

Bangladesh gains edge after US tariff cut

Trump admin has reduced tariffs on Bangladeshi goods from 35% to 20%, a move expected to strengthen the country's competitiveness against rivals such as India and Vietnam

TARIFF NEGOTIATION TIMELINE

APRIL 2: Trump imposes 37% additional tariff on Bangladesh

APRIL 7: Chief adviser sends letter to Trump for 3 months' extension; commerce adviser writes to USTR

APRIL 9: The US announces a 90-day pause with a 10% baseline tariff

JUNE 27: First round of negotiations opens

JULY 7: Tariff on Bangladesh's exports reduced to 35%

JULY 9-11: Second round of negotiations held

JULY 29-31: Final round of negotiations

JULY 31: Tariff on Bangladesh reduced to 20%

AUG 7: New tariff rate to be effective

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The Trump administration has lowered its reciprocal tariff on Bangladeshi goods to 20 percent from 35 percent, strengthening the country's competitive standing in the US market amid intensifying regional competition.

Effective from August 7, the revision is a major win for Bangladesh's garment industry, which has long struggled to stay competitive.

With this move, Bangladeshi exporters are now well placed

to increase their share of the US apparel market as they enjoy a clear advantage over regional peers in India, Vietnam, and China.

India faces a 25 percent rate and risks further penalties due to its energy and defence purchases from Russia.

Although Bangladesh's effective tariff will reach 36 percent after adding existing duties to the 20 percent benchmark, its core exports -- formal shirts, knitted polo shirts, trousers, underwear, and sweaters -- face below-average duties. These

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Breathing room for exporters, but concerns persist

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The 20 percent US tariff on Bangladesh's exports offers an opportunity for the country to diversify its export markets, said industry insiders yesterday.

They believe that the revised rate would enable them to compete with countries like Vietnam, a close rival in the American market.

Some exporters, however, have

voiced concern.

The reactions come as the US slashed its tariff rate on goods from Bangladesh from the previous 35 percent, after a final round of intense negotiations followed high-level discussions between Bangladeshi officials and the Office of the United States Trade Representative in Washington.

Exporters were deeply concerned

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A decisive diplomatic victory: CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday congratulated tariff negotiators for securing a landmark trade deal with the United States, calling it "a decisive diplomatic victory."

"By reducing the tariff to 20 percent, 17 percentage points lower than anticipated, our negotiators have shown exceptional strategic

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Parties split over making July Charter legally binding

MD ABBAS

The National Consensus Commission has finalised the agreed-upon reform proposals for inclusion in the July Charter, but parties remain split over whether to make the document legally binding for ensuring its implementation.

Some parties are calling for the charter to give a legal basis while others believe that the consensus it represents overrides legal formalities, making its implementation a moral and political obligation for any future government.

The BNP and its allies, including Jatiyatabadi Samamana Jote, the 12-Party Alliance, the National Democratic Movement (NDM), and the Labour Party, oppose giving the charter legal status.

Speaking to reporters, BNP Standing

Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said, "We are committing to implement this charter based on the sovereign authority of the people. There is no greater national consensus than this. It is above the law."

He said that the charter includes a proposal to implement reforms within two years of forming a new government, a timeline the BNP supports.

"The charter will not only be signed by the commission but by all political parties. It reflects the people's will and may be added to the constitution's fourth schedule," he said.

"We will grant it constitutional and state recognition. If this isn't legally binding, what is?"

In contrast, the Jamaat-e-Islami,

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Relief in SE Asia over Trump tariffs

REUTERS, Bangkok

Southeast Asian countries breathed a sigh of relief yesterday after the US announced tariffs on their exports that were far lower than threatened and levelled the playing field with a rate of about 19 percent across the region's biggest economies.

US President Donald Trump's global tariffs offensive has shaken

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We will grant it constitutional and state recognition. If this isn't legally binding, what is?

Salahuddin Ahmed, BNP Standing Committee member



If there's no legal backing, signing or not signing will both be meaningless. The reform process would remain incomplete.

Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher, Jamaat naye-e-ameer



If implementation is delayed or left to a future government, it could result in uncertainty and crisis.

Akhter Hossen, NCP member secretary



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Nationwide clashes as violence returns

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

After nearly two weeks of tense calm, Bangladesh once again plunged into violence on August 2, 2024, as widespread clashes broke out between protesters and police – often aided by ruling party activists – across multiple districts. At least two people were killed and around 150 injured in a day marked by defiant protests, state crackdowns, and growing demands for justice and accountability.

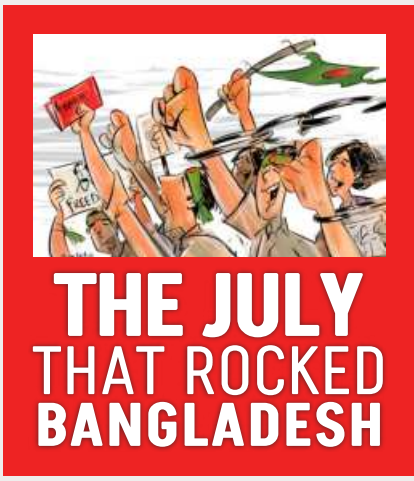
The violence erupted during processions organised by the Students Against Discrimination in Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Chattogram, Habiganj, Narsingdi, Noakhali, and other districts. Thousands of students, cultural workers, and members of the general public defied rain to demand justice for the victims of recent state violence and the immediate release of detained protesters.

In Habiganj, Chhatra League members and students clashed near the Town Hall. Police intervened with teargas and firearms, leaving at least 50 people wounded. A labourer, caught in the crossfire, was killed.

In Khulna, a police constable died after being assaulted during clashes around Khulna University. Police responded with rubber bullets, batons, and teargas, injuring at least 50 protesters.

In Sylhet, violent clashes between law enforcers and protesters in front of Mount Adora Hospital in Akhalia left over 30 injured, including a child, seven policemen, and several protesters.

Chattogram witnessed a police box being torched at Wasa intersection after Juma prayers, while demonstrations



AUGUST 2, 2024

took place on Laldighi-Rifles Club Road. In Noakhali, at least 10 were injured in clashes near Chawkbazar Masjid. In Narsingdi, Chhatra League, Jubo League, and Mahila League members attacked a protest in Court Road area, injuring 12.

A massive rally titled “Droho Jatra” was held in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka. People from all walks of life – students, teachers, guardians, lawyers, civil society members – gathered, braving rain and shouting anti-government slogans. They announced a mass procession for the following day, demanding the resignation of Sheikh Hasina.

At the rally, Prof Anu Muhammad stated, “We don’t want anything from this government. The government must resign. The people must take back control of the country and ensure



Protesters gather in large numbers at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital on the afternoon of August 2, 2024, demanding justice for those killed during the quota reform protests.

FILE PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

a democratic transition.”

Throughout the capital, protests blocked key intersections – Uttara, Science Lab, Mirpur-10, Shahbagh, and Aftabnagar. Students of East West University and BRAC University led processions, while performance artists staged street dramas and symbolic protests. Human chains were formed by groups of doctors, urban planners, authors, poets, and teachers demanding an end to the killings, curfew, and arrests.

STATEMENTS OF SOLIDARITY

At least 626 faculty members of BRAC University expressed concern over the violence and reaffirmed students’ rights to peaceful protest. Authors and academics condemned the police brutality under the banner of “Poets and Writers Against Countrywide Arrests and Oppression”.

In the afternoon, Students Against Discrimination announced a countrywide non-cooperation movement starting the next day, reinforcing their nine-point demand, which includes justice for the July killings, release of detainees, withdrawal of curfew, and resignation of the government.

Meanwhile, the six key organisers of the quota reform movement issued a statement declaring that the video of them withdrawing from the protests had been filmed under coercion while they were in custody at the Detective Branch office.

To control the narrative, the government once again imposed a social media blackout, cutting off Facebook and Messenger services for about seven hours starting around noon.

Cambodia to nominate Trump for Nobel Prize

Says deputy PM following his intervention in halting border conflict with Thailand

REUTERS, Phnom Penh

Cambodia will nominate US President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize, its deputy prime minister said yesterday, following his direct intervention in halting the Southeast Asian country’s recent border conflict with Thailand.

Asked via text message to confirm Cambodia’s plan to nominate Trump for the prize, Chanthol responded, “yes.”

Speaking to reporters earlier in the capital, Phnom Penh, Chanthol thanked Trump for bringing peace and said he deserved to be nominated for the prize, the highest-profile international award given to an individual or organisation deemed to have done the most to “advance fellowship between nations”.

‘India an ally, but can’t align 100pc of time’

Says US top diplomat Marco Rubio on Trump tariffs

NDTV ONLINE

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday said that India’s purchase of oil from Russia is “most certainly a point of irritation” in New Delhi’s relationship with Washington.

Speaking to Fox Radio a day after US President Donald Trump announced a 25 percent tariff on India and an additional penalty for buying Russian military equipment and energy, Rubio said that India’s purchases of Russian oil are helping to sustain Moscow’s war efforts in Ukraine.

“Look, global trade - India is an ally. It’s a strategic partner. Like anything in foreign policy, you’re not going to align 100 percent of the time on everything,” Rubio said when asked if Trump is “upset” with India getting a “great portion” of the discounted oil from Russia.

Bangladesh gains edge after US tariff cut

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five categories alone make up 80 percent of Bangladesh’s apparel shipments to the US, keeping the overall rate competitive.

Vietnam, while facing the same base rate as Bangladesh, could see its added levies surge to 52 percent when applied to high-end apparels. This burden is intensified by a 40 percent US duty on Chinese goods rerouted through Vietnam.

China itself is contending with a potential 55 percent tariff, pending negotiations.

As the third-largest apparel supplier to the US with a 9.3 percent market share, and now ahead of China in trouser and denim exports, Bangladesh is poised to consolidate its gains by capturing significant orders from US buyers looking to diversify their supply chains.

The new tariff rate, announced by the White House yesterday, was hailed across government and industry circles.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus called it a “decisive diplomatic victory”, crediting the negotiation team’s “strategic acumen”. He said, “This preserves our comparative advantage and secures access to the world’s largest consumer market.”

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin noted that although Bangladesh had sought a lower rate, the final outcome still protected its competitive standing. National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, a member of the negotiation team, added that the agreement includes pledges to import US agricultural goods – a step aligned with Bangladesh’s food security goals and is expected to build goodwill in key American farming states.

Industry leaders welcomed the deal, albeit with cautious optimism. Rubana Huq, former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the agreement will help Bangladesh “retain competitiveness in a tough market”.

Current BGMEA president Mahmud Hasan Khan called the revised rate a “relief” but added that its true impact would depend on “consumer responses in the next retail season”.

Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, executive

WHAT BANGLADESH OFFERED

Purchase of 25 Boeing aircraft

Purchasing 3.5 million tonnes of American wheat over next 5 years

Building warehouse to facilitate US cotton in Bangladesh

Import of more US cotton, LNG

Import of more US soybean, other agricultural products

Removing trade barriers to facilitate US export here

Removal of import duty on many US goods

president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, welcomed the move towards a near uniform tariff structure among US trading partners. “Keeping major apparel-exporting countries within the 19-20 percent range helps stabilise global competitiveness,” he said.

From the textile supply side, Showkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association and a private-sector delegate in the talks, pointed out that the deal opens the door to importing up to \$2 billion worth of US cotton in a major rebalancing, as only 5 percent of Bangladesh’s \$4 billion in cotton imports currently comes from the US.

Private importer Mohammed Amirul Haque said American exporters of soybeans, cotton, and LPG had also pushed for a favourable tariff regime with Bangladesh, aligning commercial interests across both economies.

Still, challenges remain. Faisal Samad, managing director of Surma

Garments Ltd, cautioned that rising production costs could offset the benefits of the tariff cut. “China will inevitably recalibrate to regain competitiveness,” he said.

The tariff cut also reflects a broader shift in US trade policy.

“It’s a strategic shift, not just towards Bangladesh but towards many partners,” said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). “Sri Lanka’s rate, for example, was cut from 30 percent to 20 percent, and Pakistan’s from 29 percent to 19 percent.”

In the political sphere, the BNP described the US tariff cut as “satisfactory” for Bangladeshi exporters, while the Jamaat-e-Islami thanked Trump for lowering the rate.

Speaking to reporters at his residence in Gulshan, BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said, “This is not about winning or losing. ... I think overall the tariff figure is satisfactory in terms of competition.”

“... the tariff won’t harm our export market at this moment. So, for now, it’s a satisfactory decision.”

Khosru, a former commerce minister, declined to comment on the impact of the new tariff rate, saying, “We don’t know the full details of the whole negotiation. We only know about the tariff part. After knowing the full details, we’ll be able to comment on this.”

Asked about the decision to purchase 25 Boeing planes from the US, Khosru said Bangladesh had to do something to cut the trade gap with the US as sought by the Trump administration.

“But while doing that, how much Bangladesh can absorb, how much our economy can absorb, how much our businessmen can absorb – these are things to talk about,” he said.

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman thanked the Trump administration for its sincerity and the interim government of Yunus for its effective initiatives in having the tariff lowered.

In a Facebook post, he expressed hope that in the future, Yunus and those who will come to the power will maintain their honourable position and fulfill their dignified duties in the arena of world diplomacy.

Parties split over making July Charter

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the National Citizen Party (NCP), Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and several other parties have demanded a clear legal foundation for the charter.

Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher warned that his party would file a compensation lawsuit against both the government and the commission if the charter lacked legal validity.

“BNP claims the charter needs no legal basis, but relying on promises isn’t enough. If it lacks legitimacy, it will be meaningless,” he said.

“Even an oath means nothing without action.”

Taher stressed that legal implementation is both feasible and essential.

“Those who claim it can’t be done are misleading the nation. If there’s no legal backing, signing or not signing will both be meaningless. The reform

process would remain incomplete.”

He urged the government and the commission to avoid what he called “another farce” with the people. “Those who made promises must now fulfil them,” he added.

NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossen echoed the demand for legal grounding.

“While consensus was reached on several issues, implementation details remain vague,” he said.

“The preliminary draft mentions that reforms will be carried out within two years of the next parliament’s formation. But if implementation is delayed or left to a future government, it could result in uncertainty and crisis.”

Akhter warned that such ambiguity risks undermining the entire process.

“The charter emerged from long deliberations among anti-

authoritarian forces and citizens. If implementation falters, our efforts will be wasted. The people expect a new state structure based on accountability, decentralisation, and balance of power.”

The NCP leader added that most political parties supported the commission taking the lead in developing an implementation roadmap.

“We commend the commission for its patience and initiative. But now, it must move urgently to finalise a concrete path forward,” he said.

Responding to these concerns, Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz said that once the final draft is ready, it will be sent to political parties for feedback.

“If necessary, the commission will sit again to discuss the roadmap for implementing the charter,” he added.

Breathing room for exporters

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about losing competitiveness in the US market, the single biggest destination for Bangladesh’s goods, after the Trump administration announced a 35 percent tariff, albeit lower than the initial plan of 37 percent, which would be added to the existing average of around 16 percent.

“While the revised rate is 20 percent on Bangladesh’s exports to the US, it could raise the effective duty to as high as 35 percent in some cases,” said AK Azad, chairman and managing director of Ha Meem Group, a leading exporter to the US.

“Still, we remain competitive. With India facing a higher duty, some US orders may shift towards Bangladesh.”

He added that the 20 percent duty is not uniform across all goods.

“Many of our exports fall under lower tariffs, but there’s concern that buyers may use this hike to pressure us for price reductions. Negotiation pressure from buyers is expected. The industry must act collectively and strategically to handle this.”

Azad, a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said that since Vietnam faces similar tariffs in the US market, there is no added competition from their side.

But Cambodia and Indonesia face 19 percent tariffs in the American market, placing Bangladesh at a mildly disadvantageous position.

“There’s still scope for negotiation,” he said, “Government efforts must continue, and trade bodies can play a key role. Even a one percent tariff reduction could significantly ease pressure on exporters.”

“We must remain cautious,” he said, mentioning that India is in talks for a reduction from the 25 percent tariff.

Pakistan, having access to local raw materials, enjoys a 19 percent tariff. This will increase its competitiveness.”

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez), president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, said, “Though we’ll not face intense competitive pressure from our competitors from Vietnam, US buyers will try to pass the extra burden of the tariff on to us. Middle and small manufacturers will face a significant challenge to retain US buyers as they will bargain for a price cut.”

He expressed concern that prices of imported goods would rise in America due to the new tariff, leading to a decline in consumer demand.

“So, the volume of orders from US buyers will fall,” added Parvez, who is also a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Riad Mahmud, managing director of N Poly, a non-leather shoe exporter to the US market, said, “We expect that orders which have been put on hold by buyers will come back, as the tariff rate remains the same as that of our main competitor, Vietnam. But I assume that US buyers will bargain for a price reduction in a way that we absorb part of the tariff burden,” he added.

“Ultimately, US customers will suffer. They will have to spend extra

“

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Chairman of Ha-Meem Group

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Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury
President of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries

Our buyers are under pressure and are asking us for more concessions. We need to work wisely, not just by offering low prices, but by providing excellent service and maintaining strong, trustworthy relationships.

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury
CEO of Pran-RFL Group

because of the import tariff,” he said.

Asif Ibrahim, former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), said the final 20 percent tariff imposed by the US on Bangladeshi exports, following three rounds of negotiations, offers much-needed breathing space for the country’s exporters.

He said that while the tariff presents challenges, it also opens the door to recalibrate and chart a path for strategic growth.

“As global competition heats up, Bangladesh now has the chance to diversify its export markets and upgrade its value proposition.”

He said the tariff may act as a catalyst,

accelerating the shift towards higher-value, sustainable apparel production and enhanced industry standards. By investing in efficiency, technology, and design, the readymade garment (RMG) sector can retain its edge in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

“With the right strategy and bold initiatives, this could be a turning point, transforming Bangladesh into a more agile, innovative, and globally respected sourcing hub,” he added.

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of Pran-RFL Group, expressed concern that the 20 percent tariff will directly impact the group’s exports to the US.

He cited a recent conversation with a US buyer and added that the buyer reportedly asked the company to absorb part of the tariffs by lowering export prices.

“This is quite challenging for us,” he said. “We operate on very thin margins, and as a developing country, we have limited financial resources. But we still need to hold our ground in the US market.”

He termed the move a “step backwards for global trade,” adding, “Tariffs like these don’t just hurt us but disrupt the entire global trade ecosystem.”

“The burden of this tariff will ultimately fall on American consumers. Prices will go up, and it will become increasingly difficult for middle-class families in the US to bear the cost.”

Chowdhury emphasised the need for consistent engagement with the US market.

“The battle isn’t over yet. Tariffs change over time, and we need to stay alert to seize any opportunity that comes our way.”

