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BB readying Tk 20,000cr for bank overhaul

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank is designing a Tk 20,000-crore plan to restructure troubled banks, backed by international audits and new legal powers to deal with failing lenders.

"The first phase will start in a month or so, and some banks will be restructured by December," BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur told The Daily Star last week.

Further funds will be needed in later phases, with financing coming from both the national budget and development partners. The Asian Development Bank is expected to provide up to \$1.5 billion, while the World Bank may contribute \$1 billion.

The overhaul plan will start with at least five banks: First Security Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Union Bank, and EXIM Bank. ICB Islamic Bank, also in trouble, will require a separate solution due to its foreign investment exposure. The others could be merged as part of the restructuring.

"Equity injections will be unavoidable. However, for banks involved in mergers, future business plans must be financially viable," said Zahid Hussain, a member of the central bank's reform task force. "It's possible to merge these five banks by December," he added.

Governor Mansur stressed that government recapitalisation funds, whether provided as equity or loans, will be repaid with a return, ensuring the government does not incur losses.

A donor-supported Asset Quality Review (AQR) is already underway in private banks to test compliance with new rules on asset classification and provisioning. The phased review will cover 17 private domestic banks, representing 35 percent of total banking assets.

The first phase, completed in May by KPMG and Ernst & Young Sri Lanka, examined six banks. The second and third phases, covering the remaining 11, are due to conclude by December. Bangladesh Bank has

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- ADB may provide as much as \$1.5 billion
- Five banks targeted for restructuring by December
- Reviews of an additional 11 private banks underway
- Tk 13,000cr earmarked for bank restructuring in budget



Once a shimmering landscape of white stone beds -- Bholaganj Sada Pathor, a popular tourist spot in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila -- now lies stripped and desolate. Over the past year, illegal stone extractors have been plundering valuable mineral resources from the Dhalai river, as authorities looked the other way. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Armed forces to act as law enforcers during polls

Says draft amendment to RPO; 'no-vote' option on cards to stop uncontested wins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has prepared a draft amendment to the Representation of the People Order, 1972, proposing several key changes, including the reintroduction of a "no vote" option on ballots for constituencies with only one contestant.

The draft further proposes recognising the armed forces as law enforcement agencies during elections. It grants the EC the power to cancel a constituency's election if significant

irregularities are detected. It will also have the authority to reject a candidate's nomination for submitting false information in their affidavit.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting at the EC, Election commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah said, "We hope to finalise the draft within this week so that we can send it to the law ministry by next week for the vetting."

He said the EC has covered topics it thinks will not require approval by the National Consensus Commission.

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Mourners bid farewell to the bodies of the Al Jazeera journalists who were killed in an overnight Israeli strike on their tent in Gaza City, before their burial at the Sheikh Radwan cemetery in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

48.5pc yet to decide whom to vote for
Shows BIGD survey of 5,489 respondents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of Bangladeshi voters undecided about their choice in the upcoming polls has risen sharply over the past eight months, shows a BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) survey.

The figure now stands at 48.5 percent, up from 38 percent in a survey in October last year.

The Pulse Survey-3 was conducted between July 1 and 20 this year through telephone interviews with 5,489 respondents representing both rural and urban demographics.

Of them, 53 percent were male and 47 percent female, with 73 percent from rural areas and 27 percent from urban centres.

The survey assessed public perceptions of the interim government's performance, reform priorities, the upcoming election, and the popularity of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Israel strike kills five Al Jazeera journos in Gaza

UN, rights groups slam targeted killing of journalists

AGENCIES

Condemnations poured in from the United Nations and media rights groups yesterday after an Israeli strike killed an Al Jazeera news team in Gaza, as Palestinians mourned the journalists and Israel accused one of them of being a Hamas militant.

Dozens of Gazans stood amid bombed-out buildings in the courtyard of Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City to pay their respects to Anas al-Sharif, a prominent Al Jazeera correspondent aged 28, and four of his colleagues killed on Sunday.

Hospital director Mohammed Abu Salmiya said a sixth journalist, freelance reporter Mohammed Al Khaldi, was killed in the strike that targeted the Al Jazeera team.

Mourners, including men wearing blue journalists' flak jackets, carried their bodies, wrapped in white shrouds with their faces exposed, through narrow alleys to their graves.

Israel confirmed it had targeted Sharif, whom it labelled a "terrorist" affiliated with Hamas, alleging he "posed as a journalist".

Al Jazeera said four other employees -- correspondent Mohammed



Anas al-Sharif

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

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The Daily Star's new initiative

In the next 14 months, Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate from the least developed country status. This graduation is, of course, a great achievement and is the result of years of efforts by various stakeholders.

However, the graduation is also the starting point for many challenges. It will mean the end of many special facilities and exemptions that we have enjoyed and which gave

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

'We hanged Razakars, we'll hang them too'

Hasina told then DU VC about July protesters; phone call transcript read out at ICT-1

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

In an audio conversation on July 14 last year with then Dhaka University vice-chancellor ASM Maksud Kamal, deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina likened the protesters to "Razakars" and said they would meet the same fate as those executed for 1971 war crimes.

ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam read out the transcribed conversation at the International Crimes

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Man killed in mob attack after mugging bid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

An unidentified man was killed in a mob beating following an attempted mugging in the Station Road area of Tongi, Gazipur, yesterday.

The incident occurred around 12:00pm, said Faridul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tongi East Police Station.

Quoting eyewitnesses, the OC said the victim allegedly attempted to snatched mobile phones from Md Habibur Rahman of Jamalpur Madhyapara, and Moni Akhtar of Jangliya, both residents of Kaliganj upazila in Gazipur.

Screaming for help, Habibur and Moni drew the attention of nearby pedestrians. Locals reportedly chased the suspect and beat him, he added.

During the attack, the man lost consciousness and was subsequently taken to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital.

Abul Fazal, duty officer at the hospital's emergency department, told The Daily Star that the man was declared dead on arrival.

At least 89 people were killed in mob attacks between January and June this year, including 45 in Dhaka alone, according to rights group Ain o Salish Kendra.

The Daily Star's new initiative

FROM PAGE 1

our exports a lot of protection.

The present day questions are: Are we ready to face the international trading world without the exemptions allowed? Is our economy ready? Is our legal framework modern enough to suit the international standards?

Most importantly, is our private sector ready, which will spearhead our drive forward to compete and succeed?

If not, what do we need to do?

To find answers to those crucial questions, The Daily Star is launching a series of four roundtable discussions, starting today, with leading personalities from the corporate world to chalk out a way forward. The roundtable will be under the following headings:

1. LDC graduation: How to energise the private sector

2. Smart logistics for a competitive private sector

3. Policy and regulatory challenges for the economy

4. Financial sector: How can it help drive the private sector for international competition

Finally, we will hold a review meeting to formulate a "Way Forward" action programme.

All of this must be done before we graduate, meaning within the next 14 months.

Mahfuz Anam
Editor & Publisher

BB readying

FROM PAGE 1

engaged an international consultant to review earlier special audits by local firms and identify gaps against the donor agreed terms of reference.

International audits completed in May revealed significant capital deficits. As of December 2024, five banks - First Security Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Union Bank, and ICB Islamic Bank - had a combined capital shortfall of about Tk 46,000 crore, which has since grown.

The central bank has established a three-tier governance structure -- implementation, project management, and steering committees -- along with special inspection teams to analyse the root causes of asset quality problems. A high-level AQR oversight committee was formed with representatives from the IMF, the World Bank, and ADB as observers.

The reform programme is supported by the Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025, issued in May, which gives the Bangladesh Bank formal authority to execute corrective actions and apply resolution tools in a structured, rule-based manner. The ordinance allows intervention when a scheduled bank is deemed non-viable.

