowd on the championship's final day -- rare for a tournament that usually ends without much buzz.

But this year, the spotlight was firmly on New York-based Zinnat Ferdous, who made her domestic debut memorable by clinching gold, outclassing Afra despite the latter's strong family support.

The atmosphere, however,



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

contrasted with the poor conditions inside the stadium. Spectators, including the services team members, sat in dusty galleries. Many had to climb ladders to access the stands, as the entrance gates were locked.

Yet, the excitement was palpable. Fans welcomed both fighters with loud cheers, with Afra's family being the most vocal. Her father, Arif Hassan Prince, even offered tactical instructions from the stands.

In the ring, Zinnat controlled all

match by match at Laos National Stadium, with the opening game against the home side on August 6 critical for building momentum.

"Our first priority is Laos. South Korea are very strong, but we'll be fit and ready for that," Butler told reporters at a press meet in Dhaka yesterday.

Captain Afeida Khandoker echoed her coach's sentiment. "We know South Korea are tough, but we aim to qualify for the final round," said the defender, who recently captained the senior team in Myanmar to a historic berth at the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 before the SAFF U-20 triumph at home.

Eight group winners and three best runners-up from the qualifiers will join hosts Thailand for the 2026 AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup. The top four teams from there will secure spots in the

FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup 2026 in Poland.

Asked about the possibility of his charges advancing as one of the best runners-up, coach Butler reiterated the need for keeping up the development arc. "The SAFF tournament was experimental for me and for the players. When it comes to the AFC, it's a different kettle of fish. We're talking a step up... [Since] we don't have a league, and I think it's really important to understand that our development comes from playing high-profile games against the best oppositions we possibly can," said the Englishman.

"And since I've come here, I've requested that, and... shown that we can actually compete with teams who have higher rankings," added the former Liberia and Botswana coach.

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**GOPALGANJ VIOLENCE**  
‘Army acted to save lives, not in support of any party’  
Says Army HQ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army troops intervened in the Gopalganj incident solely to protect lives that were under threat, and not in support of any political party, the Army Headquarters said yesterday.

“The incident in Gopalganj was unfortunate, and any loss of life is deeply saddening. But the army acted only after lives were at risk,” Brig Gen Nazim ud Daula, director of Military Operations Directorate (MOD), said at a press briefing in Dhaka cantonment.

Regarding the use of force, he said, “A high-level investigation committee, headed by a retired judge, has already been formed to determine what happened, why it happened, and who was responsible.”

SEE PAGE II COL 1

**PURBACHAL PLOTS**  
Charges framed against Hasina, Joy, Putul

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Charges were framed against 28 people, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and daughter Saima Wazed Putul, yesterday in six cases filed over alleged irregularities in plot allocation under the Purbachal New Town project.

Other accused include Rehana’s son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, her daughters, British MP Tulip Siddiq and Azmina Siddiq, and several current and former officials of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripankha (Rajuk).

After a brief hearing, Judge Abdullah Al Mamun of Dhaka Special Judge’s Court 5 framed charges

SEE PAGE II COL 1



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A father walking across the Shahbagh intersection with a child covered by a towel during yesterday's pouring rain. A group of demonstrators, in the background, under the banner of “July Warriors” blocked the intersection demanding the finalisation of the July Charter, causing traffic jams on key thoroughfares. Many, including patients, had to get off their vehicles and walk to their destinations.

## Govt moves to revise essential drug list, price

Sparks debate as 18-member taskforce formed without industry voices

TUHN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and JAGARAN CHAKMA

After nearly a decade-long pause, the health ministry has launched a significant initiative to revise the national list of essential medicines and fix their prices to improve their accessibility and affordability.

An 18 member taskforce has been constituted to draw up the list and develop a procedure for setting prices of other medicines. The objective is to balance affordability for the public with fair profit margins for drug manufacturers. In doing so, the taskforce will assess the effectiveness, safety, and necessity of medicines, guided by recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO).

While the initiative is underpinned by strong public health goals, its formation

has triggered criticism from industry leaders. The exclusion of pharmaceutical manufacturers from the taskforce has raised concerns about the practicality and sustainability of the initiative.

Industry stakeholders argue that crafting a pricing framework without the involvement of those who produce and distribute the medicines could prove counterproductive and even detrimental to the supply chain.

The taskforce is led by Prof Md Shahinul Alam, vice chancellor of Bangladesh Medical University. According to a health ministry circular issued on July 24, the taskforce must submit its report by August 20. The circular also states that the committee may induct new members if deemed necessary.

SEE PAGE II COL 4

22 held over ‘secret meeting’ of AL men

Major in army custody for ‘involvement’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested 22 people, including several leaders and activists of the Awami League and banned Chhatra League, following a “secret meeting” at the KB Convention Centre near the capital’s Bashundhara Residential area on July 8.

A major is also in custody of the army for his alleged involvement in the meeting.

The information came to light at a press briefing held at the Army Headquarters yesterday.