“We must continue working proactively with American stakeholders, build stable trade relations, and look for ways to reduce our production costs in order to remain competitive.”

“Our buyers are under pressure and are asking us for more concessions. We need to work wisely, not just by offering low prices, but by providing excellent service and maintaining strong, trustworthy relationships.”

A decisive diplomatic

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skill and unwavering commitment to protecting and advancing Bangladesh’s economic interests,” Yunus said in a statement.

He noted that the team had worked relentlessly since February, navigating a complex process involving tariff, non-tariff, and national security issues.

“The deal preserves our comparative advantage, boosts access to the world’s largest consumer market, and safeguards our core national interests,” he said.

Yunus said the achievement highlights Bangladesh’s growing influence on the global stage and paves the way for greater opportunities, faster growth, and lasting prosperity.

“Today’s success is a powerful testament to our national resilience and bold vision for a stronger economy.”



Cars move along a waterlogged road in the capital's Rajarbagh yesterday. *Inset*, even this alley in Bakshibazar was submerged after just a few hours of heavy rain. Persistent waterlogging continues to plague the city, reflecting its poorly managed drainage system.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, RASHED SHUMON

‘We may boycott polls if our rights overlooked’

Warns Minority Rights Movement, urges govt to act on their 8-point demand

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh's minority population could boycott the upcoming national election if their rights are not protected in the lead-up to the polls, warned the Minority Rights Movement, a platform representing minority communities.

While minority communities make up eight percent of the country's population, the group expressed concern that they may be “used for political gains only” during the election, citing silence from both the interim government and political parties on safeguarding their rights.

The remarks came during a press conference titled “The Situation of Eight Percent Population After One Year of Uprising,” organised by the platform at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

At the event, the platform also announced the “National Minority Conference-2025”, scheduled for August 22, to press home their various demands.

Sushmita Kar, a representative of the platform, said following last year's July uprising, members of minority communities took to the streets on August 9 to push for an eight-point demand. These included enacting a Minority Protection Act and a law to eliminate discrimination.

She said the demands were submitted to the interim government, and repeated pleas have been made for their

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DEMANDS AT A GLANCE	
➤	Enact Minority Protection Act
➤	Form Minority Affairs Ministry
➤	Ensure inclusion of minority representatives in National Consensus Commission
➤	Punish perpetrators of communal violence
➤	Provide compensation, rehabilitation for victims

Veggie, onion and egg prices soar in Dhaka markets

Traders cite crop damage due to rain, low supply behind hike



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of various vegetable items have increased in the capital's kitchen markets over the past week, with traders blaming a lack of supply due to countrywide rain.

In addition, the price of locally grown onions has risen by Tk 10 to Tk 15 per kilogram, while farm eggs have become costlier by Tk 15 per dozen.

This picture of price hike was observed yesterday at several kitchen markets, including those in Mirpur-11, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur Bazar, Farmgate, and Karwan Bazar.

Rakibul Hasan, who visited the Karwan Bazar kitchen market from the Begunbari area to purchase daily essentials, said he had to spend extra money on items like onions, long beans, and eggs. He noted that

prices of some other essentials, such as soybean oil, remained unchanged over the week.

Trader Kalam Sheikh, who typically buys vegetables like long beans and eggplants directly from farmers in Manikganj and sells them wholesale at Karwan Bazar, said he was receiving less supply than usual.

According to him, farmers in Manikganj reported that continuous rain over the past week had submerged many vegetable fields. As a result, they were unable to harvest the produce on time, causing much of it to rot in the water. This disruption, he said, led to a supply shortage and eventually higher prices.

Yesterday, traders at various city kitchen markets were selling long

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CUSTODIAL DEATHS OF 3 BAWM MEN

155 eminent citizens want judicial probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Judicial inquiry has to be conducted into the deaths of three Bawm men in jail custody, demanded 155 eminent citizens yesterday.

In a statement, they also sought the immediate release of all detained innocent people from the Bawm community.

“We strongly condemn the ongoing repression of the indigenous people in Bandarban in the name of combating terrorism in the Chattogram Hill Tracts. Ordinary citizens, including women and children of the Bawm ethnic group, have been detained... and imprisoned for years,” it said.

On July 17, Bhan Lal Rual, 35, died in jail custody. Earlier, Lal Sangmoy, 55, and Lal Tleng Kim, 29, died in prison.

In the statement, they said on April 2 and April 3, 2024, the repression of the Bawm community began in the name of a “joint operation” following bank robberies in Ruma and Thanchi of Bandarban.

“We think that indiscriminate detention of villagers and state repression in multiple false cases in the name of preventing activities and crimes of KNF members

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Protest turns chaotic as ‘rival July warriors’ clash at Shahbagh

STAR REPORT

Protesters under the banner of “July warriors” continued their demonstration for a second consecutive day at the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday, demanding immediate finalisation of the proposed July Charter.

After a 32-hour blockade since Thursday morning, another group, identifying themselves as the “real July warriors”, arrived at the protest site around 6:30pm yesterday and attacked the demonstrators. This group included injured participants of the July uprising who had been undergoing treatment at various hospitals.

They also removed the barricades set up around the intersection by the first group.

At one point, clashes broke out between the two sides.

Police then intervened and dispersed both parties from the street. Traffic flow at Shahbagh resumed fully afterwards.

Several individuals were injured in the clashes.

At least five of them received primary treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, while two others are in critical condition and currently undergoing treatment there, confirmed Inspector Md Farouk, in-charge of the DMCH police outpost.

Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of police (Ramna Division), told Prothom Alo, “A group

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‘Fascism research institute’ banner now hangs at AL central office

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

A large red banner reading “International Fascism and Genocide Research Institute” now hangs in front of the abandoned central office of the Bangladesh Awami League in the capital's Gulistan area.

During a visit on Saturday, workers were seen clearing bricks, rubble, and garbage from various



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

floors. The ground and the second floor had already been cleaned, they said.

Cleaning began on the ground floor on Wednesday morning. Many curious pedestrians stopped to take photos of the building.

Shakhawat Hossain, a man estimated to be in his early 30s, said they were preparing the building to set up the International Fascism and Genocide Research Institute.

When asked who assigned them the task, he said, “We will disclose that after July 31.”

Several young men were sitting on plastic chairs in front of the building. One cleaner said they were students.

On the afternoon of August 5 last year, during a student-led mass uprising, the Awami League's central office was vandalised and set on fire.

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‘SECRET MEETING’ OF AL MEN

Army to probe involvement of detained official

Says ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Army has constituted a court of inquiry to investigate allegations of political involvement against one of its officers, who was taken into military custody on July 17, according to a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) yesterday.

The officer was detained from his residence in the capital's Uttara area following a complaint received through a law enforcement agency.

“To ensure an impartial and thorough inquiry, a court of inquiry has already been formed. Preliminary investigations have yielded credible evidence supporting the allegation,” the ISPR statement said.

“Based on the findings of the full investigation, appropriate punitive action will be taken in accordance with military laws and regulations,” it added.

The ISPR also said coordination is underway with Bangladesh Police and other law enforcement agencies in connection with the matter.

A separate court of inquiry has been set up to investigate the officer's unauthorised absence from duty. Upon completion of the investigation, the “Command Responsibility” of the officer will be determined under military law, based on the court's recommendations.

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This large tree, uprooted during midday rain, crushed a CNG-run auto-rickshaw near Dhanmondi-6 in the capital on Thursday. The injured passenger and driver were rescued by onlookers before they were taken to hospital. However, as of yesterday, the tree and the damaged vehicle had yet to be removed, leaving an obstacle for traffic in the area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Yasmeen Murshed laid to rest

CITY DESK

Yasmeen Murshed, founder chairperson of Scholastica School and former adviser to the caretaker government led by then-president Iajuddin Ahmed, was laid to eternal rest at Banani Graveyard yesterday.

Earlier in the day, her first namaz-e-janaza was held at Azad Mosque in Gulshan after Juma prayers. Family members, Scholastica alumni, and many distinguished individuals from across the country attended to pay their respects.

Later, her body was taken to Scholastica's Senior Campus in Uttara,

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Continuous rain submerges Jashore

Destroys Aman seedbeds, vegetable crops in the district

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Relentless rainfall over the past two days has left most parts of Jashore town and its outskirts submerged, damaging vegetable crops and Aman paddy seedbeds across 1,759 hectares of land.

In the last two days, 78mm rainfall was recorded in Jashore, according to the meteorological office at Jashore's Birshreshtha Matiur Rahman Airport.

Additionally, 25mm rainfall was recorded between 6:00am and 6:00pm on Wednesday while 53mm of rainfall was recorded from 6:00am to 6:00pm on Thursday.

Many areas -- including Shah Abdul Karim Road, Stadiumpara, Pirtala, Narikelbaria, Shankarpur, Phayara Saheb Mor to Pipe Patti, Bezpara Chinamor, Bezpara Dhal, Police Lines, Rail Gate, Missionpara, Rail Station, Chachra Para, Tikapara, Palbari, TIC Clinic Mor, Puratan Kasba, Churamankathi, Airport Road, and Stationpara -- went under the water due to the incessant rain.

A resident of Shankarpur, Zaki Hossain, said, "It rained on Wednesday night, and there was water inside our homes in the morning. For the last two days, we've been in great distress."

Amin Uddin, a farmer in the area, said, "The fields are now submerged, and all the crops and vegetables have been destroyed. Most of the fields are completely ruined."

Kamal Hossain, assistant engineer of Jashore Municipality Council, said, "Due to continuous rain, most of the areas in the town have been inundated. All measures have been taken to drain the water. The drains of the town are being cleaned quickly. I hope the water will recede soon."

Jashore District Agriculture Officer Razia Sultana said a total of 209 hectares of vegetables have been completely damaged in Jashore Sadar upazila.

Samaresh Biswas, additional deputy director of the department, said, "Aman seedbeds were prepared on approximately 13,000 hectares. Of these, around 1,550 hectares have been completely submerged and destroyed. The remaining seedbeds have suffered partial damage,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



DACOPE, BATIAGHATA UPAZILAS Erosion threatens key road in Khulna



DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Erosion caused by the Kazi Bacha River has put the main road connecting Dacope and Batiaghata upazilas in Khulna at serious risk. At least five major points along the road have already been severely damaged, and locals fear that if any section collapses completely, over 40 to 50 villages across Batiaghata and Gangarrampur unions could be directly affected.

The Dacope-Batiaghata road is the only direct communication route between the two upazilas and the city.

Recent visits to several erosion-hit locations -- including Kismat Phultala's Boruitola area, Batiaghata Bazar, near the Pankhali ferry terminal, and Gopal Khali -- revealed that the river has eaten into several parts of the road. In some places, the erosion has crept 7 to 8 feet into the road, leaving narrow, stretches for vehicles and pedestrians.

"The river is now just a few feet away from our homes," said Beethika Mondal, a resident of Kismat Phultala. "If the erosion continues like this, the water will come right over our house.

We can't even sleep at night out of fear. Our land, just 3 to 4 kathas, is right next to the erosion site. If it collapses, not just us but over 50 bighas of surrounding land will be lost."

Swapon Biswas, another resident of Phultala and a retired bank officer, said during high tides, water already overflows onto their land. "The riverbed has risen due to siltation. When the tide is strong, water hits the base of the road directly, loosening the soil. If this continues without proper sandbag reinforcements or embankment protection, the road will collapse very soon."

"If this road breaks, it will cut off communication between Khulna and Dacope, and our agricultural economy will be devastated," he added. "Right now, it's the Aman season. This is our only rice crop. If that fails, we won't have anything to eat for the rest of the year."

At the Batiaghata Bazar section of the river, erosion has caused large cracks over a stretch of nearly 400 metres along the main Khulna-Chalna

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Justice Abu Sayeed's death anniversary

CITY DESK

Today is the 37th death anniversary of former president Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, said a press release.

Justice Chowdhury, also a former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, played a leading role in mobilising world opinion in favour of Bangladesh during the War of Liberation in 1971.

He was also elected chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission in 1985.

He authored several books -- including "Probashe Muktiujuddher Dinguli", "Manobadhikar", "Muslim Family Law in the English Courts" and "Human Rights in the Twentieth Century".

On the occasion of his death anniversary, a doa mahfil will be held at Dabail Jamia Ashrafia Madrasa in Tangail. His family requested all of his relatives, friends and well-wishers to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Ganosamhati calls for overhaul of state structure



DU CORRESPONDENT

The existing state structure of Bangladesh does not serve the people but protects the interests of a privileged group, said speakers at an event organised by Ganosamhati Andolon at Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday.

They demanded justice, reforms, and participatory national elections.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati, said, "The state is built upon enforced disappearances, killings, land grabbing, and a deep-rooted system of repression. This must be dismantled."

Saki said the current state system has long been

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Man kills wife, surrenders to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A man surrendered to police in Patuakhali early yesterday, confessing that he had killed his wife during a family dispute before fleeing with their minor son.

The accused, Sarwar Hossain, 40, walked into Bauphal Police Station around midnight and admitted to killing his wife, Salma Akhter, 32, said Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman Sarkar.

Police later recovered Salma's body from their house and sent it to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Advertisement

Beauty Industry reaches New Height through Aesthetica Bangladesh 2025 by The Aesthetic Dermatology Society of Bangladesh (ADSB). Chief Guest Dr. AZM Maidul Islam inaugurated the event. Dr. Nazmul Hossain and Dr. Md. Abu Jafor were present as special guests. Others at the ceremony were Secretary General of ADSB Dr. Jahanara Ferdous Khan Jhumu, Organizing Secretary, Dr. Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, Organising President, Dr. Imrose Mohit. Chief Patron Dr. M.U. Kabir Chowdhury delivered his insightful address. The ceremony concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by the ADSB President Dr. Sarker Mahub Ahmed Shamim.

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We may boycott polls

FROM PAGE 3
implementation. Several minority rights organisations also expressed solidarity with these demands.

However, Sushmita noted that the interim government formed the National Consensus Commission without including any representatives from minority communities.

"Consensus cannot be reached under this commission since it is not inclusive," she said, adding that no political party has raised any questions over this exclusion.

"It is quite disappointing for us to wonder whether the political parties are only thinking of using the eight percent [population] as a vote bank, or whether they

are genuinely concerned about our rights," she said. Sushmita said although two advisers in the interim government represent minority communities, they have remained silent on issues affecting the minorities, which is disheartening.

Sushmita stressed that minorities are now more aware of their rights and warned that if the interim government or political parties fail to address their concerns before the election, the eight percent population could boycott the polls.

At the press conference, Torun Roy, the platform's northern unit representative, alleged that political parties still lack genuine commitment to upholding minority rights.

He read out the eight-point demand, which also includes the formation of a minority affairs ministry and a minority commission.

He also called for the trial and punishment of those responsible for communal violence, along with compensation and rehabilitation for victims.

Other demands include upgrading the existing religious welfare trusts for Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists into full-fledged foundations; enacting laws to recover and protect Debottor (religious endowment) properties; and ensuring full implementation of the Vested Property Return (Amendment) Act-2013. The platform also demanded an extension of the Durga Puja holiday to five days.

Two drown in Gazipur beel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Two persons drowned when they fell into Panchua Beel from a boat in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Mahim, 16, son of Nur Alam of Tengra Tepir Bari in Gazipur, and Bayojid, 35, said Kapasia Police Station Sub-inspector Zahid.

An eyewitness, Sharif Mia, said five friends went to the beel around 8:00am to collect water lilies, hiring a small boat. Mahim and Bayojid fell into the waterbody when the boat suddenly tilted.

Police went to the spot, rescued Mahim, and took him to Kapasia Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared him dead. said SI Zahid.

Bayozid's body was recovered from the waterbody later.

Veggie

FROM PAGE 3
beans at Tk 80 to Tk 100 per kg, up from Tk 60 to Tk 80 a week earlier.

Bitter gourds were priced at Tk 70 to Tk 100 per kg, compared to Tk 60 to Tk 80 last week.

Eggplants were being sold at Tk 60 to Tk 100 per kg, up from Tk 50 to Tk 80, while ridge gourds were selling at Tk 60 to Tk 80 per kg, compared to Tk 50 to Tk 60 last week.

Okra was priced at Tk 50 to Tk 60 per kg, an increase from Tk 40 to Tk 50 a week ago.

Meanwhile, the price of locally grown onions rose to Tk 70 per kg, up from Tk 55 to Tk 60.

Sabuj Sheikh, proprietor of wholesale onion shop Matri Bhandar at Karwan Bazar, said wholesale onion prices increased by Tk 10 to Tk 15 per kg within a week, which in turn affected retail prices. He said he primarily sources onions from farmers in Pabna and Faridpur and sells them at wholesale rates in Karwan Bazar.

Md Roni, a grocer at Shewrapara, said the price of eggs has increased by Tk 15 per dozen in the past two to three days. Yesterday, he sold farm-produced brown eggs at Tk 140 per dozen.

We mourn the demise of Mrs. Yasmeen Murshed, Founder Trustee of Independent University, Bangladesh, who passed away on July 31, 2025. Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaihi Rajiun.

Yasmeen Murshed was born on May 19, 1945, in Calcutta, India. She had her early education at the Viqarunnisa Noon School in Dhaka and earned her bachelor's degree in English and master's in Economics in 1969 at the University of the Punjab.

She founded Scholastica School in 1977. She played a key role in founding Independent University, Bangladesh in 1993 as a member of the Education Science Technology and Cultural Development Trust (ESTCDT) -- the founding trust of the university.

Mrs. Murshed was in charge of several ministries in 2006-07 as an Advisor to the former caretaker government. In 2007 she was made the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan. She was married to Late Syed Tanweer Murshed and is survived by a daughter and a son.

The IUB community -- including members of the Board of Trustees, ESTCDT, faculty, administration, students and alumni -- expresses deepest condolences to the bereaved family and prays for the salvation of her departed soul.

Independent University, Bangladesh



Russia’s actions in Ukraine ‘disgusting’

Says Trump; Putin signals no change in Russia’s stance

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump threatened fresh sanctions Thursday while slamming Russia's military actions in Ukraine as “disgusting,” as strikes on Kyiv killed at least 16 people.

“Russia -- I think it's disgusting what they're doing. I think it's disgusting,” Trump told reporters. Trump also said he would send his special envoy Steve Witkoff, currently in Israel, to visit Russia next.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has already met Witkoff multiple times in Moscow, before Trump's efforts to mend ties with the Kremlin came to a grinding halt.

Washington has given Moscow until the end of next week to cease hostilities in Ukraine, under threat of severe economic sanctions.

Trump reiterated the deadline on Thursday. “We're going to put sanctions. I don't know that sanctions bother



Rescuers carry the body of a victim recovered from the debris of an apartment building struck by a Russian missile in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

him,” the US president said, referring to Putin.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Moscow hoped for more peace talks with Ukraine but that the momentum of the war was in its favour, signalling no shift in his stance despite a looming sanctions deadline from Washington.