Its powers include establishing bridge banks, implementing bail-ins, arranging purchase and assumption transactions, imposing temporary public ownership, and transferring assets to asset management companies. A new Banking Sector Crisis Management Council will coordinate crisis responses and maintain financial stability. Banks will be classified by financial health.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said the current budget includes allocations for bank restructuring.

According to finance ministry sources, Tk 13,000 crore has already been earmarked for bank restructuring in the current budget. Allocations under the "miscellaneous expenses" category have risen to Tk 17,442 crore this year, a 163 percent increase from last year, primarily for financing banking reforms. Historically, spending in this category ranged between Tk 4,000 crore and Tk 5,000 crore annually.

Under its IMF programme, the government will publish a banking sector stability and sustainability strategy. Agreed between Bangladesh Bank and the finance ministry, the plan will set out how to make weak banks healthy again, keep essential banking services running, and keep the cost to taxpayers as low as possible.



Malaysia rolls out the red carpet for Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus upon his arrival for a three-day state visit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

48.5pc yet to decide

FROM PAGE 1

political parties.

The October survey covered 4,158 respondents.

Yesterday, BIGD Fellow of Practice Syeda Selina Aziz presented the latest findings during a joint event organised by BIGD and the citizen reform platform "Voice for Reform" at the National Archives auditorium in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

The data paints a picture of an electorate increasingly uncertain as the election draws closer.

According to the results, 14.4 percent of the respondents did not wish to disclose their preferred candidate, while 1.7 percent said they would not vote.

Asked which party they intended to vote for, 12 percent named the BNP, 10.4 percent Jamaat-e-Islami, and 2.8 percent the National Citizen Party (NCP).

Eight months earlier, those figures stood at 16.3 percent for the BNP, 11.3 percent for Jamaat, and two percent for a "new political party formed by students", indicating slight declines for BNP and Jamaat, and a modest rise for the student-led NCP.

Support for the Awami League, now barred from political activities, fell from 8.9 percent in October to 7.3 percent in July, while Jatiya Party's share declined from 0.7 percent to 0.3 percent, and Islamist parties dropped from 2.6 percent to 0.7 percent.

However, when asked which party they believed would win in their constituency, 38 percent predicted a BNP victory, followed by 13 percent for Jamaat, seven percent for the AL and one percent for the NCP.

Asked if Bangladesh is on the right track politically and economically, 42 percent said the country is on the right

path politically, down from 56 percent in October. In contrast, 45 percent believed the country is economically on the right path, up slightly from 43 percent.

On average, respondents rated the interim government's performance at 63 out of 100, compared to 68 in October.

The survey found that 51 percent wanted comprehensive reforms before the election; 17 percent supported holding polls only after urgent reforms; and 14 percent preferred the election without reforms. Thirteen percent had no opinion.

On reform priorities, 30 percent wanted improvements in law and order; 19 percent each called for reducing political unrest and reforming the electoral system; 17 percent urged tackling corruption; 16 percent mentioned judicial reforms and boosting the economy; 13 percent wanted essential commodity prices reduced; 11 percent demanded improved security; and 10 percent sought reduced unemployment.

Meanwhile, 32 percent wanted the election before December this year; 12 percent by February 2026; 11 percent by June 2026; and 25 percent in December 2026 or later.

A notable 70 percent believed the next national election would be free, fair, and impartial, while 15 percent disagreed and 14 percent were unsure.

The data unveiling was followed by a panel discussion with BIGD Senior Research Fellow Mirza M Hassan and Dhaka University Associate Professor Asif Mohammad Shaham, moderated by Voice for Reform co-convenor AKM Fahim Mashroor. The discussants then responded to journalists' questions.

Israel strike kills five

FROM PAGE 1

Qreiqeh, and cameramen Ibrahim Zaher, Mohammed Noufal and Moamen Aliwa -- were killed when the strike hit a tent set up for journalists outside the main gate of Al-Shifa.

An Israeli military statement accused Sharif of heading a Hamas "terrorist cell" and being "responsible for advancing rocket attacks" against Israelis.

The military released documents alleging to show the date of Sharif's enlistment with Hamas in 2013, an injury report from 2017 and the name of his military unit and rank.

According to local journalists who knew him, Sharif had worked at the start of his career with a Hamas communication office, where his role was to publicise events organised by the group that has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2006.

Sharif was one of Al Jazeera's most recognisable faces working on the ground in Gaza, providing daily reports on the now 22-month-old war.

Media freedom groups have condemned the Israeli strike on journalists, which the UN human rights agency called a "grave breach of international humanitarian law".

A posthumous message, written by Sharif in April in case of his death, was published online saying he had been silenced and urging people "not to forget Gaza".

In July, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called for his protection following online posts by an Israeli military spokesman.

The group had accused Israel of a "pattern" of labelling journalists militants "without providing credible evidence", and said the military had levelled similar accusations against media workers in Gaza including Al Jazeera staff.

"International law is clear that active combatants are the only

justified targets in a war setting," Jodie Ginsberg, CPJ's chief executive, told AFP yesterday.

Unless Israel "can demonstrate that Anas al-Sharif was still an active combatant, then there is no justification for his killing", she said.

Al Jazeera called the attack "a desperate attempt to silence voices exposing the Israeli occupation", as it described Sharif as "one of Gaza's bravest journalists".

The Qatari broadcaster also said the strike followed "repeated incitement" and calls by Israeli officials to target Sharif and his colleagues.

Hadja Lahbib, the European commissioner for equality, preparedness and crisis management, said she was "horrified" to learn of the killing of the Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza, including Anas al Sharif.

"A direct hit on freedom of the press," she wrote in a social media post. "Civilians must be protected, access secured & the press safeguarded. Always."

Reporters Without Borders says nearly 200 journalists have been killed in the war, which was sparked by Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel.

RSF "strongly and angrily condemns the acknowledged murder by the Israeli army" of al Sharif and other journalists in a Sunday strike on their tent in Gaza City, it added.

Israel prevents international reporters from entering Gaza, except on occasional, tightly controlled trips with the military.

The strike on the news team in Gaza City came days after the Israeli security cabinet had approved plans to send troops into the area, a decision met with mounting domestic and international criticism.

Joining others, Australia yesterday said it would join a growing list of Western nations in recognising a Palestinian state.

"International law is clear that active combatants are the only

Armed forces to act as law enforcers

FROM PAGE 1

EC officials said the reintroduction of "no vote" will ensure that no one is elected uncontested. "No vote" option was on the ballot papers in the 2008 polls. Around 3,82,000 people cast "no vote" in that election.

During the one-sided 2014 election, 153 lawmakers out of 300 were elected uncontested, as most of the opposition, including the BNP, boycotted the vote.

Earlier, 49 candidates nominated by the then ruling BNP were elected uncontested in the February 15, 1996 election, boycotted by the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and other parties.

EC Sanaullah said that under the new definition approved by the EC, law enforcement agencies will now include the army, navy, air force, and coast guard. All provisions related to EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) have been abolished, as a prior decision had already been made not to use them.

If members of the armed forces members are defined as law enforcers, the EC will not require any further order to deploy them in election duties. Armed forces members will also get the power to arrest culprits, he added.

The draft proposes the restoration of a provision that allows the EC to postpone elections at any stage after announcing the schedule. If approved, the commission will have the power to suspend or cancel election results in one or multiple polling centres, or all constituencies, depending on the situation.

After an amendment in July 2023, the EC can postpone elections only on the polling day.

A provision has also been added in the RPO to enforce penalties for violations of the electoral code of conduct, ensuring proper implementation of the code.