Responding to a related query, Col Shafiqul Islam, colonel staff at the Military Operations Directorate, said, “We are aware of Major Sadikul Haque’s alleged involvement. An

SEE PAGE II COL 1

## Rights abuses still persist

Says HRW reviewing interim govt’s records after one year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus is falling behind on its promise to improve human rights in Bangladesh a year after mass protests ousted the authoritarian regime of Sheikh Hasina, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said.

“The hope of the thousands who braved lethal violence a year ago when they opposed Sheikh Hasina’s abusive rule to build a rights-respecting democracy remains unfulfilled,” said Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director at HRW, in a statement on Wednesday.

While some of the fear and repression that marked the Awami League’s 15 year rule and abuses such as widespread enforced disappearances appear to have ended, the interim government has resorted to arbitrary detentions targeting political rivals and failed to carry out meaningful reforms.

“The interim government appears stuck, juggling an unreformed security sector, sometimes violent religious hardliners, and political groups that seem more focused on extracting vengeance on Hasina’s supporters than

SEE PAGE II COL 1

**India must stop expulsion of Indian Muslims, Rohingyas**

Says Fortify Rights

STAR REPORT

The Indian government must immediately end its unlawful campaign of expulsion against Indian Muslim citizens and Rohingya refugees, said Fortify Rights.

The move comes as the Indian authorities in recent months have been arbitrarily arresting, detaining, torturing and coercively removing members of Muslim minorities – including those with valid documentation or citizenship – as well as Rohingya refugees as part of its intensified “illegal immigrant” verification campaign.

“These actions not only violate international human rights law but deepen the dangerous marginalisation of Muslims and refugees in India,” said John Quinley, director at Fortify Rights, in a statement yesterday.

Since the Indian home ministry issued a directive in May mandating all states and union territories to verify the credentials of individuals suspected to be “illegal immigrants”, mass raids and forced expulsions of Indian

SEE PAGE II COL 4



WINGS WIDE OPEN



A peacock pansy spreads its glorious wings while resting on a flower in Chattogram’s Banskhali tea garden. Known for its vivid eyespots and seasonal forms, this butterfly is common across South and Southeast Asia. Its population is stable and often spotted in grasslands, gardens, and tea estates. Active year-round, it feeds on nectar and lays eggs on various host plants. While caterpillars favour low-lying herbs, adults bask in the sun, using their colourful wing patterns to ward off predators. As both pollinator and prey, the peacock pansy plays an important role in maintaining ecological balance.

PHOTO: KAMOL DAS

## Gaza aid delivery is ‘far from sufficient’: UN

Israeli strikes kill 34 Palestinians, including 15 aid seekers

AGENCIES

The United Nations’ humanitarian agency has said that the conditions for delivering aid into Gaza were “far from sufficient” to meet the immense needs of its “desperate, hungry people”.

OCHA also said fuel deliveries were nowhere near what is needed to keep health, emergency, water and telecommunications services running in the besieged Palestinian territory.

This week, Israel launched daily pauses in its military operations in some parts of the Gaza Strip and opened secure routes to enable UN agencies and other aid groups to distribute food in the densely populated territory of more than two million, reports AFP.

“While the UN and its partners are taking advantage of any opportunity to support people in need during the unilateral tactical pauses, the conditions for the delivery of aid and supplies are far from

SEE PAGE II COL 3

Myanmar forms interim govt before election

Coup leader remains acting president, military chief

REUTERS

Myanmar’s military yesterday nominally transferred power to a civilian-led interim government ahead of a planned December election, with the junta chief remaining in charge of the war-torn country in his other role as acting president.

An announcement in state media said a decree that granted power

SEE PAGE II COL 6

BB lowers target of private credit growth

B1

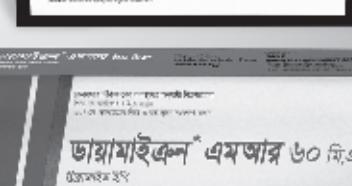
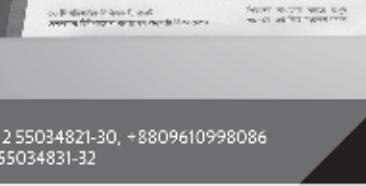
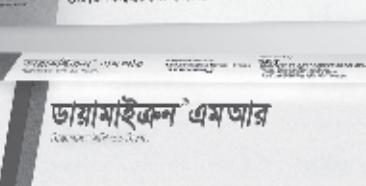
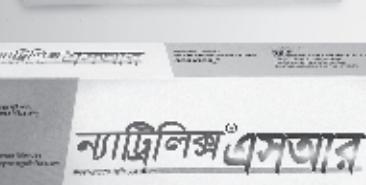


Dengue deaths, and infections double in July

P3

## জনসচেতনামূলক বিজ্ঞপ্তি

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১০০% প্রাপ্তি প্রদান করা হচ্ছে। প্রেস্বেড প্রয়োগের পর কোন পার্শ্ব প্রভাব নেই।

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