Meanwhile, Germany said yesterday it will soon start delivering two more US-made Patriot air defence systems to Ukraine, as Kyiv faces a growing number of Russian drone and missile attacks.

After reaching an agreement with the US, the German military will deliver additional Patriot launchers in the coming days, and will supply further components in the next two to three months, the defence ministry said.

98 DNCC spots

FROM PAGE 12

green spaces should cover at least 35-40 percent of the total area. In Dhaka, those have been reduced to around 10 percent,” he said.

In 1995, waterbodies covered 20.57 percent of the city's central area, which dropped to just 2.9 percent by 2023. Similarly, green space shrank to only 9 percent from 22 percent during the same period, according to BIP data.

Adil explained that while artificial drainage systems can reduce the duration of flooding, they cannot eliminate it if natural drainage channels are destroyed.

Though DNCC managed to restore water flow in several canals, including those in Baunia and Ibrahimpur, many others remain choked with solid waste, he said.

“For example, Kalyanpur branch canal at Agargaon, Baishteki canal in Mirpur, and Rupnagar canal near Arambag residential area are clogged with waste. The canal adjacent to Pongu Hospital is dying, while Ramchandrapur canal near Mohammadia Housing is overrun with weeds and bushes,” he said.

Adil suggested that DNCC should consider community involvement to make its cleaning efforts sustainable.

“Within a month of a cleaning drive, canals are filled again with garbage. It's essential to engage local communities in such efforts for lasting results,” he said.

Former BIP president Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon said that though DNCC cleaned several canals in areas including Khilkhet and Baunia, the primary drains linked to those have not been upgraded.

He also stressed the need to revise Wasa-2015 Drainage Master Plan, which is no longer suited to shifting rainfall patterns caused by climate change.

1,373 Gaza aid

FROM PAGE 12

“US-backed Israeli forces and private contractors have put in place a flawed, militarised aid distribution system that has turned aid distributions into regular bloodbaths,” said Belkis Wille, associate crisis and conflict director at Human Rights Watch.

After nearly 22 months of Israeli offensive in Gaza, the Palestinian territory is slipping into famine and civilians are starving to death, according to a UN-mandated expert report.

In the ground, Gaza's civil defence agency said 22 people were killed by Israeli gunfire and air strikes yesterday, including two who were waiting near an aid distribution site.

Expelled Gonotantik Chhatra Sangsad leader arrested

FROM PAGE 12

“We are investigating the true nature of the incident and whether anyone else was involved. We are also thoroughly examining if there are any other aspects of the case,” he said.

Apu is the sixth suspect arrested in the case. Riyadh and four others were arrested from Shammi's house on July 26 and a case was filed in this regard.

Riyad and three of his associates -- Ibrahim Hossain Munna, convener of SAD's Dhaka city unit; and members Sakadoun Siam and Sadab -- were remanded in police custody for seven days. The other arrestee, a minor, was sent to a juvenile correction centre.

In the case statement, the ex-lawmaker's husband Siddique Abu Zafar stated that on July 17, several individuals identifying themselves as SAD members arrived at their Gulshan residence and demanded the money. Shammi was not at home at that time.

“When I refused to pay, they labelled me an Awami League

We'll be free from fascism

FROM PAGE 12

night, dummy polls, making MPs as she wishes, smuggling thousands of crores of taka abroad, and looting banks -- these things will never happen again.”

This interim government has many mistakes because it lacks experience, he said.

“We hoped that within one year, they would prepare a complete list of martyrs and arrange support for their families. Unfortunately, they couldn't fully do it. But they tried.”

Fakhrul thanked the government for successful negotiations with the US administration to have tariffs on Bangladeshi products reduced from 35 percent to 20 percent, saying the foreign ministry and advisers have played a key role in this regard.

“This is a big achievement.”

The party's Dhaka Metropolitan (north) unit organised the event in memory of those killed during the mass uprising.

Urging BNP supporters to stay alert, Fakhrul said, “Look around carefully, pay attention to what people are saying. Try to understand what the people want. Don't try to do anything else ... people are not foolish.”

At another rally in Jatrabari, BNP

associate and continued to pressure me. Eventually, I paid Tk 10 lakh to Riyadh,” Zafar said in his statement.

He further alleged that the group returned on July 19 and banged on the door but left after he informed the police.

“On July 26, Riyadh and others came again. I wasn't at home, but the security guard called me. They demanded the remaining Tk 40 lakh and threatened to hand me over to the police if I didn't pay. I called the police again, and five of them were arrested on the spot,” Zafar added.

Apu reportedly managed to flee during that raid.

Earlier, police carried out drives on two separate houses used by Riyadh in Dhaka and recovered around Tk 3 lakh in cash and four cheques worth around Tk 2.25 crore.

Police officials said the same group targeted another former AL lawmaker, Abul Kalam Azad, and took cheques of Tk 5 crore, including the seized ones, from Azad's Green Road office on June 26.

Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas called upon the government not to delay the announcement of an election date.

“I strongly suspect that there is a big conspiracy even behind announcing the election date. I still believe they [government] will try everything to make sure that the election is not fair or doesn't take place at all. They will try to mislead the people against the BNP.”

In another development, Standing Committee members Nazrul Islam Khan and Salahuddin Ahmed visited Hathazari Al Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Uloom Moinul Islam Madrasa in Chattogram yesterday, reports UNB.

Talking to reporters, Salahuddin said except for 51 points, his party has no disagreement with the National Consensus Commission on the remaining reform proposals. “We are hopeful that the July Charter will be signed soon.”

He reiterated their commitment to the implementation of the July Charter if voted to power.

The other BNP leader, Nazrul, said, “We don't see any impediment in holding the election in February. Since we don't see any obstruction, that is why there is no reason to worry about the possibility that the election will not be held.”



Baraa Al-Fara, a wounded Palestinian child, bids farewell to family members killed in an Israeli airstrike that struck their tent, according to medics at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

OVERSEAS PLOTS TO KILL DISSIDENTS

Iran rejects Western accusations as ‘baseless’

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday rejected accusations by the US and more than a dozen of its allies that Tehran had attempted to kill or kidnap dissidents, journalists and officials in Western countries.

In a statement, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei described the claims as “baseless”, calling them “an attempt to divert public attention from the most pressing issue of the day, the genocide in occupied Palestine”.

Western governments including the United States, Britain, France

and Germany condemned in a joint statement on Thursday “the growing number of state threats from Iranian intelligence services in our respective territories”.

“We are united in our opposition to the attempts of Iranian intelligence services to kill, kidnap, and harass people in Europe and North America in clear violation of our sovereignty,” they said.

“These services are increasingly collaborating with international criminal organisations to target journalists, dissidents, Jewish citizens, and current and former officials in Europe and North

America.”

Baqaei said the accusations were “blatant fabrications... designed as part of a malicious Iranophobia campaign aimed at exerting pressure on the great Iranian nation”.

Since early 2022, Britain says it has disrupted more than 20 Iran-linked plots to kidnap or kill individuals in the United Kingdom, including British nationals and others Tehran views as threats.

In October, Reuters reported that Iran was behind a wave of attempted assassinations and abductions across Europe and the United States.

TACKLING MILITANCY

Pakistan issues fresh call for Afghans to leave

AFP, Quetta

Pakistan yesterday issued a new call for Afghans living in the southwest to leave the country, triggering thousands to rush to the border, officials said.

Millions of Afghans have poured into Pakistan over the past several decades, fleeing successive wars, as well as hundreds of thousands who arrived after the return of the Taliban government in 2021.

A deportation drive first launched in 2023 was renewed in April when Pakistan's government rescinded hundreds of thousands of residence permits for Afghans, threatening to arrest anyone who did not leave.

“We have received directives from the home department to launch a fresh drive to repatriate all Afghans... in a respectful and orderly manner,” Mehar Ullah, a senior government official in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province, told AFP.

The province borders Afghanistan and there are significant ties between the regions.

Yesterday, there were “around 4,000 to 5,000 people at Chaman border” waiting to return, said Habib Bingalzai, a senior government official.

S Korea’s Yoon resists questioning by lying down on floor



REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's ousted President Yoon Suk Yeol, who is in detention while on trial and facing various criminal probes, lay on the floor of his cell yesterday and refused to leave it for questioning, a spokesperson for a special prosecutor said.

Yoon was removed from office in April by the Constitutional Court over his botched attempt last year to declare martial law and is now being investigated by a special prosecution team formed under new President Lee Jae Myung.



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Partial tariff relief is a hard-won victory

A sober understanding of the new reality is necessary moving forward

In securing a 20 percent tariff rate from Washington, Dhaka has navigated a perilous new era of US trade diplomacy. The immediate reaction is justifiably one of relief. A potential 35 percent tariff, which would have been catastrophic for the country's primary export engine, has been averted. This is a hard-won victory for Bangladesh.

Yet, this relief should be tempered with a sober understanding of the new reality. While National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman rightly praised the outcome as "good news," the more measured comments from Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin are equally telling. His admission that Bangladesh "expected a rate below 20 percent" reveals the fine print of modern transactional diplomacy: a win is not about achieving the ideal, but about securing a competitive position in a world of hard bargains. The new 20 percent benchmark, applied under the reciprocal trade framework, will stack atop the country's existing average tariff of 16 percent, pushing the total levy to 36 percent. While steep, the rate remains workable, precisely because it is not unique to Bangladesh. The same formula applies to all nations, ensuring the country stays competitive with key rivals.

Indeed, the outcome keeps Bangladesh in lockstep with Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, and only marginally behind Pakistan's 19 percent. The contrast comes from the fate of India. Hit with a punitive 25 percent tariff, New Delhi's experience demonstrates that in President Donald Trump's Washington, strategic partnership alone is no longer a shield. Access to the world's largest consumer market is now explicitly tied to a country's willingness to align with American priorities.

The price of this access is clear. Bangladesh's negotiators wisely focused their commitments on purchasing US agricultural products, a move that serves food security goals and fosters essential goodwill. That was an astute concession. It illustrates that successful negotiation is no longer confined to tariff percentages but requires a holistic approach, linking trade to everything from food policy to strategic cooperation.

Therefore, this episode must serve as more than a momentary success; it must be a blueprint for the future. The era of predictable, rules-based trade relations is giving way to a more fluid and demanding environment. The White House has declared that each country's tariff rate reflects the "depth of its commitment" to US interests. Dhaka has proven it can meet this challenge, but the demands will not cease. The government should be applauded for securing this initial victory, as a failure to do so would have disrupted exports to the country's single biggest market. But the key takeaway is that such negotiations are the new normal. Bangladesh must now institutionalise this capacity for agile, interest-based statecraft. The hard work of navigating this complex new world order, where every trade benefit comes with a cost, has only just begun.

Break the nexus of crime and politics

Jahangir's death in Narayanganj continues legacy of political crimes

In a few days, Bangladesh will mark the first anniversary of freedom from Sheikh Hasina's tyrannical rule, notorious for its corruption and political abuses. Yet, the toxic nexus between crime and politics continues to grip the country, as illustrated most recently by the alleged killing of Md Jahangir Hossain in Narayanganj's Araihaazar by local BNP members.

According to a report, Jahangir's shop—along with two others—was used to set up the Mahmudpur union's Ward 7 BNP office shortly after August 5. Quoting the deceased's son, the report states that Jahangir's consent was not taken before using his shop, and no rent was paid for it either, although rent for the other two was paid to their owner. On July 30, Jahangir visited the site to demand rent and got into an argument with Tota Mia Pradhan, former general secretary of Mahmudpur union BNP, and several other BNP men. The altercation escalated into a scuffle, after which Jahangir, also a BNP affiliate, was taken to the local health complex where he was pronounced dead. As of 5pm on Friday, police arrested one person in relation to the killing. However, the main accused, Tota, is still absconding.

This is not an isolated incident—certainly not for BNP, which has seen its grassroots leadership often descend into violent infighting since the uprising—continuing the legacy of the Hasina era when abuse of power and party affiliations became widespread. In fact, over the past 12 months, errant members of almost all major parties have made headlines by engaging in unlawful activities, often leading to violence. According to Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), between January and June this year, 65 people died in political violence stemming from intra-party feuds. Crimes of all kinds including extortion, murder, and rape were also reported. Unfortunately, most parties disown such incidents by placing blame on individuals, ignoring how they draw their power from party affiliations. Parties signal symbolic distancing when it suits them but have no issue with using the muscle power provided by criminally minded members or when they use images of party founders or top brass for personal gains.

But expelling party members after the fact—like BNP did in the Araihaazar case—is not enough. Political parties must build effective and transparent accountability mechanisms that prevent crime within their ranks. They must ensure every member is held accountable by actively cooperating with law enforcement. Without such measures, political abuses will persist. We also call on the government to investigate Jahangir's death and ensure justice. Without consistent enforcement of justice, the legacy of political crime will only deepen.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Kuwait invaded

On this day in 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and Saddam Hussein's subsequent refusal to withdraw his troops sparked the Persian Gulf War, in which an international force led by the United States quickly defeated Iraq.

After July: A fragile transition, a nation in waiting



Zillur Rahman is a journalist and the host of the current affairs talk show 'Tritiya Matra.' He also serves as the president of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). His X handle is @zillur.

ZILLUR RAHMAN

One of the most significant political upheavals in Bangladesh's recent history occurred during the July uprising, which took place only a year ago. After years of political persecution, suffocation, and the deliberate deterioration of democratic principles, it was a moment of communal liberation for many. Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's prolonged and increasingly autocratic administration came to an abrupt end due to a confluence of student protests, widespread public discontent, elite disenchantment, and institutional retreat. Hope for change, rebirth, and the restoration of the republic followed. That hope remains a year later, albeit weakened.

The subsequent transition following the uprising brought with it an interim government, headed by Prof Muhammad Yunus, which was never going to be easy. The government began cautiously optimistic, charged with re-establishing public trust, consolidating a shattered state, and laying the groundwork for a fair electoral process. It pledged a restoration of the rule of law, reform, and inclusivity. However, the administration is increasingly vulnerable to both internal conflicts and public scepticism due to its delayed delivery, increasing political inconsistencies, and growing doubts about its authority.

The breakdown of the political unity that initially enabled the revolt has been the most depressing development since it began. After briefly uniting behind a common goal—the overthrow of the previous government—the alliance of student activists, opposition parties, and civil society leaders has returned to distrust, competitiveness, and conflicting agendas. Long seen as the main opposition party, the BNP has struggled to articulate a consistent post-Hasina policy, wavering between calls for more extensive structural reform and demands for early elections. The National Citizen Party (NCP), which formerly presented itself with a young, reformist image, has

become increasingly entangled in internal conflicts and characterised by exaggerated rhetoric. Even some student organisations, which were previously praised as the movement's moral core, have been drawn into disputes and controversies.

The Awami League's political future is still a significant concern in the interim. Whether it should be officially



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

banned or marginalised remains a topic of debate. Although many people believe that a party long associated with authoritarianism and impunity must be held accountable, others caution that exclusion—particularly by decree—risks eroding the same democratic norms that the movement aimed to restore. Here, there are no simple solutions. There is a fine line between justice and retaliation, and in a culture still dealing with the effects of political violence, moving forward

International players have also been keeping a careful eye on things. Once a major backer of the former Awami League-led government, India has been, at best, ambivalent towards the new administration due to its unclear stance and cautious diplomatic approach. Border disputes have escalated, especially in light of recent push-ins of Rohingya refugees and Muslims who speak Bangla. China and Pakistan, however, have taken a more realistic stance and are

need organisation, creativity, and most importantly a forward-looking vision.

The next few months will be pivotal. The gap will either be filled by opportunism, resentment, and a return to authoritarianism, or the interim government will be able to steer the country towards elections and reform in a legitimate manner. For a country that has repeatedly paid the price of freedom, it is reasonable to expect its leaders to step up when the time comes.

Time for political parties to prioritise disability rights



Ayon Debnath is a development practitioner currently working with Sightsavers as campaign adviser.

AYON DEBNATH

In the wake of the historic July uprising, a new wave of hope and resistance surged across Bangladesh. It was not just a call for reform and justice, but also a cry for a country where equality is not aspirational but foundational. One year later, amid the chants of change, there lies a question we must not ignore: what place do the 16 million people with disabilities hold in Bangladesh's new vision for the future?

For far too long, persons with disabilities in Bangladesh have remained the most marginalised and invisible in the national development agenda. This invisibility is not due to their inability, but our failure as a society—more critically, failure in political leadership—to recognise and uphold their rights. As the country prepares for the upcoming national election, manifestos must reflect not just promises, but profound political will to ensure that disability rights are central to their vision of inclusive development.

Bangladesh, in a commendable display of commitment on paper, ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007, thereby pledging to ensure the full realisation of rights for persons with disabilities. Subsequently, several legal and policy frameworks were introduced, including the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities (RPPD) Act, 2013 and its accompanying national action plan

on disability. These measures signify a shift from a welfare-based approach to a rights-based paradigm. This act recognises persons with disabilities as equal citizens, entitled to the same rights and protection under the law. However, despite its progressive legal framework, implementation remains slow, fragmented, and under-resourced, primarily due to the lack of strong political commitment.

While the Ministry of Social Welfare is the lead agency responsible for disability inclusion, it cannot act alone. Disability is a cross-cutting issue affecting all sectors—education, health, employment, infrastructure, governance—and thus demands inter-ministerial coordination. But the role of political parties is paramount. They are the architects of policy, the bearers of legislative power, and the shapers of public priorities. An election manifesto is a moral and political contract with the people. Therefore, inclusion of disability rights in manifestos is both a democratic necessity and a litmus test of a party's commitment to equality.

Ahead of the national election, the political parties must consider the following actions:

Legislative commitment: Every political party must pledge to enforce the RPPD Act. In this regard, the law must be updated to ensure that all government bodies are held accountable for their implementation.

Nomination of persons with disabilities: Representation matters.

Political parties must commit to nominating qualified persons with disabilities as candidates for parliamentary and local elections to demonstrate their true potential. Their presence in decision-making bodies is crucial for disability-inclusive governance.

Establishing disability focal points: Every political party should establish a dedicated disability focal point to coordinate inclusion efforts, both during the election campaign period and beyond.

Formation of a parliamentary caucus on disability: Commit to establishing an all-party parliamentary caucus on disability. This caucus should be empowered to monitor policy implementation, influence legislation, and ensure that disability issues remain on the parliamentary agenda.

Adequate resource allocation: Manifestos must commit to allocating adequate financial and human resources for disability inclusion. This includes funding for accessible infrastructure, inclusive education, assistive technologies, and community-based rehabilitation.

Capacity-building for political leaders: Top leadership within political parties must undergo orientation sessions and include mandatory disability inclusion training in their party development modules. Understanding rights is the first step towards ensuring them.