The commission also proposed a provision that would allow it to withhold a party's registration if there is

a decision to ban that party's activities," said Sanaullah.

Regarding the power to suspend elections and cancel results, Sanaullah said, "If approved, the EC will have the power to suspend or cancel elections in one, several, or all constituencies as needed."

He further mentioned that penalties for negligence by officials involved in election activities have been clearly defined. Investigations now must be completed within three working days, and the findings must be reported to the Commission.

EC PROPOSES

- Abolishing all provisions related EVMs
- Restoring EC's powers to suspend or cancel polls or results
- MPs can lose their seats if they file false affidavits
- All campaign expenditures must be thru banks
- Re-election in case of a tie

On false information in affidavits, Sanaullah said the draft now has a provision for investigation and taking effective action even after taking oath as a member of parliament.

"For example, if someone is elected as an MP for a five-year term and if any false information is found in the affidavit during that time, it will be investigated. If necessary, the candidate's nomination can be cancelled, and even an elected MP could face legal consequences and lose their position if found guilty", he said.

The use of lighting in advertisements and billboards has been restricted to digital billboards only. Decorative lighting remains prohibited.

Additionally, the draft ensures access for accredited observers and journalists to polling centres. Media personnel will be allowed to remain present throughout the vote counting process. However, they will not be allowed to leave midway.

On August 5, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, in a televised address to the nation, said the next general election will be held in February 2026, kickstarting the process of transferring power to an elected government.

'We hanged Razakars, we'll hang them too'

FROM PAGE 1

Tribunal 1 yesterday during a hearing in a case over the killing of six people in police firing in the capital's Chankharpul area on August 5.

According to the transcription, Hasina told the DU VC: "They [the protesters] want to become Razakars, don't they? Then they're all Razakars. What a strange country we live in. We've already hanged the Razakars, and now we'll do the same to them..."

At one point in the conversation, Maksud warned Hasina that thousands of students with sticks had gathered on the campus, attacking Chhahtra League members and threatening to attack his residence. He requested enhanced security and promised to identify protest leaders and expel them once the situation calmed.

This is the second case over crimes against humanity during the July uprising to be tried at ICT-1.

The eight accused in the case are former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman; then DMP joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty; former additional deputy commissioner Shah Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam; former assistant commissioner (Ramma zone) Mohammad Imrul; then inspector (operations) of Shahbagh Police Station Arshad Hossain; and former constables Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul Islam.

Arshad, Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul, who are in custody, were present in court, while the rest, including Habibur, are absconding.

Tajul also told the tribunal that a secret "core committee" meeting at the then home minister's residence decided to open fire on unarmed protesters. Habibur ordered the shooting via wireless communication, while Sudip

oversaw the firing and ordered killings.

Following the orders, ADC Akhtarul instructed police to open fire in Chankharpul on August 5 around 12:32pm. AC Imrul and Inspector Arshad encouraged subordinates, and constables Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul fired Chinese rifles at peaceful protesters, killing six.

Two video clips of the shooting were played in court, watched in pin-drop silence by everyone present, including the accused.

The footage showed Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul firing at protesters heading from Chankharpul toward the Central Shaheed Minar. The policemen were seen kneeling or lying on the ground while aiming at protesters. ADC Akhtarul was visible on site, giving orders to shoot.

FATHER OF SLAIN STUDENT TESTIFIES

At the beginning of the hearing before the three-member tribunal, led by Justice Golam Mortuza Mozumder, Tajul first read out a letter by one of the victims - 17-year-old student Shahar Khan Anas -- written to his mother before he was killed in police firing in Ch

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CUSTODIAL DEATH OF JONNY HC upholds life term for two former cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld the life imprisonment of two former police officers and reduced another officer's life term to 10 years imprisonment in a case over the custodial death of Ishtiaque Hossain Jonny, a garment-waste trader from Dhaka's Mirpur, 11 years ago.

This is the first High Court verdict in a case filed under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.

The court upheld the life term of Zahidur Rahman, former sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station, dismissing his appeal against the trial court verdict.

It did not say anything about the life imprisonment of former assistant sub-inspector Qamaruzzaman Mintu, who has been absconding and did not appeal against the trial court verdict, meaning his sentence remains in place.

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Jonny



Speakers at a seminar titled "Empowering Women Fisherfolk Communities in Bangladesh," organised by Badabon Sangho at the International Mother Language Institute in Shegun Bagicha, Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Indigenous rights still ignored despite political shifts

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite their contribution to the July uprising, the situation of indigenous people in the country remains unchanged, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

They noted that neither the interim government acknowledged them as "indigenous" nor observed the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The speakers urged the government to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The discussion, titled "Indigenous Peoples and AI: Defending Rights, Shaping Futures", was organised by the Bangladesh Indigenous Women Network (BIWN) at the Liberation War Museum auditorium on the occasion of the indigenous peoples' day.

Presiding over the discussion, BIWN Vice President Lalasa Chakma said, "We thought the new generation who joined the uprising would be progressive, but we have found them rather opposite. We have our own language, culture, food, and traditions, yet we are always deprived of our rights."

In her keynote paper, BIWN General Secretary Falguni Tripura said indigenous people in Bangladesh have been neglected by the state throughout the British period, the Pakistani era, and even after independence.

"Just as indigenous peoples were 'betrayed' after the Liberation War, they were also 'deceived' following the July uprising," she said, noting that persecution, repression, rape of women, killings, and violations of fundamental human rights against them have continued to rise.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

MALIBAGH HOSPITAL BASEMENT Police probing two mysterious deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are investigating the deaths of two men whose bodies were found yesterday inside a car parked in the basement of Sirajul Islam Medical College and Hospital in Dhaka's Malibagh area.

The victims – Zakir Hossain, 40, and Mizan, 42, from Gomotoli village in Noakhali – were cousins.

According to Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Ramina Division Police, officers went to the scene after receiving information and recovered the bodies – Zakir in the driver's seat and Mizan in the passenger seat.

It is not yet clear whether the men were murdered, Alam said, adding that CCTV footage and other evidence were being collected. The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Police said the white private car entered the hospital parking lot around 5:30am on Sunday.

One person got out of the car at the hospital gate and went away. Since then, the car remained in the parking lot. Police noted that the bodies had already begun decomposing when discovered.

It was later found that the person who got off the car was its owner, Zubair Al Mahmud Sourav, also from Noakhali. Contacted, Sourav said he ran a rent-a-car service and Zakir was working as a driver for the last three months. "I came to Dhaka to drop off a person at the airport. Mizan tagged along as his relative booked the car. Zakir and Mizan were supposed to pick up some relatives from Sirajul Islam hospital around 11:00am yesterday and return to Chatkhil. Since there were too many passengers, I got off at the hospital gate and took a bus to Noakhali.

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Fisherwomen left in the shadows by gender bias

Says study; speakers urge recognition, support, and policy reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite playing a crucial role in sustaining Bangladesh's fishing communities, nine out of ten women fishers face regular gendered bias and remain largely invisible due to deep-rooted social, structural, and policy barriers, according to a recent study.

Their vital work, ranging from fishing in rivers and canals to net mending and fish drying, is often dismissed as "less important" compared to men's sea fishing. Frequently labelled as mere "assistants" rather than full-fledged fishers, women are denied the recognition and respect they deserve, the study added.

One of the most pressing hurdles is the difficulty in obtaining National Fisherfolk ID Cards.

An overwhelming 83 percent of women surveyed have yet to receive these essential IDs, effectively cutting them off from government aid programmes such as ration distributions, which disproportionately favour male cardholders.

In the study area, only 1,234 out

of 6,695 registered fisherfolk are women, underscoring the gender gap in registration.

Subah Samara, assistant professor of public administration at Jagannath University, shared the findings yesterday at a policy discussion

AT A GLANCE

Women make up 12% of registered fisherfolk countrywide
90% women fishers face gender bias
83% lack Nat'l Fisherfolk ID Cards
57% excluded from safety nets
53% never received government support

seminar titled "Empowering Women Fisherfolk Communities in Bangladesh", organised by Badabon Sangho at the International Mother Language Institute in the capital's Shegun Bagicha.

She highlighted that the lack of

fisherfolk ID cards excludes many women from accessing low-interest loans through cooperatives. Instead, most are forced to rely on informal lenders charging exorbitant interest rates of 20 to 30 percent, trapping them in cycles of debt.

The study also revealed that women remain institutionally absent from governance and advocacy platforms, further deepening their invisibility.

Without proper registration, they are excluded from social safety nets, cooperative membership, and leases on state waterbodies, increasing their economic vulnerability.

Additionally, the research highlighted severe health challenges faced by women due to prolonged exposure to saline water – issues worsened by climate change.

Access to clean water, hygiene products, and healthcare is limited, with local clinics often dismissing women's symptoms.

Specialised gynaecological services are largely unavailable, and the costs of treatment and transport are often prohibitive.

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People jump onto a moving train while others wait on nearby tracks, risking serious accidents. The photo was taken near Dhaka's Airport Rail Station recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Star INTERVIEW

Towards a stigma-free, sustainable mental healthcare

SAJIDA Foundation CEO Zahida Fizza Kabir discusses reshaping Bangladesh's mental health landscape

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Inside a modest but modern office in Gulshan, one of Dhaka's busiest urban enclaves, Zahida Fizza Kabir was speaking with calm demeanour. "Mental health is not a luxury," she said. "Rather, it's a necessity."

As the chief executive officer of SAJIDA Foundation, one of Bangladesh's largest non-profits, Kabir is spearheading a quiet but

The aim was to create a credible, self-sustaining model – one that could be scaled down over time without compromising clinical quality. We're trying to shift how people think about mental health – from taboo to tool.

groundbreaking transformation in the country's mental health landscape.

At the forefront of this effort is Psychological Health and Wellness Care (PHWC), along with a host of other programmes and enterprises.

In a country where therapy is still spoken of in whispers and psychiatric illness is often dismissed as weakness or worse, PHWC has emerged as a rare beacon.

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SAGAR-RUNI MURDER PBI now asked to submit probe report by Sept 14

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit the probe report by September 14 of the case filed over murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Rumi in 2012.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Minhazur Rahman passed the order after Investigation Officer Md Azizul Haque, also an additional superintendent of police at the PBI, failed to submit any probe report by yesterday. This marks the 121st extension of the deadline, according to case records.

Sagar, news editor at Mastranga TV, and Rumi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed on February 11, 2012, at their rented apartment in Dhaka's West Rajabazar.



Lawyers scuffle during the bail hearing of ex-CJ Khairul Haque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two groups of Supreme Court lawyers yesterday scuffled at High Court during the hearing of a bail petition filed by former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque in a murder case.

The incident, which lasted around 10 minutes, caused pandemonium in a courtroom of the HC bench comprising Justice Md Zakir Hossain and Justice KM Rasheduzzaman Raja after 3:00pm.

Angry lawyers shouted at each other, demanding opponents leave the courtroom.

Several senior lawyers including MK Rahman, Md Mohsen Rashid, Mohammad Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury, ZI Khan Panna, Qumrul Haque Siddique and Md Motaher Hossain Sazu appeared for Haque.

Deputy Attorney Generals Md Rasel Ahammed and Md Imran Khan, along with Assistant Attorney Generals Md Uzzal Hossain, Muhammad Safwan and Md Jasim Uddin represented the state.

Advocate MK Rahman placed the petition before the bench.

DAG Rasel Ahammed requested a week's time for hearing, saying that Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman would present the state's arguments.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Man dies after bike hits pillar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 26-year-old man died early yesterday after his motorcycle hit a pillar beneath the Pallabi Metrorail Station in Dhaka.

Emon Molla, a resident of Mirpur's Alubdi area who worked in event management, was returning home from work, said Md Alauddin, sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station.

Emon's family said he tried to avoid a pedestrian. His cousin, Aslam Matbar said Emon lost control of the motorcycle and hit the pillar.

Locals initially rushed him to Islamia Hospital, from where he was referred to the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital in Agargaon. As his condition worsened, he was transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead at approximately 2:00am, the sub-inspector said.



A mother and her two children wait patiently for hours to buy essential goods at subsidised prices from an OMS truck. These trucks are often the only option for low-income groups. The photo was taken in the Ring Road area of Mohammadpur, Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Towards a stigma-free, sustainable mental healthcare

FROM PAGE 3

Founded in 2018 as a social enterprise under SAJIDA Foundation, it blends international clinical standards with a deep commitment to accessible, compassionate care. In doing so, it is not only challenging stigma but also setting new benchmarks.

"You can't separate the mind from the body," Kabir said, leaning forward slightly, as if to emphasise the urgency of a national blind spot.

"The aim was to create a credible, self-sustaining model -- one that could be scaled down over time without compromising clinical quality."

"We had to prove this was not just talk therapy. This is medical science," said Kabir during an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

From its inception, PHWC brought together psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychological counsellors under one roof. The team was led by psychiatrist Dr Ashique Selim, the centre's first managing director, and psychologist Nissim Jan Sajid.

Under their leadership, PHWC was not merely reactive but rather proactive -- offering diagnosis, ongoing treatment, and a wide range of services, including therapy for individuals, couples, and families.

To date, it has delivered over 40,000 therapy sessions to over 7,000 individuals, and partnered with more than 110 organisations. Its outreach has included 450+ workshops on emotional intelligence, stress management, and psychological safety.

Kabir sees this not merely

as service delivery, but as a way to change the system.

"We're trying to shift how people think about mental health -- from taboo to tool."

Earlier this year, SAJIDA launched another venture: The HUB -- Neuroscience & Psychiatry Hub, Bangladesh's first private long-term psychiatric admission facility.

Designed to treat

severe conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and psychosis, it fills a longstanding gap in care.

"There was no place in Dhaka where you could admit a loved one without fear of stigma or substandard care," Kabir said. "So we built one."

It's this approach --

identifying the gap and

creating the solution -- that has made SAJIDA's work in mental health an outlier in a country with little policy or regulatory clarity on the sector, she said.

"We had to navigate a

vacuum," Kabir explained.

"There were no licensing

frameworks, no unified

oversight. We engaged with

ministries, councils, and

local authorities -- no one

had a blueprint."

"With support from global

experts and institutions,

PHWC developed on its

own. Clinical supervision,

data privacy protocols,

and ethical governance -- all were

implemented internally,

long before others caught

up," she also said.

"We weren't waiting for

permission to do the right

thing."

Perhaps PHWC's most

radical feature is not its

services but its structure: a

for-profit social enterprise

designed to make purpose

sustainable,

Kabir

continued.

"Donor funding dries

up. We've seen it too

many times," she said.

"Mental health needs

long-term commitment.

And that means financial

sustainability."

That sustainability

enables PHWC to

continually reinvest --

in people, in infrastructure,

and in quality, Kabir

explained.

And while its fees make it

more accessible to Dhaka's

middle and upper classes,

the long term plan is

broader -- creating regional

centres, expanding

digitally through SAJIDA's

"Shojon"

telehealth

platform, and partnering

with universities to build

a stronger, better trained

mental health workforce,

she said.