Universal accessibility: Political parties must pledge to uphold accessibility standards across public infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and transportation systems. The universal design principle should guide all future development plans.

Awareness and sensitisation: Combating stigma and discrimination requires consistent public awareness campaigns. Political parties must

commit to public education initiatives that promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

Strengthening institutional mechanisms: The national executive committee, the national coordination committee, and the district disability committees outlined in the RPPD Act must be reactivated. Ministries should appoint disability focal points with clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms.

Engagement with civil society: Disability advocacy groups and organisations of persons with disabilities are the voice of the community. Political parties should consult them on developing and implementing policies related to disability.

Accessible campaigning: Political campaigns themselves must be inclusive. Rallies, debates, manifestos, websites, and social media content must be accessible to people with diverse disabilities. Inclusion starts with how parties communicate their vision.

Work with Election Commission: Political parties play a significant role in the conduct of a smooth, free and fair election with the Election Commission (EC). Therefore, they must collaborate with the EC to ensure people with disabilities can enjoy their voting rights independently.

The July uprising of 2024 ignited a national conversation around injustice, economic disparity, and democratic accountability. If this spirit of reform does not translate into tangible gains for the marginalised—including persons with disabilities—then the movement's legacy will remain incomplete. It is time for our political parties to demonstrate leadership in ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of society. Let their election manifestos be the starting point of transformation.

The struggle continues

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The clock was ticking towards a potential trade deal with the US when, on Thursday afternoon, we gathered at ULAB to discuss the enduring relevance of the recently deceased Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Our session was the concluding panel of the conference themed “*La luta literaria continua*” (“The literary struggle continues”) with a particular focus on Ngũgĩ from a Global South perspective.

I began by reflecting on the possible consequences for Bangladesh's RMG sector if tariff rates remained higher than those of our competitors. Thankfully, by Friday, we received welcome news: the rates had been finalised at 20 percent. The White House's official statement listed Bangladesh among the “trading partners [who] have agreed to, or are on the verge of agreeing to, meaningful trade and security commitments... to align with the United States on economic and national security matters.”

While we heave a huge sigh of relief, we are compelled to dig beneath the surface. Ngũgĩ's play, *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977), provides an opportunity to look for parallels. In the play that got the author imprisoned, Ngũgĩ narrates the tale of a peasant couple, Kigũũda and Wanjikũ, who are promised upward social mobility through marrying their daughter into a rich family. They are led to believe that by mortgaging their only piece of land for a church project, they would earn social prestige and become worthy of their in-laws. Instead, they fall prey to the trap of the wealthy elite and the church and end up losing their land. Ngũgĩ's allegory is not just Kenyan. It is the post-colonial condition that we experience on a daily basis.

To support the RMG business sector, we are already hearing that the national flag carrier will buy 25 Boeing aircrafts worth Tk 50,000 crore. There will be additional purchases of wheat, cotton and other items for a more balanced trade. We want to become an upper-middle-income country, and our paths are stewed with promises. This is a continuing struggle that is mirrored in



The author, left, at a panel discussing the late Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o's work.

PHOTO: COURTESY

literature. Our ability to decide on our own is often compromised.

For long, education has been seen as the Jacob's Ladder to climb into an alternative state. But it is education that has reminded us of its entrapment. Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chain, said French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. Ngũgĩ adds, “Colonialism planted its flags not only on our land but in our minds.” Today, when we question whose education it is, we return to Ngũgĩ's first novel, *The River Between* (1965). The river separates two

ridges of Kamenno and Makuyu representing the local Gikuyu traditions and Christianity. An idealistic young leader, Waiyaki, tries to bridge the divide through education, but fails only to realise that the colonial wound has cut too deep to heal. Our ambivalent position on the language question allows our education to be the ground zero of discrimination. From the primary level, we

who thrived next to the Padma, and once the bridge was built, although it brought a lot of benefits to the region, how many of those people lost their livelihood depended on the people who came to the river port. The masked progress that hides the teeth of dispossession is common to every country in the Global South, making Ngũgĩ relevant.

In *Devil on the Cross* (1980), Ngũgĩ

the focus from economics to culture. The traditional “centre” of cultural authority, enjoyed by the Global North, needs to be decentred. He relocates the centre to the spaces where most of the world population lives. And to do so, Ngũgĩ argues, we need to stop seeking validation of the Global North, to measure our cultural worth. This is the hardest challenge: are we ready to think of a university as world class if it is not ranked by QS or THE? Are we willing to think of an author powerful without a review in *The New York Times* or a prize in Stockholm?

To decentre, we need to create an alternative space that celebrates local knowledge, curates indigenous performances and traditions, and intellectually engages with the world on equal terms. This will require our ability to translate both at human and AI-enabled levels so that there is a seamless correspondence with the world.

Remembering the rebel writer Ngũgĩ as part of our celebration of July created an opportunity to examine different layers of oppression, and the liberation that we seek both economically and culturally. We become aware of the tariff relief as a strategic concession that limits our sovereignty. Culturally, we recognise that our fates in the Global South are intertwined. Kenya and Bangladesh are no different in their negotiations with what George Gordon Byron once called “moral North.” What is required, then, is to take control of our economic and cultural productions. It requires what Ngũgĩ labels as the decolonisation of the mind. There are three imperatives that can be applied to our context. First, we need to learn to write for ourselves first. Second, we must form a South South circuit where we learn from one another and pursue mutual growth. Third, we must create our own canon. We need to revisit our pedagogical model to understand what is important for us without the agenda-ridden prescriptions coming from the West.

The literary struggle that we are pursuing today must be guided by a type of decolonisation that refuses to mortgage our future, land or imagination. We need to stop seeking external validation when we set and prioritise our national goals. As for members of the English department, the struggle, *la luta literaria*, means to keep on telling our own stories without seeking permission. It means creating a creative and critical mass that mirrors our history without propagating someone else's hierarchy.

How precision agriculture can transform Bangladesh

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SULTAN AHMED AND AFSANA AKTER

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in Bangladesh's economy, employing approximately 35.27 percent of the workforce and contributing about 11.55 percent to the national GDP. Traditional farming methods, however, are becoming less sustainable due to their excessive reliance on synthetic fertilisers and excessive water use. Currently, Bangladesh imports 80 percent of the 6.9 million tonnes of fertiliser consumed annually. Furthermore, about 90 percent of the country's groundwater is used for agriculture. As a result, many parts of the country, especially the northwest and southwest such as Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Dinajpur, and Jashore districts, often suffer from water scarcity.

Precision agriculture offers a promising solution to this acute problem. This method uses advanced technologies to enhance crop production while minimising waste and environmental impact. Tools like sensors, satellites, drones, and GPS-enabled machinery help farmers monitor their fields more efficiently. Soil sensors measure moisture levels, enabling precise irrigation and reducing water usage by 30-40 percent. Drones and satellites capture crop images to detect issues like diseases, pests, and nutrient deficiencies. GPS and sensor data highlight variations in the field, allowing farmers to adjust fertiliser application, which reduces waste and reliance on imports.

Additionally, soil health sensors track pH, nutrients, and organic matter to guide soil improvement. By gathering real-time data on soil moisture, pH, temperature, and electrical conductivity, Precision agriculture helps determine plant water stress and nutrient requirements and allows farmers to make informed decisions. This data is analysed using software and AI to optimise irrigation, fertilisation, and pesticide use. Precision agriculture also enables the automation of these processes, making it easier to apply the right resources at the right time, thus lowering the labour costs. Ultimately, it improves resource efficiency, increases productivity, and

reduces environmental impact.

Traditional rice farming using flooded irrigation method creates an anaerobic soil condition that emits methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) estimates rice farming accounts for 21 percent of Bangladesh's total greenhouse gas emissions. However, the negative impact doesn't end there. The environmental impact

Precision agriculture offers a promising solution to the acute problem of water scarcity. This method uses advanced technologies to enhance crop production while minimising waste and environmental impact. Tools like sensors, satellites, drones, and GPS-enabled machinery help farmers monitor their fields more efficiently. Soil sensors measure moisture levels, enabling precise irrigation and reducing water usage by 30-40 percent. Drones and satellites capture crop images to detect issues like diseases, pests, and nutrient deficiencies. GPS and sensor data highlight variations in the field, allowing farmers to adjust fertiliser application, which reduces waste and reliance on imports.

is exacerbated by the extensive use of diesel-powered irrigation pumps. Large amounts of carbon dioxide and harmful particles are released by these pumps, worsening rural areas' air quality and contributing to climate change. These unsustainable farming practices also pose serious health risks. The constant flooding of rice fields can create breeding grounds for mosquitoes, increasing the spread of diseases such as dengue and malaria. Additionally, methane emission also increases the per capita carbon footprint of our country.

The alternative wetting and drying (AWD), a modern irrigation method introduced by IRRI and the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), has already gained recognition as a sustainable water management practice in Bangladesh. Building on this foundation,

we can more effectively integrate precision agriculture technologies to enhance efficiency and sustainability in rice farming. A combination of these two methods can take water management to the next level. By reducing water usage by 30-40 percent and optimising fertiliser management by 20-30 percent through precision agriculture, methane emissions can be significantly lowered. Furthermore, climate change mitigation can be supported, and rice yields can be increased by 10-20 percent. Additionally, soil moisture sensors can accurately determine irrigation needs, minimise over-irrigation and lead to savings in diesel. AWD can be implemented more effectively, ensuring fields are flooded only when necessary, thus conserving water and reducing methane emissions.

Studies conducted in countries such as the US, India, and the Netherlands have demonstrated that Precision agriculture can minimise chemical runoff and cut water use by 20-40 percent, safeguarding the environment and yields.

To achieve this, pilot projects should be implemented to directly apply precision agriculture in real-world settings. These projects can include training programmes for farmers and demonstration farms to showcase the benefits of these technologies. Farmers can gain hands-on experience in precision agriculture from government agricultural offices at the upazila level.

There are some startups which are already leading the way in precision farming by providing Internet of Things (IoT) sensor-based services to farmers. These startups are helping to bridge the technology gap and can serve as valuable partners in scaling up precision agriculture across the country.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation, BRRI, and other agricultural bodies can come together to form strategic partnerships, creating incentives and support systems to ensure the widespread adoption of precision agriculture. By promoting collaboration between government, industry, and farmers, Bangladesh can adopt precision farming to build a more resilient, sustainable, and productive agricultural future.

Precision agriculture is essential for Bangladesh to enhance food security, reduce costs, and address climate change challenges. By investing in technology, training, and policy reforms, Bangladesh can transform its agriculture into a model of efficiency and sustainability.

unleashed a grotesque vitriol of greed that shows no shame. The shameless admission by the former premier that her attendant had accrued Tk 400 crore offers a local example of Ngũgĩ's devil's feast. The feast of the devil returns when we see that cost of metro rail expansion has skyrocketed.

Last year, when the students extended the calendar to include the days of July in the month of August, they wanted to decentre the fascist mindset. Ngũgĩ's collection of essays, *Moving the Centre* (1993), teaches us how we can rethink the centre. He shifts

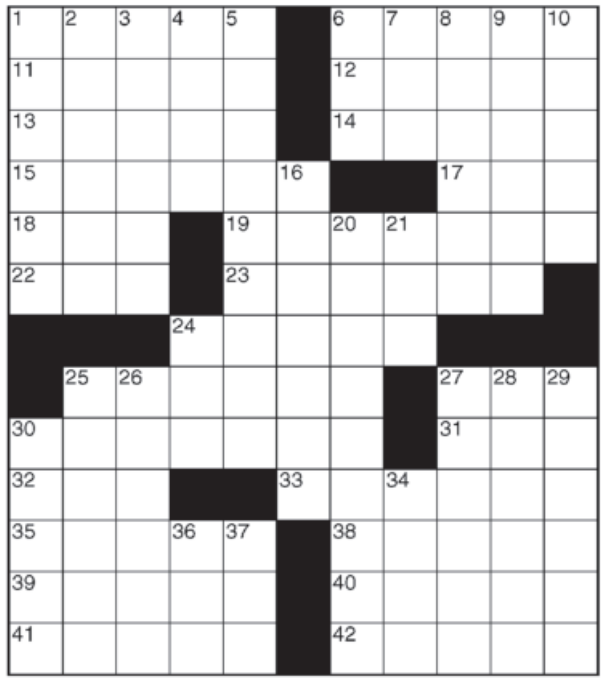
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Further down
- 6 Cocoa alternative
- 11 Undermine
- 12 Maui greeting
- 13 White of TV
- 14 Works the fields
- 15 Unbroken
- 17 Came together
- 18 Freud topic
- 19 Involving feeling
- 22 Bear's lair
- 23 Jordan neighbor
- 24 Exercised one's right
- 25 Brain cases
- 27 Spot
- 30 Metal hut
- 31 Following
- 32 High times
- 33 Hunting weapons
- 35 Following
- 38 Uniform color
- 39 Like stuffed animals
- 40 Belly feature
- 41 Distress signal
- 42 Graceful birds

DOWN

- 1 Imposed, as a fine
- 2 Grove growth
- 3 Soup dumpling
- 4 Writer Ferber
- 5 Gasp and guffaws, e.g.
- 6 Pinnacle
- 7 Completely
- 8 Dorm sharer
- 9 Sighed phrase
- 10 Treat the turkey
- 16 More scrumptious
- 20 Works of art
- 21 Wee bit
- 24 Mover's truck
- 25 Recipe amount
- 26 Raised platforms
- 27 Digestive aid
- 28 Late hour
- 29 Stands for artists
- 30 Hearty drink
- 34 Defect
- 36 Stray
- 37 Reuben base



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

R	A	V	E	D		C	A	C	T	I
A	G	A	V	E		A	B	H	O	R
T	O	N	E	S		B	R	O	O	K
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A	S	S	E	T				A	S	K

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EUAD'S

never-ending journey



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

There was no music director more sought-after than Fuad Almuqtadir in the 2000s. Single-handedly responsible for the careers of many musicians that you know and love today, Fuad is responsible for timeless albums including *Variation No. 25*, *Bonno*, *Maya*, *Re/evolution*, among many others. He built careers for fresh new musicians, uplifted dormant ones, and created an entire sub-genre that to this day, musicians follow.

How in the world have you lost so much weight?
(Laughs) Thanks for noticing. After multiple health scares, I have taken my fitness very seriously. I wake up at five in the morning to do my cardio. The other day, I even took Elita (Elita Karim) to Shahabuddin Park to take a walk with me! I must say, I feel much, much better.

What are you up to at the moment?
I am currently recording a tribute album, one that I'd been planning for a long time. It will feature reimaginings of the '90s songs that we dearly love, voiced by the talents of the 2000s – It's the ultimate 'what-if' scenario.

That sounds great. Which artistes that will be featured in this project?
While I can't divulge all the details, okay scratch that – I'll give you a peek. It features Elita Karim, Zohad Reza Chowdhury, Shakib Chowdhury, and Raef Al Hasan, alongside my lineup of FnF (Fuad and Friends). The project will consist of live performances and music videos.

Your name was synonymous with hit albums over the years. However, as time passed, songs from you have become relatively scarce. Why is that?
Priorities change as time goes on. My priority has always been my

family and loved ones, and over the years it has increased manifold. Add to that my health concerns – I've been through a lot. That's not to say that I am not regularly working on music, I really am. However, I am very critical of myself nowadays, constantly finishing tracks and finding them to be lacking according to my own standards.

To add to that, I often ponder how musicians will adapt to the prevalence of AI. It is truly scary.

I was under the impression that musicians have nothing to worry about, since AI cannot really capture human emotions/imperfections.
That's not true at all! Think about it, it is a learning model that knows how you think, how you will react to particular notes and lyrics. It will even replicate the minor nuances or mistakes that make you human! Irrespective of how confident musicians are that they'll sustain, they absolutely have to consider this new reality. It literally takes a five-minute prompt to make a catchy song that you'll like!

That may be, but can it replace live performances by musicians? I feel like that is the connection that audiences will still crave.
You may be right, but unmanneds concerts are already gaining prevalence. The youth are consistently being attracted to EDM concerts, which need little human input. Now, I say all of this not to discourage musicians, but this has to be talked about, since AI is already starting to take over jingles and short-form musical OVCs. We have to adapt.

It's been a year since we lost Shafin Ahmed, an absolute legend in Bangladeshi music. I believe that you brought out a different side of him. What do you miss the most about him?
I just wish that he could see how much people love and miss him. I'll always say that amidst senior artistes, Shafin bhai had the best sense of humour, as proven by *REXposed* and the promotion of my song *Legend*, where we pretended to have an online beef! In my twenties, when I did dumb stuff, he always forgave me. I miss him terribly.

Is there anything you'd like to say to a younger generation?
Nothing comes to mind. Oh- there is one thing. When you say Gen Z, don't pronounce it "Zyan Zeec". Sounds super awkward!

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



July Renaissance Festival
July 28 - August 6 | 10am - 4pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Exhibition: Bidrupe Bidroho
July 31-Aug 5 | 3pm-9pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi



Play: Songs of Hawkers
August 8-9 | 7pm onwards
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix: Leanne

Hulu: King of the Hill

Apple TV+: Chief of War

HBO Max: The Yogurt Shop Murders

Disney+: Eyes of Wakanda

STYLE STATEMENT

Maitreyi Ramakrishnan

Recently, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan attended the premiere of *Freaky Friday*, turning heads in a shimmering off-shoulder lilac gown that perfectly blended Old Hollywood elegance with modern charm. Her cascading waves and deep side part framed her face beautifully, while diamond accents—a lariat necklace, drop earrings, and stacked rings—added the right touch of sparkle. A delicate nose ring offered a subtle nod to her South Asian heritage, adding a personal layer to her red carpet glam.



WHAT'S PLAYING

'CRAZY TRAIN' by Ozzy Osbourne



Ozzy Osbourne's *Crazy Train* remains one of the most enduring artefacts of early '80s metal. Released in 1980 as the debut single from *Blizzard of Ozz*, the track announced Osbourne's post-Sabbath ambitions with full force: a blistering guitar riff courtesy of Randy Rhoads, an anti-war sentiment buried beneath chaos, and enough manic energy to carry it across generations.

Over four decades on, *Crazy Train* has lost none of its bite. It has racked up over 800 million streams on Spotify, making it Osbourne's most-listened-to solo track. The song continues to appear in sports arenas, blockbuster trailers, and the playlists of teenagers discovering heavy metal for the first time.

Equal parts menace and melody, *Crazy Train* has debuted at No 46; marking its very first appearance on the Hot 100 after Ozzy's passing on July 22, 2025. It saw massive spikes in streaming and AirPlay.

TV TALKIES

'Good Boy': Where heroes bleed to heal

Good Boy is a lively and heartfelt action-comedy that puts a refreshing spin on the underdog hero story. Park Bo-gum shines as Yoon Dong-ju, a golden-medalist-turned-cop with the fists of a warrior and the heart of a loyal pup.