"If we want to serve

more people, we need

more trained people. And

we have to pay them well

enough to retain them,"

she added.

Kabir stressed that this

is not just a social issue --

it's also economic.

"When people are

unwell, they miss work.

They underperform.

That impacts companies,

families, and GDP," she

continued.

The keynote paper

mentioned that the absence

of a reform commission on

indigenous affairs, as well as

the exclusion of indigenous

communities from

dialogues in other reform

commissions, reflects

an undemocratic and

authoritarian approach.

"Although the Women's

Affairs Commission

sought opinions from

both mainstream and

marginalised women,

including indigenous

women, the initiative and

its recommendations faced

fierce opposition from

fundamentalist groups.

As a result, no signs of positive

change for indigenous

women are visible even under

the current government,"

she continued.

The paper added:

"When people are

unwell, they miss work.

They underperform.

That impacts companies,

families, and GDP," she

continued.

She connected mental

wellness to Bangladesh's

broader development

goals. "We talk about

demographic dividend,

skills development, and

innovation. However,

without psychological

resilience, all that falls

apart."

Looking ahead, SAJIDA

is exploring expansion

into divisional cities and

underserved urban areas.

Kabir is adamant, however,

that scale will never come

at the expense of quality.

"We took seven years to

get this model right. Every

centre, every therapist,

she said.

It also noted that in

artificial intelligence (AI),

indigenous communities

are often neglected

or misrepresented in

ways that are false and

misleading. "The datasets

from which AI systems draw

information frequently

portray indigenous people

in a negative light."

Kabir

continued.

The paper added:

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Education sector still in disarray

Reforms necessary to ensure quality, end disparities

It is deeply disappointing that, even after a year in office, the interim government has failed to initiate any meaningful reforms in the education sector. Expectations were high that it would take decisive steps to improve quality and address longstanding disparities. Instead, the government has not only fallen short of those expectations but has also struggled to manage the turmoil that erupted after the fall of the Awami League government.

Over the past year, students and teachers have repeatedly taken to the streets with demands ranging from salary increases and pay scale adjustments to exam postponements and automatic promotion. Educational institutions have witnessed forced resignations of teachers, politically motivated appointments, and public humiliation of educators. These disruptions extended beyond universities, with protests erupting in numerous schools and colleges, often calling for the removal of institutional heads—exposing the administration's inability to restore order. Despite forming 11 commissions for state reform after the July uprising, the government excluded education from its reform agenda. But why has such a critical sector been so glaringly neglected?

Understandably, it is not possible to reform the entire sector in one year, but the government has failed to do even what was feasible during this period. Educationists argue that, at the very least, it could have formed a reform commission to provide the next government with a solid foundation for essential reforms, and that the ongoing disruptions should have been handled far more effectively. For instance, after the mass resignation of public university vice-chancellors, many institutions struggled to resume regular academic and administrative activities. As a result, students faced prolonged disruptions. At KUET, for example, all academic activities were suspended for over five months until a new VC was appointed late last month.

Primary, secondary, and higher secondary education has also suffered significant setbacks. A sudden return to the 2012 curriculum for classes 6 to 12 created widespread confusion. Meanwhile, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), tasked with revising 50 textbooks, missed its December 2024 deadline, delaying nationwide distribution until April 2025. Consequently, many students began the academic year without complete textbooks, further widening learning gaps. Although a consultative committee was formed for primary education, progress in implementing its recommendations has been disappointing. Additionally, the cancellation of HSC and equivalent examinations—postponed during the July mass uprising—was regarded by many as a serious misstep.

This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. We strongly urge the government to prioritise the education sector and implement much-needed reforms. Experts have called for the formation of a specialised, non-partisan commission to stabilise the sector and draft a long-term policy roadmap to guide future administrations. This proposal deserves serious consideration. One year has already been lost to uncertainty. The government must not dilly-dally anymore.

A chilling revelation of state policing

Implement safeguards against surveillance system built by AL govt

A recent investigation by this daily into the state surveillance system built by the Awami League government has revealed disturbing details. The report outlines how the ousted regime constructed a digital infrastructure capable of tracking, monitoring, and intercepting end-to-end communication as well as targeting specific individuals. The extent to which this system was used against citizens remains unclear, however. What's more, a year after the fall of the regime, it is not clear how the system is being used at present.

According to our investigation, between 2016 and 2024, the National Telecommunication Monitoring Center (NTMC), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and various units of police collectively purchased surveillance equipment worth Tk 1,382 crore. These included IMSI catchers, GPS trackers, mobile and vehicle-mounted signal jammers, speaker recognition systems, and tools capable of intercepting encrypted communication and injecting spyware. Ostensibly, this massive infrastructure was built to "pinpoint targets" actively and passively threatening national security. In reality, as we saw over the years, it was also used to target individuals for dubious arrests, enforced disappearances, and even extrajudicial killings. What was supposed to protect the people ultimately became a tool of oppression against critics and political opponents.

Worse still, this level of surveillance was legally authorised. As a security expert explained to this daily, Bangladesh's surveillance system is "rooted in colonial-era laws that permit spyware use, communication interception, and broad law enforcement access without adequate safeguards." While state surveillance can be necessary to prevent crime, gather intelligence, and address threats to public safety and national security, without proper checks and balances it becomes open to abuse, serving the agendas of the ruling authorities of the day. This leads to violations of people's constitutional rights to privacy, due process, and dignity—something we saw happen repeatedly under the previous regime.

Unfortunately, although more than a year has passed since Awami League's fall, there has been no tangible action by the interim administration to neutralise or dismantle this digital policing system. There is still no clarity on whether—or how—this massive surveillance apparatus, built at the cost of crores of taxpayers' money, is being used. Establishing transparency and accountability must be a prerequisite when it comes to state surveillance. The administration must outline a clear plan to neutralise the system and restrict its use solely to matters of national security and combating serious crime.

One way to do it is to establish an independent oversight body to monitor the activities of the executive branch and the security forces, including intelligence agencies. Another is to introduce strong legal safeguards to prevent abuse of the surveillance system and curb executive overreach. Surveillance may at times be necessary, but it must never override citizens' civic and human rights.

EDITORIAL

What the Global South needs to achieve SDG goals



MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun
is executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KATUN

From June 30 to July 3, 2025, world delegates convened in Seville, Spain, for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) of the United Nations. For many Global South countries, the deadline to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is fast approaching, but the financing gap remains staggering—an estimated \$4 trillion every year. Seville was pitched as a moment to both inject momentum into resource flows and reshape the global financial system, making it more equitable and effective.

The meeting concluded with the Sevilla Commitment, outlining over 100 policy actions covering almost all aspects of the development finance agenda: from public and private resource mobilisation to debt relief, tax cooperation, trade, and the fight against illicit flows. Long-standing promises resurfaced, including the benchmark for wealthy countries to allocate 0.7 percent of their national income to official development assistance (ODA), with 0.15-0.20 percent earmarked for least developed countries. Donors were also urged to at least double support for domestic revenue reforms in partner countries striving to raise their tax-to-GDP ratio to 15 percent.

Developing countries, however, wanted fresh injections of public finance, concrete operational steps to expand the lending firepower of multilateral development banks (MDBs), and faster, fairer procedures for resolving debt crises. They also pressed for a more representative process to write global tax rules, as well as dependable new revenue streams through solidarity levies—a small, targeted tax on certain activities or goods, like airline tickets, collected to raise money for global causes such as development or climate action.

In some respects, the conference moved the needle. A coalition of nations, including France, Spain, Kenya, and Barbados, pledged to design

taxes on premium airline travel and private jets, with proceeds ring-fenced for climate and development. Though the measure is still at a blueprint stage, and will require legislative follow-through, it marks a shift from theory to actionable policy.