Alongside a team of misfit Olympic athletes recruited into the police force, he dives headfirst into a corrupt city's darkest corners, taking on everything from petty thugs to high-ranking criminals.

The friendship formed between the primary characters after they begin their journey as athletes-turned-officers is key to the formation of the plot.

Notably, Oh Jung-se stands out with a haunting performance as a powerful antagonist, relentlessly pursuing his goals with ruthless determination, no matter the consequences.

The series balances intense street brawls and thrilling showdowns with moments of humour, warmth, and romance—particularly between Dong-ju and sharp-shooting ace Han-na (Kim So-hyun).

Throughout the 16-episode run, the show remains engaging thanks to strong performances, grounded flashbacks, and a central message of grit and teamwork.

Despite a few pacing stumbles and over-the-top moments, *Good Boy* is ultimately about perseverance, loyalty, and standing up for what's right—even when the odds are stacked against you. A satisfying, action-filled ride with heart.



Azim Uddin Ahmed passes away

CITY DESK

Azim Uddin Ahmed, founder life member and former chairman of the Board of Trustees, North South University, passed away in Singapore yesterday. He was 85, said a press release.

He contributed significantly to the growth of private higher education in Bangladesh. The NSU community including members of the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, students, and alumni extends its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prays for the eternal peace of his departed soul.



Mahmud Husain's death anniv

CITY DESK

Today is the 43rd death anniversary of Chief Justice Syed AB Mahmud Husain, said a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at High Court Mazar after the Zohr prayers. His relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the doa mahfil.



Ganosamhati calls for

FROM PAGE 4

shaped by domination, oppression, and inequality. "Only changing the government is not enough -- the entire state machinery must be transformed," he added.

He called for unity among the people to bring about this change.

Family members of those killed or injured during the July uprising also joined the rally.

Leaders and activists from Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barishal, and other parts of the country also joined the rally.

Man kills wife, surrenders to police

FROM PAGE 4

According to police and locals, Salma, a Bangla lecturer at Nurainpur Nesaria Degree Madrasa, hailed from Dhawa village in Bhandaria upazila of Pirojpur, while Sarwar is from Nadmulla village in the same upazila.

The couple had been living with their only son in a rented house in Chandrapara village, near Salma's workplace, and had been experiencing marital discord for some time, said locals.

On Wednesday



This three-year-old has been receiving treatment for dengue at Mugda Medical College and Hospital for the past three days. Her family brought her from Daudkandi in Cumilla. With dengue cases on the rise, people of all ages remain at risk of the mosquito-borne disease. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Relief in SE Asia over Trump tariffs

FROM PAGE 1

Southeast Asia, a region heavily reliant on exports and manufacturing and in many areas boosted by supply chain shifts from China.

Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia joined Indonesia and the Philippines with a 19 percent US tariff, a month after Washington imposed a 20 percent levy on regional manufacturing powerhouse Vietnam.

Southeast Asia -- with economies collectively worth more than \$3.8 trillion -- had raced to offer concessions and secure deals with the United States.

Its countries, many of them key players in the global supply chain, vied to stave off the prospect of losing market share to each other and of multinational firms shifting operations and orders elsewhere.

Malaysia's Trade Ministry said its rate, down from a threatened 25 percent, was a positive outcome without compromising on what it called "red line" items.

Thailand's finance minister said the reduction from 36 percent to 19 percent would help his country's struggling economy face global challenges ahead.

"It helps maintain Thailand's competitiveness on the global stage, boosts investor confidence and opens the door to economic growth, increased income and new opportunities," Pichai Chunhavanajira said.

The extent of progress on bilateral trade deals with the United States was not immediately clear, with Washington so far reaching broad "framework agreements" with Indonesia and Vietnam, with scope to negotiate further.

Pichai said Thailand was about a third of the way there.

The United States on Friday slashed the tariff rate for Cambodia to 19 percent from earlier levies of 36% and 49%, a major boost for its crucial garments sector, its biggest economic driver and source of about a million manufacturing jobs.

"If the US maintained 49%

or 36%, that industry would collapse in my opinion," Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister and top trade negotiator Sun Chanthol told Reuters in an interview.

In Thailand and Malaysia, business groups cheered a tariff rate that could signal a maintenance of the status quo between rival markets, among them beneficiaries of so-called "China plus one" trade.

"It's very good - we're on par with Indonesia and the Philippines and lower than Vietnam ... we're happy," said Werachai Lertluckpreecha of semiconductor manufacturer Star Microelectronics (SMT.BK), opens new tab.

Much remains to be worked out by the Trump administration, including non-tariff barriers, rules of origin and what constitutes transshipment for the purposes of evading duties, a measure targeting goods originating from China with no or limited value added, where a 40% tariff would apply.

Vietnam has one of the world's largest trade surpluses

with the United States, worth more than \$120 billion last year, and has often been singled out as a hub for the illegal re-routing of Chinese goods to America.

It was a first-mover in trade talks and reached an agreement in July that slashed a levy from a threatened 46% to 20%, but concerns remain among some businesses that its heavy reliance on raw materials and components imported from China could lead to a wider application of the 40% rate.

"That is the real issue," said one businessman in Vietnam, who asked not to be named to allow him to speak more freely.

Andrew Sheng of the University of Hong Kong's Asia Global Institute said the similar tariffs mean Southeast Asian countries should be relieved that policy uncertainty was over for now.

"The tariff announcement looks like a classic Trump Art of the Deal deal - lots of hype and threats, and with one flourish, the other side feels that it has a reasonable deal," he said.

Protest turns

FROM PAGE 3

identifying as 'July warriors' had been occupying Shahbagh intersection since yesterday [Thursday] morning. Despite repeated attempts to persuade them, they refused to leave. This evening, another group also calling themselves 'July Warriors' arrived at Shahbagh, which led to fighting and chaos between the two sides.

"Fearing a major incident, police removed both groups from the street in the interest of public safety. Traffic has now returned to normal," he added.

The demonstrators who had been occupying Shahbagh claimed that police charged batons on them after they were attacked by the other group.

Md Yasin, one of the protesters, said, "Police beat me on my back. A group came from PG Hospital [BMU] and attacked us. They tore down our stage. While some of them may have been injured during the uprising, most were outsiders who didn't want our movement to succeed."

Masud Rana Showrav, chief organiser of the group demonstrating for July Charter, said, "Both the police and the other group attacked us. Two of our members have been admitted to the hospital, and several others were

injured. We are now gathering at the Raju Memorial Sculpture. Our next course of action will be announced later."

Asked about the incident, Khalid Monsur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, told The Daily Star, "The demonstrators had blocked three directions of the intersection. The group of injured individuals, currently receiving treatment at various hospitals, dispersed them, citing public suffering."

He, however, denied that police had used force.

"There was no incident of police beating anyone. When one group left the area, another group remained and several individuals tried to escalate the situation. Police then dispersed those who were trying to cause unrest," said the OC.

Meanwhile, one individual claiming to be a "real July Warrior" said, "The government has already announced a date [for finalising the July Charter]. But they [demonstrators] are deliberately causing public suffering by blocking a busy intersection like Shahbagh. As a result, people are growing resentful of the July movement."

"We spoke to them yesterday too, but they didn't listen," he added.

155 eminent citizens

FROM PAGE 3

cannot continue. Death in custody is a reflection of the state's utter failure and oppression.

"We, on behalf of the civil society of different classes and professions, demand that the interim government release all innocent women, students, jum cultivators and conduct a judicial inquiry into the medical negligence and deaths of these three in jail custody," they said in the statement.

They demanded that those who are responsible for the custodial deaths be held accountable, justice be ensured through a legal process, and compensation and rehabilitation of the

victims be ensured.

The signatories included rights activists Dr Hamida Hossain, Sultana Kamal, Khushi Kabir and Nirupa Dewan; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Prof Anu Muhammad; Shamsul Huda, executive director, ALRD; Rahnuma Ahmed, writer and anthropologist; Dr Ittekkharuzzaman, executive director, TIB; ZI Khan Panna, senior lawyer and chairperson of ASK; Shirin Parveen Haque, member, Naripokkho; Prof Sumaiya Khair of Dhaka University; Shahidul Alam, photographer, writer and activist; and lawyer Raja Debashish Roy.

Yasmeen Murshed

FROM PAGE 3

where former colleagues, teachers, students, parents, and members of the local community gathered to offer their final tributes.

Following a second janaza held on the school premises, Yasmeen Murshed was buried at the Banani Graveyard in the evening.

She passed away on Thursday night at United Hospital in the capital. She was 80.

Yasmeen is survived by her son Syed Maher

Murshed, daughter Syeda Madiha Murshed, and countless admirers.

She was a pioneering figure in Bangladesh's education sector, having established Scholastica in 1977 as one of the country's leading English-medium institutions.

She served as the principal of the institution from 1977 to 2007.

She also served as an adviser to the caretaker government during a politically turbulent period, overseeing the ministries

of Mass and Primary Education, Women and Children's Affairs, and Social Welfare.

She later served as Bangladesh's high commissioner to Pakistan from 2007 to 2009.

Born on May 19, 1945, Yasmeen completed her MA in Economics and BA in English from the University of Punjab. She began her professional career as a lecturer in English at the Government College for Women in Islamabad.

Thousands bid farewell

FROM PAGE 12

The street surrounding the mosque fell silent as uniformed officers, Bangladeshi immigrants, and grieving residents lined up in solemn rows. Just as the service ended, rain began to fall.

Didarul was killed on Monday in a mass shooting that unfolded inside an office tower at 345 Park Avenue. A gunman, who had travelled from Nevada and was reportedly targeting the NFL headquarters, fatally shot Didarul and three others before taking his own life.

"Didarul Islam came to this country as an

immigrant with no guarantees, only the hope that hard work, that humility, and that purpose might lead him somewhere meaningful," Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said during her remarks at the funeral. "And it did."

Didarul had served in the NYPD for just three and a half years, having earlier worked as a school safety agent. Known for taking extra security jobs after long shifts to support his family, he was considered on track for a promotion even before the fatal incident.

He lived in a modest

Bronx home with his wife, Jamila Akhter, their two sons aged five and seven, and his parents. Jamila, pregnant with their third child, is expected to give birth in the coming weeks.

The service was attended by city and state leaders, including Mayor Eric Adams and State Assembly member Zohran Mamdani, who sat beside the grieving family.

The funeral procession continued toward New Jersey for burial, led by dozens of police motorcycles. As the hearse passed under the elevated 6 train line, a Manhattan-bound train saluted with a long, mournful horn.

Continuous rain submerges

FROM PAGE 4

and efforts are underway to assess the extent of the loss. We are taking preparation to provide assistance to affected farmers."

"We are closely

monitoring the situation and have already begun distribution of alternative seeds and necessary support to the affected farmers. Final damage assessment will be completed soon," he added.

According to data of the Department of Agricultural Extension, about 1,550 hectares of seedbeds have been entirely destroyed in 15 upazilas of Jashore district.

Erosion threatens key road in Khulna

FROM PAGE 4

road. Locals warn that if this section gives way, nearby villages will be flooded and Aman paddy seedbeds will be destroyed.

Latif Sarder, a resident of Batiaghata Bazar, said, "We've informed the Water Development Board many times. But they've done nothing. We urgently demand that immediate and effective erosion control measures be taken before it's too late."

Debproshad Mondal, executive director of LoCOS, a local NGO, said with climate change intensifying tidal surges and river behaviour, long-term embankment

reinforcement and sustainable road protection projects are urgently needed.

Contacted, Ashraful Alam, executive engineer of Khulna Water Development Board-2, said, "There is always some time lag due to bureaucratic procedures. The project file has already been sent to Dhaka, and work will begin shortly."

PRAYER TIMING	
AUGUST 2	
Fazr	Zohr
Asr	Maghrib
Esha	
AZAN 4-20	12-45
5-00	6-47
8-15	
JAMAAT 4-55	1-15
5-15	6-50
8-45	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION	

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ, টাঙ্গাইল

দরপত্র আহবান বিজ্ঞপ্তি

স্মারক নং: ৫৯.১৪.০০০০.১৪৮.০০২.০৭.০০০২.২৫.৮১৭০

তারিখ: ২৯ জুলাই ২০২৫ খ্রি.

টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ, টাঙ্গাইল-এর ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের জন্য নিম্নোক্ত পণ্য ও সামগ্রী ক্রয়ের লক্ষ্যে অভিজ্ঞ, যোগ্য এবং আর্থিকভাবে সক্ষম সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/এজেন্সি/ব্যবসারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

ক্রমিক নং	প্যাকেজ নং	পণ্যের বিবরণ	বাজেট (টাকা)
১	TMC-09	Books and Periodicals	৫,০০,০০০/-
২	TMC-16	Medical and Surgical Supplies	১০,০০,০০০/-
৩	TMC-19	Other Stationery	১০,০০,০০০/-
৪	TMC-29	Computer and Accessories	৫০,০০,০০০/-
৫	TMC-30	Office Equipment	২৫,৫০,০০০/-
৬	TMC-31	Furniture	২৫,০০,০০০/-

সময়সীমা ও স্থান:

- দরপত্র ফরম সংগ্রহের স্থান: রুম নং ১০৩, একাডেমিক ভবন, টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ, টাঙ্গাইল
- সময়: প্রতিদিন সকাল ৯:০০ টা থেকে দুপুর ২:০০ টা পর্যন্ত (সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত)
- ফরম সংগ্রহ শুরুর: ২ আগস্ট ২০২৫
- দরপত্র জমার শেষ সময়: ২৩ আগস্ট ২০২৫, সকাল ৯:০০ ঘটিকা হতে ১১:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
- দরপত্র খোলার সময়: ২৩ আগস্ট ২০২৫, সকাল ১১:১৫ ঘটিকা
- স্থান: অধ্যক্ষ মহোদয়ের অফিস কক্ষ, টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ, টাঙ্গাইল।

শর্তাবলী (সংক্ষিপ্ত):

- দরপত্রদাতাকে অবশ্যই বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ ভ্যাট প্রদান সনদ, হালনাগাদ আয়কর প্রদান সনদ, একই পণ্য/সেবা সরবরাহের পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সার্টিফিকেট ও অন্যান্য চাহিত কাগজপত্র প্রদান করতে হবে।
- নির্ধারিত ফরমে দরপত্র জমা দিতে হবে।
- দরপত্রের বৈধতার মেয়াদ দরপত্র জমা দেয়ার শেষ তারিখ হতে ২০ দিন বলবৎ থাকবে।
- দরপত্র কি: ১০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য), যা নিচের ব্যাংক হিসাব নম্বরে জমা দিতে হবে:
ব্যাংক হিসাবের নাম: অধ্যক্ষ, টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ, টাঙ্গাইল, ব্যাংক হিসাব নম্বর: ০২০০০৪২৯৪২৩১, অগ্রাধী ব্যাংক, টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ শাখা, টাঙ্গাইল।
- দরপত্র জামানত কি দরপত্র সুদের ২% দরপত্রের সাথে পথে অর্ডার আকারে জমা দিতে হবে যাহা ফেরতযোগ্য।
- সকল কাগজপত্র সূচীপত্রসহ বই আকারে বঁধাই করে প্রত্যেক পাতায় দরপত্রদাতার স্বাক্ষর ও সীল অবশ্যক।
- অসম্পূর্ণ বা নির্ধারিত সময়ের পরে প্রাপ্ত দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে। সার্ভে কমিটির সন্মোদনকৃত প্রত্যয়ন পাওয়ার পর বিল পরিশোধ করা হবে।
- কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যেকোনো দরপত্র আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণভাবে বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করে।

যোগাযোগ:

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29.07.2025

অধ্যক্ষ

টাঙ্গাইল মেডিকেল কলেজ, টাঙ্গাইল

GD-1700



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

CREATIVE NONFICTION

To fold a city into silence

I blinked and he was gone. There were slow murmurs and loud screams ahead translating to rebellious chants. I looked around and an elderly woman called me into her house. I went inside to find at least 20 young girls and boys hiding there.

OHONA ANJUM

The bus stop was empty as usual, I sat waiting for a sight of one. Then he came. A man in a faded red shirt with a bag hanging on his back, running as if the devil himself had taken out a lease on his shadow. He collapsed onto the bench beside me, his sweat sharp, anxious with the fear of a hundred things. Before I could speak, the gunshot cracked the air, a sound so loud it wasn't sound at all, rather a rupture, a tear in the fabric of the ordinary day I planned to have but my body knew before my mind: this was not a day for buses.

Where—? I started, staring at his face. Wide, liquid, the eyes of a man who had just seen history rewrite itself in blood.

"My friend is dead," he said, and in his voice was the quiet fury of the unexceptional, the way people here learned to say such things without

flinching.

Down the road, a pack of boys moved like a single organism, they had wooden sticks raised above their heads like they tied an invisible flag to it. That would protect them, stand with them in need. They were young, too young, but their faces were old with the knowledge of what sticks could do when rains of bullets chased them. Around us, the street folded in on itself, the shopkeepers yanked down corrugated shutters, mothers dragged children inside by their wrists, a stray dog trotted past, ribs heaving.

I should have run. But the body is a stubborn thing; mine stayed rooted, as if my bones had turned to stone. Only when the second shot rang out closer now, a punctuation mark to some unspeakable sentence, did my hands move of their own accord. I held my bag to my chest for the newest fear of bullets.

I did not know where to go. The

street had become a living thing, recoiling. The shutters slammed down over market stalls, their metallic shrieks cutting through the heat. Cars and motorcycles stood abandoned, their engines burning gasoline into air, their riders vanished into the cracks of the city. The July sun hung low and white like a merciless witness. But no crueller than this day, or the silence that followed each gunshot, it was its own kind of violence.

The rickshaw driver's eyes met mine. He did not ask where I needed to go. There was only one direction now: away.

His legs pedalled through the unknown corners of the city I had lived in all my life, which I called my city. In that moment, I no longer recognised it. We slipped through alleyways so narrow the rickshaw's wheels grazed the walls, scraping off flakes of old propaganda posters. Vote for Progress, one fragment read, clinging to the brick. The buildings here leaned into

one another with balconies so close a neighbour could pass a cup of sugar or a curse across the gap without stretching. Those windows were sealed shut, yet I felt eyes tracking us with the weight of held breaths.

I gripped my bag tighter. Inside it was a wallet, a half-finished novel, my student ID, and a tube of lipstick. Ordinary things. Useless things. The rickshaw lurched around a corner, and for a dizzying second, I saw my own face reflected in a darkened shop window, wide-eyed, mouth slightly open, a portrait of a woman who had just learned how quickly a day could unravel.

The terror did not fade. It only changed shape. From the sharp scream of bullets to this: the slow, sickening realisation that the streets I'd walked blindfolded as a child were now a maze with no exit. The driver hunched over the handles, his shoulders sharp as blades. He knew these turns, these

shadows. I wondered if he, too, was counting the gunshots in his head, measuring the distance between each one like the spaces between heartbeats.

He left me in a distant alley, saying, "May God's mercy be upon you."

I blinked and he was gone. There were slow murmurs and loud screams ahead translating to rebellious chants. I looked around and an elderly woman called me into her house. I went inside to find at least 20 young girls and boys hiding there.

The woman bolted the door behind me. Outside, hour by hour the chants swelled, like a tide against the shore. Gunshots were faster than the blinking of eyes. Inside, we were silent. Waiting. The walls felt as thin as parchment that trembled with every shout. I thought of the rickshaw driver's prayer. Mercy, from this day forward, was going to be a currency out of circulation.

Ohona Anjum writes, rhymes, and studies English Literature.

POETRY
BY IFTEHAZ YEASIR IFTEE

July 18

Do you remember the sunset on the 18th of July? What colour was it? Orange? Red? Violet perhaps? Or was it a simple hue of blue? I have asked the birds for an answer; they say they didn't fly that day. The thrashing movement of the copters, the buzzing sound of the flaps, The smoke from the tear-gas has not let them fly in the sky. So, when, in the pursuit of an answer, I ask the birds, I get no reply.

Run

Myriads of legs marching. Hand in hand. Firework of slogans. Broad daylight or silent night. Goons and guns. Velocity of bullets. A broken skull. An unmoved body. A hasty run. How many days shall it continue? How much more to run? I have run a mile more with everyone else, and I shall keep running. Unknowing of what to expect next, careless of what is coming.

One of them

Every now and then, I shift the curtains of my room and pretend That I am not inside my house. And that I have no proof of the thousands of murders committed, That I have not seen with my two eyes how defeated The children of my country are. I pretend that I know no green and red flag That has been reddened with the blood gushing from Mughdho's skull. And I pretend to fool myself and play ignorant To the hundreds more they forcefully disappeared. When I walk, I carry a smile I borrowed from an innocent child playing in a field, Who equals me in not knowing anything. But the heavens and oceans know, I know it all, I have known it all since the very beginning. But when I tread on the corrupted streets, I tread defying my knowledge.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Because I am one of them. And I must survive.

Iftehaz Yeasir Iftee is a third year student at IBA, University of Dhaka.

FICTION

Echoes through THE BALCONY

SAMARA SUBAITA

Saiyara didn't wave a flag to voice her rights on the streets. She had never marched in a protest line, never chanted beneath the dark blanket of smoke-heavy skies. Her revolution was quieter, and it carried a little soul swaddled in a bassinet beside her, traces of milk on her lips and dreaming eyes. Her days were soft and stitched with lullabies. Three months ago, she gave birth to a beautiful daughter, Layl, meaning "night" in Arabic, inspired by her quiet prayers during a power cut, lit by candlelight and hope. This was a new beginning for her.

That July afternoon, as the city began unravelling in slow, furious rage, she stood barefoot on the marble-tiled balcony of building 57. The sun was beginning to bend towards the west. The sky above Narayanganj churned and bellowed in hues of smoke bombs and shots. Helicopters circled the air like vultures made of steel, orbiting over houses as if waiting for death.

Saiyara wasn't watching the chaos; she was absorbed in watching the wind, the way it carried dust and the history we were to make. She looked up at the sky, tracing the skyline with her eyes like a silent prayer, unaware of

the grief that would befall on the joy of her motherhood.

"Maa," she called inside. "It's getting louder by the minute."

No answer from the kitchen.

Inside, her mother washed the rice for lunch with shivering hands. A flash of a red dupatta fluttered on a rooftop in a building across the street.

Then it came.

Not a bang.

Not a warning.

A rupture in the sky.

Something crueller.

A bullet sliced through the iron grill like it was meant for Saiyara. It passed through her skull. Her knees gave out first. Then the silence. It did not pause to consider the cries, the innocence, the milk contained for the child or the lullabies waiting to be sung.

She collapsed without a cry, her body folding around her daughter's cradle, imitating a final act of a mother protecting her child.

Layl did not cry.

Not until her grandmother broke down in tears.

The men who walked in later said it was a stray bullet. As if the violence had no master.

As if the weapon had just departed without a destination.

Saiyara was not collateral. She, like many, was not an item in a line of someone's spreadsheet of unrest.

She was a mother. A daughter. A breathing vessel of stories that may never unfold.

The balcony stands still today. The iron grill carries the same dent the bullet hole had imprinted on it, like a dark eye watching people walk on the street beneath it. The concrete wall has been repainted, but it peels off every monsoon, like grief refusing to be silenced.

Layl is a year older today—hardly walking, babbling half words like ma and dada. She does not understand death yet, but she understands absence.

She traces her grandmother's face for someone she cannot name and sometimes hums to the wind like it might carry her lullabies back.

Today, she does not speak of protest.

But one day, she will.

And when she does, her voice will be of inheritance.

Samara Subaita is a student at North South University.

HP and ‘A’ team’s preps hampered

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh High Performance (HP) unit had been holding a joint training camp with the ‘A’ side under the Bangladesh Tigers programme in Chattogram. The camp was designed both as a conditioning phase ahead of domestic competitions and as preparation for the upcoming Top End T20 tournament and a four-day match in Australia. However, the preparations have been significantly disrupted by persistent rainfall.

The camp began with 28 players travelling to Chattogram in June. Over the past one and a half months, sources said that only 23 to 24 days of practice sessions or match-scenario training were possible at the Bir Shrestha Shahid Ruhul Amin Stadium. Even during those limited sessions, interruptions were frequent, resulting in sporadic training routines.

It was learnt that even the practice matches faced challenges. The first of these matches, held on Thursday, was played in poor conditions and

Over the past one and a half months, only 23 to 24 days of practice sessions or match-scenario training were possible.

turned out to be a low-scoring affair. Friday’s fixture fared no better, being interrupted by rain after just three overs.

“There was a lot of rain and since both teams – HP and the ‘A’ side – are here, we tried to balance priorities by using the indoor nets, given that they’ll soon be travelling to Australia,” said a source from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

BCB’s chairman of cricket operations, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, visited Chattogram yesterday to assess the preparations first-hand and addressed the media about the interruptions.

“In the past few days, whenever the HP or A team practised here, there were certainly interruptions. When rain interferes, indoor facilities are the only option for practice, but unfortunately, the indoor facilities were not functional. That hampered our training sessions – and this cannot be denied. We have to accept that,” Fahim told reporters on Friday.

Seven players from the HP squad have been included in the ‘A’ side’s preparations for the upcoming tour of Australia. Tofael Ahmed, Rakibul Hasan, Jishan Ahmed, Ripon Mondol, and Mahfuzur Rahman are among the cricketers earmarked for the tour. National team pacer Hasan Mahmud is also under consideration for the Australia tour.

“The final team has not been announced yet, so we can’t say definitively whether he is going or not. But since he is here at the camp, it’s clear he is in the plans [to tour Australia with the ‘A’ side],” Fahim said.



PHOTO: REUTERS

England pacer Gus Atkinson celebrates his fourth five-wicket haul in Tests after he wrapped up the Indian innings for just 224 in 69.4 overs by nicking off Prasidh Krishna in the first session on Day 2 of the fifth Test at The Oval on Friday. England openers Ben Duckett (43) and Zak Crawley (64) raced off to 92-0 before the Indian pacers came back strongly, reducing England to 215-7 at Tea.

Proposed two-tier system a test for Bangladesh

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

How Test cricket can be saved is a question that has been pondered upon for over a century, and since 2016, the ICC has seemingly made up its mind on the solution: dividing the teams in two tiers.

That year, the world cricket’s governing body pushed to establish a two-tier system, with seven teams in the top flight and the remaining five in the bottom.

Reportedly, six teams had even agreed, however, the plans fell through due to opposition from others, most significantly India’s.

Around nine years after that failure, the ICC is once again pushing for it, this time proposing to equally split the 12 teams into two groups of six.

Interestingly, this time the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is seemingly leading the charge as the current ICC chairman Jay Shah and chief executive Sanjog Gupta both hail from India.

The proposal was discussed in the ICC’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Singapore held from July 17-20, and even though some teams opposed it, especially Pakistan, an eight-member working group was formed to test its viability.

World cricket is seemingly split at the proposal, with some terming it a necessity to keep the format relative while others say it as a blatant cash grab.

And amid all the debate, Bangladesh’s future as a top-tier cricketing nation – at least on paper – hangs in a limbo.

For and against
Cricket Australia (CA) and England and



PHOTO: AI GENERATED

Wales Cricket Board (ECB), the other two boards alongside the BCCI in cricket’s supposed ‘big three’, support the move, their main incentive being that it would open the door for two bilateral series in every three years between these three sides.

The youngest Test sides in Ireland and Afghanistan also are reportedly for the tier system as it would open up more playing opportunities for them in red-ball cricket.

The position of teams like current World Test Champions South Africa, New Zealand, Sri Lanka is not clear but the former two could financially benefit from this move.

Meanwhile, teams like Bangladesh, Pakistan, West Indies, and Zimbabwe, all ranked below the top six in Tests, stand to lose the most from this change.

The invisible tiers
There is already an invisible tier in place in

Tests, as the top sides hardly ever play the weaker teams.

Bangladesh, in its near 25-year-long history in Test cricket, have only played six Tests against Australia, and toured them only once for a Test series in 2003.

The Tigers have played just four Tests in England, the last time being in 2010, and have played only five Tests in India.

Zimbabwe have faced a similar neglect and the newest additions Afghanistan and Ireland are hardly getting any matches, having played just 11 and 10 Tests respectively since attaining Test status in 2017.

The argument used by the big three nations is that matches against weaker teams would not be as competitive. But by that logic, England have no business heading to Australia for the next Ashes, having not won a Test Down Under in their last 15 attempts.

Bangladesh’s fate

Although there remains many challenges in implementing the two-tier system, if it does end up happening, Bangladesh, who are currently ranked ninth, are certain to start at the second tier, which would be detrimental to the Tigers’ progress in the format.

But for now, the BCB is playing the waiting game.

“[In the ICC AGM] many did not agree to the decision to form a two-tier system... Till now, we just know about the committee being formed and perhaps in the next meeting an update will come,” a BCB official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Khalid Jamil named India coach

AFP, New Delhi

Former India player Khalid Jamil was on Friday appointed coach of the struggling national men’s football team, a month after Spain’s Manolo Marquez stepped down following poor results.

Jamil, 48, was preferred over England’s Stephen Constantine and Stefan Tarkovic of Slovakia, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said in a statement.



AIFF committee members, including president Kalyan Chaubey, said they believed that Indian coaches “need to be given a fair chance to prove themselves”.

Jamil is the first Indian to coach the senior national team in 13 years after Savio Medeira led the side from 2011 to 2012.

Kuwait-born Jamil, a former midfielder who appeared in 40 international matches for India between 1998 and 2006, has been coaching local Indian club Jamshedpur F.C.

A few members of the AIFF executive committee discussed having Constantine back at the helm but Jamil was regarded a better option as “he has been working with Indian players on a regular basis”.



‘Emotional’ Yu celebrates historic world medal

AFP, Singapore

China’s Yu Zidi said she felt “quite emotional” after the 12-year-old became the youngest swimmer in history to win a world championships medal.

Yu swam in the heats of the women’s 4x200m freestyle relay but missed Thursday’s final as China claimed bronze behind Australia and the United States in Singapore.

Yu, who was competing in the women’s 200m butterfly final on Thursday – finishing fourth – received a medal as a member of the Chinese relay team.

“It feels quite emotional, it’s a nice feeling,” she said.

Yu has turned heads with her performances in Singapore.

She qualified for Monday’s 200m individual medley final and finished fourth, missing out on a medal by just 0.06sec in what is not considered her strongest event.

She followed that up with another fourth in the 200m butterfly final and will also compete in the 400m individual medley.

Yu, who turns 13 in October, discovered swimming at age six as a way to cool off during China’s roasting summers.

She has drawn historical comparisons to Denmark’s Inge Sorensen, who at 12 was the youngest ever winner of an Olympic swimming medal with bronze at the Berlin Games of 1936.

‘Table tennis needs structural overhaul’

ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF) general secretary Maksud Ahmed Sonnet has attributed the national teams’ dismal performance in the recently concluded South Asian Regional Championship in Nepal to a lack of fitness, structure, and proper planning, saying the sport remains confined within the walls of a wooden-floored stadium with no support facilities.

Both the men’s and women’s teams finished at the bottom of the five-nation event, which also served as qualifiers for the World Teams Table Tennis Championship. Sonnet, who accompanied the teams in Kathmandu, said the outcome was not unexpected.

“It was not unexpected, and the players deserved the results. We initially decided not to send the team but later revised our decision so that we and the players could realise where we actually stand,” Sonnet told The Daily Star.

He accepted full responsibility on behalf of himself and the federation, highlighting the lack of an existing system when he took over. “There wasn’t even access to the previous general secretary’s email account. I had to start from scratch,” he said.

Sonnet identified physical fitness,



especially in the women’s team, as a major weakness. “They may have technical skills, but without fitness, it’s impossible to apply those in matches,” he said. In contrast, he felt the men’s team had potential, particularly Mohutasin Ahmed Ridoy, who he considered the best South Asian paddler after the Indians. However, inconsistent participation in the training camp – with Ridoy missing it entirely – hampered their performance.

He pointed to the team’s comparatively better performance in the 2023 Asian Championship in China, where Bangladesh finished ahead of most South Asian nations. “Back then, there was a continuous camp. This year we started late, on May 27, and did not mandate players to stay at camp full-

time. Plus, there were no preparatory matches or domestic tournaments, so the gap showed,” he said.

The BTTF general secretary stressed the urgent need for proper infrastructure and planning. “There’s no physio centre, no gym, and the training venue lacks air conditioning. Players undergo six hours of daily training, but less than half of it is effective due to poor conditions. We also lack player accommodation.”

To address these issues, Sonnet revealed plans to appoint a coach from Thailand on August 3, following unsuccessful attempts to secure a Chinese coach. He also announced the launch of a national youth tournament across four age categories – U-11, U-13, U-15, and U-17 – and pledged to regularise domestic events such as the Federation Cup, national league, and ranking tournaments.

He underscored the importance of reviving club culture. “Table tennis used to be vibrant at the club level – Swamibagh, Armanitola, Young Pegasus – but it has faded. Without club-level engagement, we can’t improve.”

Responding to recent disputes over team selection, Sonnet confirmed that trials will now be mandatory before any international tournament. “No team will be sent abroad without selection trials based on national rankings,” he said.



PHOTO: BFF

Members of the Bangladesh under-23 football team pose for a group photograph after reporting at the camp in Baridhara yesterday evening. Only 19 members, including USA-based Zayyan Ahmed who appeared in the three-day open trial in June, have been called up for the camp. According to the BFF, players from Abahani and Bashundhara Kings will be called up after their respective AFC assignments while three more foreign-based players will join later. Bangladesh are in Group C of the qualifiers alongside hosts Vietnam, Yemen and Singapore. The qualifiers will be held from September 3 to 9.

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Thousands bid farewell to Didarul

AGENCIES

Thousands of mourners gathered outside Parkchester Jame Masjid in New York's Bronx on Thursday, as Didarul Islam, the 36-year-old Bangladeshi-American NYPD officer killed in a mass shooting last week, was laid to rest with full honours.

Moments before the funeral prayer, the New York Police Department announced Didarul's posthumous promotion to Detective First Grade. "He gave everything to protect this city," said the NYPD in a tribute shared on its verified Facebook page.

"Today, Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch honoured Officer Didarul Islam with a posthumous promotion... We will never forget. Detective Islam's legacy will live on in the heart of every NYPD officer," it said.

The funeral, held under heavy skies and stifling heat, drew officers from over 54 precincts and neighbouring states, alongside community members, local leaders, and city officials, reports The New York Times.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



Police officers carry the coffin of NYPD officer Didarul Islam, who was killed in a mass shooting at a Midtown Manhattan office tower on Monday, during his funeral in rainy Bronx, New York City, US on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

EXTORTION IN GULSHAN Expelled Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad leader arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of police has arrested an expelled leader of Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad in an extortion case involving the family of former Awami League MP Shammi Ahmed in Dhaka's Gulshan.

Jane Alam Apu, joint convener of the student organisation, was arrested from the capital's Wari area early yesterday, said Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Apu was expelled from the organisation on July 26 after the extortion allegations against him surfaced.

According to law enforcement officials, Apu and Abdur Razzak Riyad, an expelled leader of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), had allegedly been leading an extortion racket.

Briefing reporters at the DMP media centre yesterday afternoon, Talebur said they are investigating the extortion case with due importance.

In primary investigation, police found that Apu and Riyad went to the Gulshan house of the ex-lawmaker for the first time on July 17 and demanded Tk 50 lakh in extortion. They left after taking Tk 10 lakh in cash that day, Talebur said.



Jane Alam Apu

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

We'll be free from fascism when AL politically wiped out: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country has been freed from fascism for now, but ultimate freedom will be achieved only when the Awami League is politically eliminated, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has said.

"There will be no compromise with those who loot banks, launder money, and grab people's property. We will not accept them. We will not let them come forward in any way," he told a rally in the capital's Azimpur yesterday.

Fakhrul also emphasised the return to democracy, saying people want the country to be run by an elected government.

"Our chief adviser has announced that an election will be held in mid-February. We want this election. Right now, there's nowhere to go. Suppose I have a problem — whom do I turn to? There's no MP.

"Who will raise my problems in parliament? There's no one. Who will speak about my demands in parliament? That's why we need an election soon. We need a parliament soon, where we can speak about our issues."

The BNP leader said every time the AL or other parties come to power, "they loot us, and we don't want to let that happen anymore".

"We have said we want democracy. What is democracy? It means people can express their opinions, cast their votes. By voting, they will choose their representatives. Those representatives will run the country."

Fakhrul said, "As Hasina did — holding daytime votes at

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2



DNCC flags 98 spots as prone to waterlogging

HELEMUL ALAM

At least 98 spots in the capital's northern part remain vulnerable to waterlogging from heavy downpours, though the city corporation spent crores of taxpayer money in recent years to address the problem.

Around Tk 650 crore was spent on development and maintenance of drainage systems in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) areas from fiscal year 2020-2021 to 2023-2024, according to DNCC officials. Yet, the residents of these areas continue to suffer from flooding triggered by heavy rain.

DNCC is responsible for overseeing dozens of canals stretching over 86km, along with 300km of primary drains and 1,200km of secondary drains, said a city corporation official.