Another tangible outcome was opening the way to use Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to strengthen the capital of MDBs. Under new rules, these SDRs can be used as "hybrid capital" to increase their financial impact three

times.

That gap reflects the deeper shortcomings of today's financial order. MDB lending is hampered by

conservative risk rules and protracted



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

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That gap reflects the deeper

shortcomings of today's financial

order. MDB lending is hampered by

conservative risk rules and protracted

approval processes. Debt restructuring is often reactive, coming too late to prevent economic damage. Tax regimes are largely shaped in forums where poorer countries lack full voice.

While innovative financing options such as airline levies and fossil fuel windfall taxes are discussed, they face

domestic political hurdles that slow

implementation.

Developing countries made

consistent and clear demands, urging

MDB shareholders to unlock more

lending, offer more local-currency

financing, and set up rapid response

facilities for crises. They want debt

contracts that include standstill

debt system involving the Paris Club, new bilateral lenders, private bondholders, and state-owned lenders often ends in deadlock. The outcome urges more inclusive restructuring and stronger governance at the IMF and the World Bank, but does not specify binding mechanisms or automatic triggers for action.

However, FfD4 was not designed as a pledging conference. No master spreadsheet of new dollar amounts was unveiled. Instead, the outcome offers policy direction, reform blueprints, and the launch of initiatives that can grow if political will follows. For many observers, the absence of major new funding was nonetheless a disappointment, and the \$4 trillion gap in SDG financing remains just as wide.

That gap reflects the deeper shortcomings of today's financial order. MDB lending is hampered by

conservative risk rules and protracted

clauses and disaster-linked repayment pauses; rules that ensure all creditor groups share the burden fairly; tax rules set through a truly global process, backed by transparency measures that unmask illicit flows; and predictable global revenue streams earmarked for common challenges such as climate change and pandemic preparedness.

The Monterrey Consensus of 2002, the Doha Review of 2008, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of 2015 also called for increased development finance and a more inclusive system. They yielded incremental progress in areas such as domestic tax capacity and blended finance but missed their bigger marks. Hence, the ODA target remains unmet, debt distress has re-emerged, and climate finance still falls short of promises.

For Bangladesh, these global debates are anything but abstract. The National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh estimates that around \$230 billion will be needed for climate adaptation alone by 2050. With a tax to GDP ratio hovering near eight percent, fiscal space is tight, leaving little scope to fund large-scale green infrastructure or social programmes through domestic revenue. The ongoing IMF programme of \$4.7 billion blends traditional support with climate-related financing. But the scale and availability of such resources depend heavily on how global reforms play out.

The practical value of the Sevilla Commitment for Bangladesh lies in what happens next—whether the SDR-based hybrid capital facility becomes fully operational, whether solidarity levies mature into steady funding streams, and whether MDB reforms expedite lending and lower borrowing costs. Bangladesh also stands to gain from stronger international tax cooperation and targeted technical assistance to enhance its domestic revenue base closer to the 15 percent threshold. However, the promises of the Commitment will remain on paper unless countries act on areas such as funding MDBs, enacting levies, meeting aid targets, and improving tax governance.

The challenge now is turning Sevilla's policy architecture into actual flows of affordable and timely finance that can close the gap between ambition and delivery. Without that, global targets such as the SDGs will keep slipping further away.

Mending the line of blood on our border



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Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MD BADRUL ALAM SIDDIQUI

Three hundred and five. That is the number of Bangladeshis killed by India's Border Security Force (BSF) in the last ten years, according to a recent report from the Human Rights Support Society. This is not a statistical anomaly. Our research, analysing dozens of these incidents, also reveals a horrifying policy that has turned a shared border into a line of impunity.

For too long, these deaths have been dismissed as isolated events, but the evidence points to a pattern of arbitrary and extrajudicial executions in what has been a sustained human rights crisis. When BSF personnel shoot and kill an individual, they act as judge, jury, and executioner. There are far too many examples of such unlawful border enforcement to recount here or to call them anything but state-sanctioned.

This brutality is enabled by a political narrative of dehumanisation that operates at every level. On the ground, victims are dismissed as "miscreants" or "criminals" to justify the violence. At the highest political levels, this is sanitised into bureaucratic language that is just as pernicious. When confronted about India's "pushback" of alleged Bangladeshi immigrants through the border, the country's Ministry of External Affairs deflects by citing a "pending list of 2,369 [Bangladeshi] nationals" and blaming Dhaka for verification delays. This rhetoric reduces thousands of human beings to a backlog to be "dealt with." Systematic dehumanisation doesn't

just dull empathy; it creates the perfect conditions for border killings or illegal push-ins.

The erosion of restraint, then, is no accident. The BSF routinely defies the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms—an ethical framework built on necessity, proportionality, and accountability.

Necessity demands that lethal means be a last resort.

Proportionality forbids

using a bullet to answer

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robust accountability.

The BSF routinely defies the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms—an ethical framework built on necessity, proportionality, and accountability. Necessity demands that lethal means be a last resort. Proportionality forbids using a bullet to answer a transgression. Finally, the principles mandate robust accountability.

First, the commission would be the engine of truth. By conducting fully autonomous investigations, it would serve as the official bilateral counterpart to a UN Special Rapporteur, with its mandate backed by the United Nations Human Rights Council. This is not a radical demand. The UN has deployed similar mandates to investigate state-sanctioned border violence in Belarus, and the UN

Rapporteur on Iran has specifically investigated shoot-to-kill policies against cross-border couriers. The crisis on the India-Bangladesh border warrants no less.

Second, the commission would be the engine of reform. Its mandate must include the authority to compel prosecutions in civilian courts, bypassing opaque military tribunals. This external, binding pressure is the only mechanism that can force a genuine overhaul of the BSF's Rules of Engagement to align with UN norms, tear down the walls of immunity protecting abusers, and ensure measures like body cameras are implemented meaningfully.

Third, the commission would be the engine of bilateral justice. Its binding rulings on victim compensation and criminal accountability would transform the dynamic from political negotiation to a quasi-judicial process, injecting the element currently absent: inescapable consequence.

Fourth and fifth, the commission's mandate would extend beyond adjudication to address the root causes of the crisis. Its investigations would provide both governments with authoritative reports on why people are crossing the border—to find work, visit relatives, flee police crackdowns, etc. From this evidence, it could issue formal recommendations to establish joint development programmes and, crucially, design and monitor the implementation of legal migration pathways, such as temporary work permits. This would undercut the traffickers who profit from desperation.

A nation's commitment to human rights is tested at its margins. Right now, at its eastern border, India is failing that test—one body at a time. Trust between nations is not built on the number of meetings held, but on the justice delivered. The time for empty rituals is over; the time for justice has come.



If you think seriously, it's concerning that some men think that a 'wife material' should be someone who thinks that way.

There shouldn't be a set standard for 'wife material': Sunerah

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHEWAZ

Thanks to the release of the nationally beloved film *Utshob* on OTT, it has once again found its way into social media discussions. Praised for its family-friendly, emotional, and evocative script, the film arguably peaks in the scene between Sunerah Binte Kamal and Zahid Hasan. A lighter facet of the emotional reunion of the father-daughter duo is Sunerah screeching, "How come this coffee is Tk 350? Outrageous!", a humorous dialogue which has unexpectedly set off debates on social media.

Memes captioned "wife material" have been circulating for days, owing to her character's stingy nature. "It is honestly flattering and quite funny to see these memes circulating around," said the actress, a recipient of the National Film Award for her very first film, *No Dorai*. "If you think seriously, it's concerning that some men think that a 'wife material' should be someone who thinks that way."

Sunerah further says that such arbitrary standards demean women in general. "Every woman who wants to get married is a wife material."

The actress, on a high from her role in *Daagi* and the subsequent cameo

in *Utshob*, still believes that she is on a learning path as an actress. "From the beginning of my career, I wanted to set an example. There was a weird perception that artistes who came from modelling weren't that good at acting – and I wanted to buck that stereotype." That, she did. Her portrayal of the verbally mute Likhon in *Daagi*, especially when she communicated solely through her expressive eyes, was something to behold. "Likhon is among the top three characters I have played, along with Ayesha from *No Dorai* and Esha from *Utshob*. I hold them very dear to me."

Sunerah goes on to insinuate that she was previously ridiculed for 'cameo' appearances in films. "A lot of people would poke fun at me, saying 'when is your next cameo?'" but they failed to understand that the screen-time of a role is not necessarily proportional to its impact. I give it all to whatever I'm doing, and seems like it's paying off!"

What's next for the young star? Unsurprisingly, the hard worker is firing on all cylinders – working on television, films and even YouTube. "I don't subscribe to the notion that a film actress should stay away from other mediums. As I said, it's a learning journey for me and I am cherishing it."



PHOTO: COURTESY

Blackpink's Lisa to release short film for 'Dream'

Blackpink's Lisa will release a short film for her track *Dream* from her debut album *Alter Ego*. Co-starring Japanese actor and model Kentaro Sakaguchi, the film premieres on August 13 at 11pm EST. Lisa announced the project on social media with a poster and the caption: "An emotional, beautiful story that will soon be yours."

Dream appears as the 13th track on *Alter Ego*, released on February 28, which debuted at number one on the Billboard Top Album Sales chart.

Lisa is currently on the *Deadline World Tour* with Blackpink, with upcoming shows in London on August 15–16 and in the Philippines on November 22–23.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

Troubling Rain'

Renowned photographer Abir Abdullah unveils a compelling solo exhibition portraying the resilience, struggles, and lyrical beauty of life in the monsoon's embrace. Through evocative frames, the collection invites viewers to pause and reflect on the intimate relationship between rain, hardship, and hope in everyday Bangladeshi life.

DATE: THURSDAY–SATURDAY | AUGUST 14–23, 2025

TIME: 3–9 PM

VENUE: LA GALERIE, ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE DHAKA



Popular Turkish series *Kurulus: Osman* is now streaming on Toffee in Bangla dubbing, with the first three seasons available and the fourth releasing on August 22. Toffee has partnered with SRK Group to bring all six seasons in Bangla, featuring the voices of 53 Bangladeshi artistes.

The historical drama follows the Kayi tribe of Anatolia, led by Ertugrul and later his son Osman, as they lay the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. Written by Mehmet Bozdag and directed

by Metin Günay, Özge Törer, and Alma Terzić. Broadcast in 73 countries, *Kurulus: Osman* won Best Series at the International Venice TV Awards in 2020.

NEWS

Graft trial starts against Hasina, others

FROM PAGE 12

According to court sources, the three complainants read out very similar statements.

As all the accused were declared fugitive, there was no scope for any lawyers to cross-examine the witnesses.

The judge set August 26 for the next hearing.

Meanwhile, the trial of another three graft cases against Hasina, Sheikh Rehana, her son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, and daughters, British MP Tulip Siddiq and Azmina Siddiq, and 18 others, including several current and former officials of the Ministry of Housing and Public

Works and Rajuk, is pending with the Special Judge's Court 4 in Dhaka.

The anti-graft body – between January 12 to 14 – lodged six cases with its Dhaka Integrated District Office 1 over alleged irregularities in the allocation of plots under the Purbachal New Town project.

The ACC alleged that Hasina, in connivance with senior Rajuk officials, unlawfully secured six plots – each measuring 10 kathas – in the diplomatic zone of Sector 27 of the Purbachal New Town project for herself, Joy, Putul, Bobby, Tulip, and Azmina, despite their ineligibility under existing regulations.

On March 25 this year, the ACC

filed six charge sheets with the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka where Hasina was a common accused in all six cases.

On April 10, 13, and 15, the court issued arrest warrants against Hasina, Rehana, Joy, Putul, Tulip, Azmina, and Radwan, along with others, after taking cognisance of the charges.

The same court on July 1 ordered the relevant authorities to issue six gazette notifications summoning the 29 individuals to appear before the court in the cases.

On July 31, charges were framed against 29 people, including Hasina, Rehana, Joy, Putul, Bobby, Tulip, and Azmina, in the six cases.

he said.

"These agencies collected varying amounts – Tk 4 lakh, Tk 4.5 lakh, Tk 5 lakh – but passengers only signed documents acknowledging Tk 78,900. If they paid more, they themselves must lodge complaints. So far, not a single victim has done so."

The case lacked proper evidence, Rasel added.

In his no confidence petition against the report, Khan said the accused, as part of the syndicate, influenced the police to transfer the investigation to a preferred CID unit without consulting him or seeking his input.

"During the investigation, the officer had no contact with me and was clearly influenced by the accused. Out of hostility and malice, he submitted a false and fabricated report, prepared or dictated by the accused," the petition said.

Khan said Interpol's National Central Bureau in Dhaka on October 24 last year requested assistance from Malaysian police to arrest two alleged masterminds – Bangladeshi-origin Malaysian citizen Md Aminul Islam (Amin Nur) and former Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies secretary general Mohammed Ruhul Amin – on charges of human trafficking and extortion.

"Interrogating them will uncover the true picture of the human trafficking," he said, adding that the request to Malaysia was based on the accounts of former minister Ahmad.

Khan said he will pursue the case until he is satisfied.

The complainant in the case was not a direct victim as the alleged victims were the workers who paid the money, the CID inspector Rasel told The Daily Star.

Many recruiting agencies in Bangladesh, including Afia Overseas, also faced losses because of the syndicate that extorted huge amounts of money, he said.

The complainant in the case was

not a direct victim as the alleged

victims were the workers who paid

the money, the CID inspector Rasel

told The Daily Star.

About 4.76 lakh passengers were involved, many of whom paid through 3,000 agencies rather than directly to the so-called 103 processing agency.

Khan said he will pursue the case until he is satisfied.

No reforms in foreign ministry amid

FROM PAGE 12

Shabab Bin Ahmed, who was posted at Bangladesh Embassy in the Netherlands at that time, and asked him to return home instead of joining as deputy high commissioner at the Kolkata mission.

"As competition between the US and China escalates to near Cold War levels, Bangladesh must exercise heightened caution and pursue skillful diplomacy," said former ambassador M Humayun Kabir.

Bangladesh's youth, who played a pivotal role in ending an authoritarian regime, aspire to a country that maintains foreign relations with mutual respect and independence, Humayun said.

Reality, however, paints a different picture.

The foreign ministry remains institutionally weak, owing to both internal and external factors that have influenced its direction over the past few months.

The resignation of Jashim Uddin as foreign secretary on May 21 was one of several developments that raised questions about the ministry's institutional stability and integrity.

He stepped down under pressure following a social media campaign targeting him. Certain quarters within the ministry and also the government acted against him, according to several foreign ministry officials.

Also, the government cancelled the appointment of Khorshed Alam Khastagir, deputy high commissioner at the Bangladesh mission in Malaysia, as ambassador to Poland on October 6 last year following a social media campaign.

The campaigners alleged that he sued Bangladeshi migrants for demonstrating in support of the July mass uprising. Later, Malaysian authorities clarified that he had not filed any cases.