Following the July mass uprising last year, DNCC saw a change in leadership. The new administration took some measures, such as cleaning canals and drainage networks in many areas, to mitigate waterlogging. But these efforts proved insufficient.

In late May, the inadequacy of the drainage system was exposed during several days of heavy rain, which inundated many DNCC areas, including Kazipara, Shewrapara, Green Road, Bhashantek, Kalshi, Paris Road, and most parts of Uttarkhan and Dakkhinkhan.

DNCC recently identified 98 waterlogging-prone spots across 40 wards where residents experienced flooding from heavy rain in May due to

faulty drainage networks and structures. The spots include the road adjacent to Mirpur-10 roundabout; Mirpur-1 crossing; Paris Road; eastern part of Kazipara metro rail station; Paschim Matikata; Khilgaon Chowdhurypara roundabout; part of airport link road; Shaheenbagh Lane 10 and 12; Uttar and Madhya Badda;

DNCC has cleaned existing drainage lines and is now evaluating its capacity to effectively drain rainwater in the identified areas, he added.

Experts attribute the persistent waterlogging to the indiscriminate filling of waterbodies and canals, compounded by outdated and inadequate drainage



A waterlogged road in the Green Road area after rain recently.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Starkul Road; Namapara and Bottala in Khilkhet area; road 1-9C and 9D in Uttara Sector-1 and road 5, 6, 9-13 and 16 in Uttara Sector-4.

"We have not only pinpointed the affected areas but also assessed the causes and duration of waterlogging. We are now exploring possible solutions," said DNCC Administrator Mohammad Azaz.

systems.

Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), said the primary cause of Dhaka's recurring waterlogging is unplanned urbanisation, which has destroyed canals, waterbodies, and flood flow zones.

"In a liveable city, waterbodies and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Potato evolved from a tomato ancestor 9m years ago

CNN ONLINE

The humble modern-day potato, first domesticated about 10,000 years ago, got its start in the Andes mountains before becoming a key crop the world depends on. But because plants don't preserve well in the fossil record, its lineage has remained largely a mystery.



Now, a team of evolutionary biologists and genomic scientists has traced the origins of this starchy staple to a chance encounter millions of years ago involving an unlikely plant relative: the tomato.

The researchers analysed 450 genomes from cultivated and wild potato species, and the genes revealed that an ancient wild tomato plant ancestor naturally bred with a potato-like plant called *Etuberosum* 9 million years ago — or interbred, as both plants had originally split off from a common ancestor plant about 14 million years ago, according to a study published Thursday in the journal *Cell*.



A woman collects spilled flour from the ground as Palestinians receive aid from the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in central Gaza, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

1,373 Gaza aid seekers killed since late May Says UN rights office

AGENCIES

The UN human rights office said yesterday that 1,373 Palestinians have been killed while waiting for aid in the shortage-stricken Gaza Strip since late May, most of them by the Israeli military.

"In total, since 27 May, at least 1,373 Palestinians have been killed while seeking food; 859 in the vicinity of (US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation) sites and 514 along the routes of food convoys," the UN agency's office for the Palestinian territories said in a statement.

"Most of these killings were committed by the Israeli military," it added.

In a separate statement, Human Rights Watch yesterday accused Israeli forces operating outside US-backed aid centres in Gaza of routinely killing Palestinian civilians seeking food, as well as using starvation as a weapon of war.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



A FLOATING MOSAIC OF guavas, baskets and people

In Jhalakathi's misty canals, women row through debt, tradition and shifting tides of a seasonal harvest



As the sun climbed over Bhimruli, the boats drifted quietly across the water. Women like Pushpa and Minati rowed forward, baskets full of fruit, hearts full of resilience. The guava season in Jhalakathi is more than a harvest – it is a portrait of survival, tradition, and quiet heroism.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

SHUSHANTA GHOSH and
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Rain clouds hung low over the Bhimruli canal in Jhalakathi, casting a misty haze over the emerald landscape. But neither the damp air nor the morning drizzle could deter Pushpa Samaddar.

At 41, Pushpa stood at the edge of the water, ready to begin her daily journey into the guava orchards. With her were two children and her blind husband, Sumath Samaddar, seated quietly in a small dinghy boat.

With a determined face and weather-hardened arms, Pushpa rowed her family into the canal's green expanse. Her younger child clutched a small umbrella, shielding them from the drizzle.

Once among the trees, Pushpa climbed onto a guava branch with practised ease and began picking the day's harvest. When another boat approached, she smiled and called out to this correspondent, "Try it, these are the early guavas of the season. A little bitter, but good to eat."

Pushpa has known these orchards since childhood. Raised nearby in her father's house, she married Sumath two decades ago, and has since taken over every aspect of family life: rowing, harvesting, selling, and raising their three children.

"I leased this garden for Tk 15,000 this season," she said, still perched on the branch. "To manage the money, I took a loan from a local association. I'll have to pay back Tk 1,750 extra over the year."

Her workday begins at 4:30am. That day, the bad weather caused a delay, but she was undeterred. She packed guavas into a basket with practised hands, ready to sell them at Bhimruli market that evening.

From her guava earnings, Pushpa managed to marry off her eldest daughter, Pinky, four years ago. Her son-in-law now runs a guava business after leasing a bigha of orchard for Tk 17,000. Her son Sumon is in class five, and her younger daughter Sukanya studies in class three at a local school.

"My whole family depends on the guava season. The rest of the year, we grow vegetables and take on whatever work we can find," she said. As the canal widened, dozens of boats came into view – a floating mosaic of baskets, guavas, and people. Some carried tourists. Others were filled with women farmers, hard at work.

Minati Samaddar, 45, was seen rowing a small dinghy.

"My husband Nitai has breathing issues, so I'm taking care of our guava garden," she said. "He sells the guavas in the market."

Minati leased their orchard for Tk 10,000 this season, borrowing the sum with interest. Like many in the

community, she carries this burden quietly.

Nitai's weary face tells of hard years. When he returns from market, it is often on an empty stomach.

During the monsoon, Jhalakathi transforms into a floating paradise. Bhimruli guava market comes alive with boats carrying farmers, buyers, and tourists.

By mid-morning, the air is thick with the scent of ripe guavas and the soft flapping of bat wings in the orchard trees. Boats glide past, their passengers bartering for fruit or soaking in the view.

Guava now sells for Tk 25 to Tk 30 per kg. But as the season peaks, prices plummet to as low as Tk 2 or 3 per kg.

Boats loaded with jackfruits, raw bananas, and lemons also head to Bhimruli Bazar. Nitai supplements his income by selling vegetables in city markets.

Asim Halder cultivates lemons alongside guavas. On this day, he brought 80 lemons to sell wholesale for Tk 80, a modest return, but

have turned to tourism for extra income.

Anik, a boatman who also runs a tailoring shop, ferries tourists during the season.

"Hundreds of young people like me are earning from this," he said. "Soon, the market will be full, hotels and shops will get busy again."

A standout attraction is the "Boudir Floating Hotel," run by Sathi Roy for the past 20 years.

"We serve vegetables, local fish, chicken, and duck. During peak season, 200 to 300 people eat here daily," Sathi said, watching over steaming pots of fish curry.

Tourism in the guava belt is growing rapidly. Asaduzzaman, secretary of the local tour operator association, said around 5,000 visitors come daily during the season.

A group of tourists from Dhaka was seen enjoying lunch at Boudir Hotel after a boat tour.

But some feel the changes have come at a cost.

Apu Nazrul, a tour operator, posted online, "We've been coming

many farmers are switching to hog plum and lemon, turning traditional orchards into mixed groves.

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) says guava is grown on 2,718 hectares in the Barishal division, yielding 25,000 tonnes valued at around Tk 50 crore.

In Nesarabad upazila of Pirojpur, agriculture officer Mahafuzur Rahman said about 10,000 farmers are involved in cultivating guava, hog plum, and lemon.

"Guava is decreasing; hog plum is increasing," he confirmed.

Jhalakathi Sadar is the region's second-largest guava producer. Major floating wholesale points include Bhimruli, Kirtipasha, Shatdashkathi, Khajuria, Dumuria, Kadakati, Jagadishpur, Kuriana, and Rayerhat.

But yields are falling due to ageing orchards.

"We're encouraging cultivation of the Bari variety," said Najrul Islam Sikder, additional director of DAE. "But farmers prefer local guavas. We're also planning jam and jelly processing projects."



enough to support his family.

Despite the picturesque setting, farmers are increasingly anxious.

"The guava season started late this year due to bad weather," said Kshitish Halder of Kapurakathi village. "We sold for Tk 20 per kg at first. Now, traders from Dhaka and Chattogram offer Tk 800 per maund, but the price will drop soon."

He added, "During peak season, it goes down to Tk 5-8 per kg. This happens every year. If only we could preserve the guavas... jam or jelly production could really help."

Many echoed this sentiment, urging authorities to set up cold storage and processing plants to prevent wastage and stabilise prices.

Alongside farming, many locals

here for 10 years, but now the serene atmosphere is disrupted by sound pollution. It's changing."

Still, many like Mizanur Rahman of Old Dhaka return each year. "The beauty of the orchards is unmatched," he said.

Currently, there are about 8-10 floating hotels, over 100 trawlers, and 20-25 tourist boats in Bhimruli. Boat rentals cost around Tk 300 per hour, while trawlers go for Tk 500.

According to locals, the region's guava variety dates back over two centuries, when a farmer named Purna Mandal brought the plant from Gaya, India. It became known locally as Purna Mandali.

But things are changing. Due to rapid ripening and lack of storage,

Dilip Sikder, a veteran farmer in Nesarabad, said cold storage and processing plants could change everything.

"There's still a lot of guavas here," he said. "At least 50,000 farmers could benefit if preservation facilities were available."

Farmers also called for low-interest loans, as many rely on private lenders who charge high interest.

As the sun climbed over Bhimruli, the boats drifted quietly across the water. Women like Pushpa and Minati rowed forward, baskets full of fruit, hearts full of resilience.

The guava season in Jhalakathi is more than a harvest – it is a portrait of survival, tradition, and quiet heroism.

THE JONAKI POKA

We may be the last generation to see it

Fireflies are not just beautiful; they are ecological indicators. When fireflies vanish, it tells us something is wrong with our environment. Their decline in Bangladesh is a red flag. If we don't take immediate conservation steps, it won't just be the fireflies we lose, but the overall health of our ecosystems.

AFRINA MOMOTAJ

“September 21, 1945, that was the night I died.”

This iconic opening from the animated film *Grave of the Fireflies* speaks not only of war and loss but also of the silent tragedies unfolding in our world today. One such tragedy is happening in our backyards, forests, and wetlands—the quiet vanishing of fireflies.

Once a common sight lighting up warm summer nights, fireflies—locally known as *jonaki poka*—are rapidly disappearing, and scientists fear that we may be the last generation to witness their glow. Their fading presence is not just an ecological concern but also a symbol of how environmental pollution and climate change are extinguishing natural wonders.

Why Are Fireflies Disappearing?

Fireflies are among nature's most magical insects, but their survival depends on specific environmental conditions: clean water, moist soil, and dark, undisturbed nights. Today, these conditions are vanishing due to four major causes:



A firefly glows near a wetland in rural Bangladesh. Once common in villages and forests, their numbers have declined drastically.

1. Light Pollution

Fireflies glow to communicate and find mates, but excessive artificial lighting from street lamps, buildings, and vehicles drowns out their natural signals. In urban areas like Dhaka, fireflies have almost disappeared due to constant illumination. A study published in *BioScience* confirmed that artificial light at night is one of the greatest threats to firefly reproduction.

2. Habitat Destruction

Rapid urbanisation, deforestation, and wetland encroachment across Bangladesh have destroyed the moist, shaded habitats where fireflies thrive. When trees are cut down and marshlands filled in, we lose more than biodiversity—we lose living beauty.

3. Pollution and Pesticides

Firefly larvae depend on moist soil rich in organic matter and small creatures

like snails. But chemical pesticides used in agriculture and household mosquito fogging kill both the fireflies and their food sources. Water and soil pollution from plastic, sewage, and industrial waste have made many environments uninhabitable for these delicate insects.

4. Climate Change

Unpredictable weather, intense droughts, sudden floods, and shifting temperatures—all consequences of climate change—disrupt the life cycle of fireflies. Some species require specific temperature and moisture levels to develop. Without them, eggs fail to hatch or larvae perish before maturing.

What Happens If They're Gone?

The disappearance of fireflies is more than a loss of nostalgia—it is a warning sign.

- Ecological Collapse: Fireflies are predators in their larval stage,

helping to keep pest populations in check. Their disappearance could destabilise local ecosystems.

- Cultural Loss: In literature, folklore, and childhood memories, fireflies hold a place of wonder. Their absence represents the fading of a shared natural heritage.

- Environmental Alarm: Fireflies are environmental indicators. Their decline points to deeper issues—polluted water, degraded soil, disappearing forests—that also threaten human health and wellbeing.

“Fireflies are not just beautiful; they are ecological indicators. When fireflies vanish, it tells us something is wrong with our environment—be it water quality, habitat integrity, or chemical contamination. Their decline in Bangladesh is a red flag. If we don't take immediate conservation steps, it won't just be the fireflies we

lose, but the overall health of our ecosystems,” says Dr Md Shahinur Rahman, Entomologist and Professor, Department of Zoology, University of Dhaka.

How Can We Stop This?

Though the situation is dire, it is not hopeless. Fireflies can still be saved—if we act now.

As Individuals:

- Switch off unnecessary outdoor lights at night, especially during the monsoon and summer months when fireflies breed.

- Avoid chemical pesticides and fogging; use organic alternatives.

- Create small natural habitats: leave leaf litter in your garden, maintain a moist corner, or plant native grasses and shrubs.

- Educate others. Teach children about fireflies and the environment. Encourage appreciation through observation, not collection.

As Communities and Policymakers:

- Implement dark sky policies in parks and rural areas to reduce light pollution.

- Protect wetlands, riverbanks, and forests that serve as critical habitats.

- Monitor and regulate pesticide use, especially during firefly breeding seasons.

- Support environmental awareness campaigns and scientific research on native species and climate resilience.

If we act wisely—if we reconnect with the rhythms of nature—fireflies might continue to grace our evenings. But if we remain indifferent, their light will become just another casualty of a world we failed to protect.

Let us not be the generation remembered for letting the firefly fade. Let us be the ones who saw the glow dimming—and chose to bring it back.

Afrina Momotaj is a *Climate-Smart Agriculturist and Animal Rescuer*. She can be reached at momotaj@frina@gmail.com.

How Coastal Communities Are Becoming Landless

RAFIQUL ISLAM MONTU

‘We are surviving by fighting the river’s current,’ said Morjina Khatun, 50, of Katmarchar village in Koyra upazila of Khulna district, wiping away tears. Morjina Begum’s struggle began after her husband Nurul Islam died in 2015. Natural hazards have made her struggle even more difficult.

‘Cyclone Amphan caused extensive damage to my land. The entire land was submerged in salt water. A part of the land was washed away by the river. Before Cyclone Amphan, the land used to yield good crops. Now the crops are not good. I catch shrimp fry in the river to support my family,’ said Morjina Khatun.

After her husband’s death, Morjina moved to her father’s house. She earns a living by cultivating the land she received from her father. She has a family consisting of one son and two daughters. Morjina has to struggle

received from her husband, so she had to undertake other work.

After Cyclone Amphan in 2020, many families lived on the Hazatkhali embankment in Koyra upazila of Khulna district. All their houses and agricultural land were under salt water. Sudha Rani and many other female-headed households lived on the embankment. Not only Cyclone Amphan, but frequent natural disasters in the region have hit female-headed households particularly hard. These disasters rendered their meagre agricultural land unproductive.

Rich Farmers Are Day Labourers

The crisis of female-headed households is distinct, but overall, all families bear the burden of natural hazards. Due to repeated disasters, once-wealthy farmers on the coast of Bangladesh are now making a living as day labourers. Once, they survived on rice

in front of his cyclone-damaged home, Abdus Salam points to his land. In some places, a layer of sand has accumulated; in others, a new canal has formed. A large part of his land has been overtaken by a newly built embankment. Much of his land has been lost to river erosion. At one time, Abdus Salam owned 150 decimals of land. Now only 22 decimals remain—and even that has become unproductive.

Another affected farmer is Amjad Hossain, 65, from Pratapnagar village in Asashuni upazila of Satkhira district. He owns a significant amount of agricultural land. However, due to the effects of frequent cyclones and high tides, much of it has become unproductive. Most of Amjad Hossain’s land was destroyed by Cyclone Aila in 2009 and Cyclone Amphan in 2020. After Amphan, his land remained under salt water for almost two years.



Farmer Abdul Hamid shows his land—now situated outside the embankment—on a map he keeps. Photo taken in Dargatla village of Asashuni upazila (sub-district) in Satkhira district, Bangladesh.



Farmer Abdus Salam lost his agricultural land during Cyclone Amphan. He is now a day labourer. Photo taken in Valithala village of Shyamnagar upazila (sub-district) in Satkhira district, Bangladesh.

PHOTOS: RAFIQUUL ISLAM MONTU

a lot to earn money. Even though her son works outside, he cannot earn much due to his illness.

I met Sudha Rani Sarkar, 60, the head of a female-dominated household in Hazatkhali village of Koyra upazila. Thirty years ago, her husband Haro Chandra Sarkar died in a road accident. Since then, Sudha Rani has been carrying the burden of the family with her daughter. She had to struggle a lot to raise her daughter. Due to poverty, Sudha Rani worked from home in Khulna city, leaving her daughter with a close relative. Her house was submerged during Cyclone Amphan for about a year. Sudha’s family could not survive by cultivating the small amount of land she

produced from their own land, but now their families are in dire straits. It is very difficult for them to manage three meals a day.

Abdus Salam, 62, once made a living by cultivating rice on his own land. His family lived on the rice they harvested. But natural disasters have taken away those opportunities. Now he survives as a daily wage worker.

Farmer Abdus Salam’s home is in Bonnyatola village in Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira district on the southwestern coast of Bangladesh. His house and land were under salt water for about a year after Cyclone Amphan in 2020. The house was submerged by tides from the Kholpetua River. The damage to his house is still visible. Standing

Deepening Crisis

Rising sea levels, frequent cyclones, and other natural hazards have put the lives of millions in Bangladesh at risk. Agriculture is under threat due to increasing salinity and a lack of irrigation water. Millions have already been displaced to urban slums or migrated abroad. According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Bangladesh ranks seventh among the countries most affected by extreme weather over the last two decades.

A study by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) states that a lack of employment and the impact of natural disasters are among the main reasons for migration. Many families were displaced by

Cyclone Aila in Shyamnagar, Satkhira. Those without land could not remain, as no employment was available. River erosion and cyclones like Aila have left people homeless in Satkhira (40 percent) and Khulna (33 percent). The study found that landlessness or becoming landless was the primary reason why residents left their homes after being devastated by natural disasters.

Millions of people in the southwestern coastal districts of Bangladesh have been affected by frequent cyclones. Cyclone Sidr in 2007, Cyclone Aila in 2009, Cyclone Fani in 2019, Cyclone Bulbul in the same year, Cyclone Amphan in 2020, and Cyclone Yas in 2021 have all caused extensive damage to the region. These disasters have had a severe

impact on people’s lives and livelihoods. Land degradation has further exacerbated their suffering.

Climate change is expected to cause a sharp rise in the number of displaced people in the future. According to the World Bank’s latest Groundswell report, more than 210 million people worldwide could be displaced by 2050 due to climate change. Of these, over 40 million are expected to be in South Asia. In Bangladesh alone, an estimated 19.9 million people could be displaced.

Rafiqul Islam Montu is an independent journalist focusing on environmental issues, climate change, and coastal communities.



Single mother Sudha Rani Sarkar no longer gets the same yield from her land. The land remained under salt water for almost two years after Cyclone Amphan. Photo taken in Hazatkhali village of Koyra upazila (sub-district) in Khulna district, Bangladesh.



Migrant workers waiting at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

People sometimes worry about “brain drain” when we promote skilled migration, but recent research we published in the journal *Science* shows that the weight of evidence shows that there is more of a “brain gain” than a brain drain when skilled workers emigrate to richer countries.

AHMED MUSHFIQ MOBARAK & MOHAMMAD ISLAMUL HAQUE

As we commemorate the first anniversary of the July Mass Uprising—a powerful expression of the frustrations and aspirations of Bangladesh’s youth—one core grievance that ignited that movement still demands urgent attention: the crisis of unemployment among the youth population. Today, more than one in four Bangladeshi youth remain unemployed, despite the majority of them having invested years in education. In the absence of meaningful job opportunities, many young people are turning to dangerous or illegal means of survival, destabilizing communities and undermining social cohesion. To honor the spirit of the uprising, we must urgently create new employment pathways for our youth. While this challenge demands a multi-pronged policy response, one high-impact and relatively untapped solution is expanding international migration—

accelerate: OECD forecasts that South Korea will need over eight times more foreign workers by 2040, and JICA estimates Japan will require 5 million additional migrant workers by that year to maintain modest economic growth. For countries like Bangladesh, these shifts present a historic opportunity to become a key supplier of skilled labor to these economies. These trends create a clear opportunity for Bangladesh—if we can equip our youth with the skills to seize it.

Bangladesh has long depended on labor migration as a lifeline for employment and remittance inflows. About 8 to 10 million Bangladeshis work in low-skilled jobs abroad—mainly in the Gulf. But these jobs often offer poor working conditions, limited labor rights, and low wages. Recent research conducted by economists at Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, and NYU–Abu Dhabi show that even when offered job opportunities in the UAE, many Indian construction

FULFILLING
THE JULY
UPRISING’S PROMISE

Skilled Migration for Our Youth

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS / THE DAILY STAR



Officials at the signing ceremony of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment and Japan's Onodera User Run Incorporate on April 10, 2025.

essential to successfully place migrants in these countries. At present, there is a severe shortage of high-quality language instructors, and the private sector has struggled to fill this gap. One solution could be to offer fellowships and scholarships to attract experienced trainers from Japan and South Korea to build the initial pool of instructors. In parallel, partnerships with technology platforms like Duolingo could be explored to develop AI-powered language learning tools tailored to Bangladeshi learners.

Second, public subsidies or innovative financing models should be introduced to enable young people to invest in acquiring these specialized language and vocational skills. Third, regulatory barriers must be eased to allow reputable foreign intermediaries like Onodera User Run to operate in Bangladesh, bringing in much-needed expertise, enhancing competition, reducing costs, and ensuring safer migration channels.

Fourth, the government must take steps to prevent widespread malpractice among unscrupulous migration intermediaries. Most aspiring migrants lack accurate information about job opportunities, employer conditions, skills requirements, and visa procedures. This will be especially true as we open up migration pathways to newer destinations like Japan and Korea. Ill-intentioned intermediaries exploit these information gaps to engage in fraud, charge exorbitant fees, and provide poor-quality training. To tackle this problem, the government could consider a robust quality rating system for intermediaries. This system could evaluate service providers on key metrics such as legal compliance, training quality, transparency of costs, placement outcomes, and migrant satisfaction. Regular updates, based on migrant feedback, third-party audits, and embassy-level monitoring at the destination, would enhance the quality and integrity of the rating system. Publicly available ratings would help drive out low-quality intermediaries and build trust among prospective migrants. These institutional reforms are essential not only to protect our workers but also to ensure that the entire skilled migration ecosystem remains credible, efficient, and equitable.



COURTESY: SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT INVESTMENT PROGRAM

especially skilled migration to rapidly aging, high-income countries in Asia.

Why Skilled International Migration?

The acute labor shortages in aging societies such as Japan and South Korea have opened unprecedented opportunities for skilled migrant workers from Bangladesh. These countries—once relatively “closed” to immigration—are now actively recruiting foreign workers to sustain their economies. Japan has introduced the “Specified Skilled Worker” (SSW) visa program, allowing migrant workers in 16 sectors, including areas like nursing care, hospitality services, food services, railway industry, construction, automobile transportation, and so on. Japanese intermediaries have already begun recruiting from the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia to fill this gap. Similarly, South Korea has tripled its migrant worker quota to 150,000 in 2024 alone (The Economist, August 29, 2024). These trends are set to

workers prefer not to take those jobs, and overall well-being does not improve much for those who do. So Bangladesh needs to “move up the value chain” in the migration sector, and shift toward skilled migration to better-paying, rights-respecting labor markets in countries like Japan and South Korea. People sometimes worry about “brain drain” when we promote skilled migration, but recent research we published in the journal *Science* shows that the weight of evidence shows that there is more of a “brain gain” than a brain drain when skilled workers emigrate to richer countries.

The Language Barrier and Market Failure

Despite these openings, skilled migration from Bangladesh to Japan and Korea remains negligible, especially relative to our competitors Philippines and Vietnam. The biggest bottleneck is language. Learning Japanese or Korean is what economists call a “highly specific investment” that has limited

value in the domestic job market or in other markets if the migration to Japan or Korea fails. In other words, learning Japanese or Korean is risky in a way that English is not. This has resulted in a classic market failure in which our workers are understandably reluctant to make a risky investment in a skill that is not guaranteed to pay off until they pass exams administered by the Japanese government before any visa is issued. The problem of under-investment becomes more severe from a societal perspective because many of the benefits of acquiring these skills will accrue to future generations of Bangladeshi workers rather than those making the investment today. Learning Japanese today can build migration networks that reduce costs and risks for future generations. Economic theory and logic easily justify public investments in this “network good” with positive externalities. Facilitating and subsidizing such training would be in our national interest.

A Solution to the Market Failure

As researchers, we had been working with a Japanese labor intermediary who has devised a clever solution to this market failure and is already successfully implementing their model in the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Onodera is a large conglomerate with operations in Tokyo, Hokkaido, and elsewhere, and operates many food service and restaurant-related businesses. Those businesses needed foreign workers, and after they started recruiting, they realized that there was massive market demand in Japan for a labor placement service. Hence the subsidiary named Onodera User Run (OUR) was born, offering their foreign worker recruitment services to other Japanese employers. OUR’s “Straight Through” model carefully selects trainees in Davao, Philippines and other locations, and provides free Japanese language instruction, vocational training, job placement, and post-arrival support. Only after the trainee passes the required government-administered language and culture exams and upon successful placement with an employer in Japan, does OUR get reimbursed by employers for the cost of providing free training.

The reimbursement amount is generous enough that OUR has been operating as a profitable business in Tokyo. They have already successfully placed thousands of workers from Southeast Asia into Japan’s labor market.

From Memo to MoU: A Public-Private Partnership Takes Shape

Inspired by our experience working with OUR in the Philippines, Mushfiq Mobarak, a Yale Economics Professor and one of the authors of this piece—outlined a concrete vision in a policy memo in August 2024 and shared it with a few relevant advisors in the interim government who were newly placed in charge of the Planning Ministry and the Ministry for Expatriate Welfare. He proposed that Bangladesh set up a public-private migration facilitation program where Japanese employers co-finance training programs. After some positive responses to the memo, we asked OUR to consider expanding their operations in Bangladesh leveraging our close connection to the company. They were persuaded based on the availability of human resources in Bangladesh and enthusiastic government agencies who were willing to partner.

Shortly thereafter, OUR submitted a letter of intent addressed to Dr. Asif Nazrul expressing interest in entering the Bangladeshi market. We set up multi-party dialogues between OUR, Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment, as well as the Bureau of Manpower Employment, and Training (BMET), with the help of Mr. Zia Hassan, policy advisor to the Ministry. OUR sent a delegation from Tokyo to Dhaka, and this collaboration culminated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to initiate a pilot program in Bangladesh. OUR will soon begin training Bangladeshi youth for skilled migration to Japan, replicating their Filipino model.

Path Forward

To realize the full potential of skilled migration and ensure the success of the new public-private partnership, Bangladesh must take several strategic steps. First, the government should invest in expanding the supply of qualified trainers in Japanese and Korean languages, which are absolutely

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THE END OF EXEMPTION?

Looming LDC graduation casts a shadow over pharma industry's success

JAGARAN CHAKMA

In the aftermath of the 1971 Liberation War, newly sovereign Bangladesh inherited little industrial infrastructure. The pharma nerve centre and related facilities, like many others, had been headquartered in Pakistan. Ensuring the availability of essential medicines became an urgent and expensive task. Pharmacies overflowed with imported drugs, many of them unnecessary, ineffective, or counterfeit, sold at inflated prices. Just eight multinationals controlled over 70 percent of the domestic drug market. While there were a handful of local players, they had little opportunity to grow.

That changed in June 1982, when the

\$3.5 billion. In fiscal year 2024-25, exports reached over 160 countries and earned \$213 million. Several firms, including Beximco, Square, Incepta, Eskayel, now operate internationally, having earned accreditations from regulators like the US Food and Drug Administration, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, and the European Union Good Manufacturing Practice.

But behind that success lies a legal cushion: the TRIPS waiver.

THE LEGAL SCAFFOLD

As a least developed country (LDC), Bangladesh has been exempt from fully complying with the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). That waiver, essentially, the legal permission to

patent laws, pay royalties, or negotiate licensing agreements for any drug still under protection, especially in areas like oncology, autoimmune disorders, diabetes, and rare diseases.

Technologically, the pharmaceutical landscape is shifting toward biologics – complex, high-precision drugs made from living organisms. Producing biologics requires advanced know-how and infrastructure, areas where Bangladesh still lags.

According to Monjurul Alam Monju, chief executive officer of Beacon Medicare, biologics are a completely new ball game, and local manufacturers remain mostly underprepared.

"If new biologic drugs fail to receive regulatory approval by 2026, we'll face major patent barriers. Either they'll become unavailable to patients or too

the absence of a gas connection.

As licensing fees and input costs rise post-waiver, Bangladesh's pharmaceutical sector will be squeezed from both ends. Even prices of non-patented drugs could rise if raw materials become costlier.

"Dependence on China and India for pharmaceutical inputs would deepen, as Bangladesh's domestic API production is insufficient. The pharmaceutical export sector could suffer severe setbacks," said Monju.

The Beacon Medicare CEO called for reforms: streamlined registration, a focus on biosimilars, robust research and development investment, and expanded API production.

"Otherwise, our people will be deprived of advanced medical treatments, and the pharmaceutical

rollouts, Bangladesh was able to supply some of the most affordable generics in the world. Without the TRIPS waiver, such access might disappear. Drug prices could go up tenfold or more."

Referring to Indian pharma industry development, the Beximco executive said India took initiatives to face this



As a least developed country, Bangladesh has been exempt from fully complying with the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). That waiver has allowed Bangladeshi firms to legally produce patented drugs without paying royalties or securing licences.

government introduced Bangladesh's first National Drug Policy. The reform was seismic. More than 1,700 so-called "irrational" formulations were banned, price controls were imposed, and foreign pharmaceutical firms faced strict new limits. The market became a space for local ambition.

Four decades later, Bangladesh went on to be known as a major player as a thriving low-cost generic drug industry defying big pharmas, and setting a precedent for the world to see. Local companies now supply 98 percent of the country's pharmaceutical needs, in a domestic market worth more than



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



copy, has allowed Bangladeshi firms to legally produce patented drugs without paying royalties or securing licences – a rare freedom in global trade. That legal shelter has powered the country's pharmaceutical rise, making life-saving drugs more affordable both domestically and for other low-income nations.

That immunity, however, is nearing its end. With LDC graduation expected in November 2026, Bangladesh will be required to comply with global patent rules.

"Losing TRIPS waiver would create substantial pressure, both on the domestic market and exports," said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem).

Raihan said the issue not only involves Bangladesh's interest but also some other low-income nations that rely on affordable medicines from the country.

Though there is still time for the waiver to end, with opportunities to prepare and even negotiate an extension, the economic and legal expectations of LDC graduation have already accelerated pressure.

"Currently, we can manufacture many new medicines ourselves without taking a licence from patent holders," said Abdul Muktedir, managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals. "But if the TRIPS waiver ends, our freedom in the industry will significantly shrink."

"After graduation, if a new drug emerges that costs hundreds of thousands of takas in Europe or the US, it will be difficult to reduce its price in Bangladesh," Muktedir said. "Producing it without a licence would be illegal. So either we would have to import it at high prices or negotiate licences from patent holders, which often involves stringent and costly terms."

While some multinational pharmaceutical companies, such as GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), sometimes grant licences at low costs out of social responsibility, others, such as Pfizer and Novartis, are known to be less accommodating. "They don't want their products made cheaply elsewhere," Muktedir added. "That will be our biggest challenge. Treatment costs will go up. And people will suffer."

To be sure, many generic drugs, those whose patents have expired, will remain unaffected, meaning prices for basic medications are unlikely to spike overnight.

BETWEEN MOLECULES AND MARKET

The looming challenge is twofold: legal and technological. Legally, Bangladesh will be required to comply with

expensive for most people to afford," he said.

Zahangir Alam, chief financial officer of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd, said, "If a new molecule is discovered abroad after the waiver ends, we'll need licences or pay royalties."

"Although technology transfer agreements and royalty negotiations could ease the transition, as was the case in India after 2002, there is a real risk of higher production costs and delays in introducing new medicines to the local market," he added.

Meanwhile, Monju warned that without the ability to offer cheap alternatives to high-priced brand drugs, Bangladesh's pharmaceutical exports, built largely on affordability, may fail to stay competitive.

And biologics are just the beginning. With each passing year, new patented drugs are introduced globally, which will require Bangladesh to purchase expensive licences to produce them.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at local think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), estimates that 20 percent of the drugs manufactured in Bangladesh today are still under patent protection, while the patents on the remaining 80 percent have already expired. Without access to those licences post-waiver, either production will halt or prices will soar. "This could push the prices of patented drugs significantly higher."

Citing a study by the South Centre in Geneva, he said it was estimated that insulin prices could increase eightfold in Bangladesh without the TRIPS exemption. "For a country where affordability defines access," Rahman said, "this is not a marginal issue. It is central to public health."

DEPENDENCY, AGAIN

Bangladesh currently imports nearly all its active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), the core chemical compounds used in drug production, from countries like India, China, and South Korea. Total annual API imports are estimated at \$1.2 billion. This dependency exposes the industry to geopolitical tensions, price volatility, and supply disruptions.

The government, for its part, announced an API Industrial Park in Gazaria back in 2008.

But 15 years on, the project remains mostly incomplete. Of the 42 plots designated for API production, only four have begun operations thanks to

sector's export earnings will face a serious blow," he added.

AT A POLICY CROSSROADS

For now, the government says it is trying to prepare. Md Akter Hossain, director at the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA), said regulatory processes are being streamlined.

"We're working to simplify and fast-track product approvals," he said, noting that intellectual property laws are also being amended to align with post-graduation realities.

"Legal ownership of most products remains with foreign entities, limiting our control. Still, we are working on regulatory terms and production guidelines to support the industry," he added.

He said that although there is no direct public investment in the industry, the DGDA is maintaining close coordination with the pharmaceutical association to understand challenges and respond effectively.

Syed Abdul Hamid, a professor at the Institute of Health Economics of Dhaka University, took a somewhat measured view.

"The immediate impact of an end to the TRIPS waiver may be minimal due to existing registrations," he said, emphasising future challenges without proper regulatory and pricing frameworks.

"But new drugs don't flood the market every year," he said. "However, when they do, they're often critical, like antivirals, cancer drugs and rare disease therapies. We need proactive regulation, academic collaboration, and readiness for what's coming."

As of now, Hamid sees no reason for alarm, expecting a gradual transition.

But others within the sector remain unconvinced.

"The country's patent office isn't functioning effectively," said one senior executive at a top firm, speaking anonymously. "Even now, many government officials don't fully understand what's coming."

Rabbur Reza, chief operating officer of Beximco Pharmaceuticals, said that while major companies are preparing to face the post-graduation challenges with their own capacities, the government appears unprepared, and the consequences could be severe.

Citing examples, he noted, "During Covid-19 and Hepatitis C treatment



similar challenge 40 years ago but Bangladesh is still lagging behind.

He called for urgent policy reforms, including revised patent laws, a dedicated pharmaceutical IPR cell, and strengthened R&D infrastructure.

"This is not just a business issue, it's a public health concern," Reza said.

THE ROAD FROM HERE

Bangladesh, alongside several other LDCs, has proposed that the TRIPS waiver be extended to 2029.

"This would give the local pharmaceutical industry time to adjust and absorb the impact," Salim Raihan said, warning that the loss of the waiver could jeopardise investments and threaten the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of skilled workers in the industry.

Unfortunately, prospects appear slim.

"Major pharmaceutical lobbies in the United States and elsewhere are not keen to extend the waiver," said CPD's Rahman.

While the European Union, the UK and Canada continue to offer some trade facilities on a bilateral basis, no multilateral agreement has yet been reached to extend TRIPS waiver benefits or other special and differential treatments for graduating LDCs.

But, even if the extension is granted, it will only delay, not prevent, the inevitable. Eventually, Bangladesh will have to comply fully with global IP rules. The only question is whether the industry will be ready.

Square CFO Alam sounds cautiously optimistic.

He said the company is now focused on expanding Bangladesh's pharmaceutical presence globally.

"With strategic planning and close collaboration with regulators and international partners, we believe we can continue to grow, even under tighter global trade and patent rules," he added.

But there is a creeping sense that the opportunity window is narrowing. The 1982 drug policy gave the sector its first real shot at independence. The TRIPS waiver gave it wings. Now, as both history and legal protection fade, the question remains: what next?