On May 22, the government scrapped a transfer order for

Shabab Bin Ahmed, who was posted at Bangladesh Embassy in the Netherlands at that time, and asked him to return home instead of joining as deputy high commissioner at the Kolkata mission.

The order was issued after a social media campaign claimed that he had "barred sacrifice of animals" during Eid-ul-Azha on the consulate premises.

The ministry has not yet provided any explanation as to why these changes were made.

Several foreign ministry officials said these developments created a sense of insecurity among them. Besides, multiple emails and WhatsApp conversations were leaked over the past year, fuelling mistrust among the staff.

Seeking anonymity, one of the officials said that any action must be backed by law, logic and proof, or else it creates chaos and promotes inefficiency.

COORDINATION NEEDED

Over the last few months, Khalilur Rahman, national security adviser, and Lutfey Siddiqi, chief adviser's envoy for international affairs, have played prominent roles in dealing with international issues, including the Rohingya crisis.

"On many occasions, the foreign ministry appeared to be taking a backseat when the Chief Adviser's Office took the front stage," said a foreign policy analyst, adding that this could lead to problems in coordination.

"This was reflected during the chief adviser's visit to the UK on June 10-13, which was declared an official tour. But no meeting between Yunus and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer took place," said the analyst, preferring not to be named.

Prof Sk Tawfiq M Haque, director of the South Asian Institute

of Policy and Governance at North South University, said that if there is any gap in coordination, the foreign ministry should bring it up and address that.

In a report on governance over the past year, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said the government lacked clarity regarding its position on providing a "humanitarian corridor" to Rakhine and didn't communicate the issue transparently to the public.

On April 27, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain said that Dhaka in principle agreed to the UN proposal for providing humanitarian passage to Rakhine, prompting widespread criticism from political parties and cross sections of people.

About a month later, Khalilur Rahman, who was posted at Bangladesh's embassy with India strained after ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to the neighbouring country. India drastically restricted visas for Bangladeshis, imposed certain trade restrictions and continued push-ins of Bangla-speaking people.

As Bangladesh's ties with Pakistan improved over the past year, Beijing initiated a trilateral mechanism involving Dhaka and Islamabad – a move that experts believe could upset New Delhi and Washington.

Experts say Bangladesh needs to have national consensus on key foreign policy issues and ensure strong coordination among relevant ministries to efficiently deal with foreign powers. Otherwise, it will be difficult to maintain strategic autonomy and protect national interests.

Plots afoot to obstruct return

FROM PAGE 12

If the BNP comes to power, leaders and activists must remain vigilant to prevent opportunists from joining the party.

"They will come. They will damage your reputation. They will take their own benefit. They will damage the party's reputation. They will take their own benefit. And when they see hard times, they will run away. These vultures must not be allowed to come."

These opportunists only care about their own interests, he said.

"Colleagues, if Allah wills, you will run the country. You may form the government with the support of the people. But right now, many opportunists are circling around you. You must watch out for these opportunists – they belong to no

If the BNP comes to power, it will face numerous challenges, including creating jobs for the unemployed, addressing water management issues by re-excavating dried-up rivers and canals and reforming the education system.

"We must all stay alert. We must not do anything that could harm the party or destroy the people's trust and confidence. Pledge that you will keep the party united."



Deepika Padukone to produce 'The Intern' remake

Deepika Padukone has stepped away from the lead role in the upcoming Hindi adaptation of the 2015 Hollywood film *The Intern* to focus solely on producing it under her KA Productions banner. Initially set to star opposite Rishi Kapoor and later Amitabh Bachchan, her role will now be recast.

According to Mid-Day, this is the first of five projects she plans to launch over the next year, aiming for stories with global relevance. The move follows her exit from Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Spirit*, citing creative differences and work-hour demands, with Tripti Dimri replacing her. Rumours of her leaving *Kalki 2* were denied by sources. Deepika last appeared in *Singham Again* and welcomed her daughter, Dua, in September 2024.

Turkish drama 'Kurulus: Osman' now in Bangla dub on Toffee

Popular Turkish series *Kurulus: Osman* is now streaming on Toffee in Bangla dubbing, with the first three seasons available and the fourth releasing on August 22. Toffee has partnered with SRK Group to bring all six seasons in Bangla, featuring the voices of 53 Bangladeshi artistes.

The historical drama follows the Kayi tribe of Anatolia, led by Ertugrul and later his son Osman, as they lay the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. Written by Mehmet Bozdag and directed by Metin Günay, the series stars Burak Özçivit, Özge Törer, and Alma Terzić. Broadcast in 73 countries, *Kurulus: Osman* won Best Series at the International Venice TV Awards in 2020.

Fisherwomen left in the shadows

FROM PAGE 3
which led to serious social consequences, including increased domestic conflicts, separations, emotional abuse, and early school dropouts, which in turn contribute to early marriages.

Additionally, 57 percent of fisherwomen remain excluded from social safety net programmes, while key policies such as the Jalmahal Policy and Fisherfolk Guideline largely overlook their gender-specific vulnerabilities.

Although 63 percent have completed registration, most have yet to receive their ID cards, blocking access to vital aid.

Off season rice aid disproportionately favours male cardholders, and many women are forced to pay fees of Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,500 to obtain VGD cards.

Furthermore, 53 percent report never having received any government or administrative support, exposing significant unfulfilled promises and misaligned interventions.

Samara recommended strengthening the economic resilience of fisherwomen by forming cooperatives with access to revolving funds, providing market-relevant skills training, and ensuring universal issuance of fisherfolk ID cards.

She urged improvements in social protection through a simplified and transparent ID registration process, the creation of gender-specific safety nets, and expanded access to affordable credit to reduce dependence on exploitative lenders.

She advocated for local health camps, support for rainwater harvesting, and the removal of barriers to healthcare access, while emphasising the need to embed women's representation and

priorities into fisheries, climate, and governance policies to achieve a gender-responsive transformation.

At the seminar, widow Farida Begum from Chila union in Bagerhat's Mongla, who has been fishing for 40 years, showing her hands, said, "Look at our hands -- whatever work men do, we do the same. We catch fish, steer boats, and our hands are marked with stains and scars. If male fishers get support, why shouldn't we?"

"We operate boats, get soaked in saltwater, and face tigers in the forest and alligators in the waterbodies to feed our children. Yet, the government provides us with neither food nor water tanks."

"If our names aren't on government records, I urge the government to remove women fishers like me from this earth altogether," said Farida.

Human rights activist Zakia Shishir stressed that discrimination stems from ingrained mindsets rather than policies alone.

"When we say 'fisherman' or 'jel', how many of us picture a woman? The real bias lies within our mindsets, not just in policies," she said.

She criticised policy-making detached from lived realities, calling for local contexts to be factored in and for women's voices to be formally recognised so they can claim their rights effectively.

Zakia criticised how policies are often made by officials detached from the realities of fisherfolk, rarely involving the actual beneficiaries.

She stressed the importance of considering local geographical differences for effective policy implementation.

Calling for formal

recognition of women's work, she pointed out that women face compounded oppression from both social norms and patriarchy.

Badabon Sangho's Executive Director Lipi Rahman echoed the need for formal recognition, stating that many remain unaware of women fisherfolk's contributions, leading to neglect of their rights.

Department of Fisheries Deputy Director Firoz Ahmed acknowledged that after the district-level ID card project ended, the department has struggled to maintain ID card issuance.

While a recent project provided some cards through a vendor, many registered fishers remain without them, he said.

Shahajadi Begum, project coordinator at Oxfam, suggested expanding the scope of definition and registration coverage to explicitly include more fisherwomen.

She also emphasised the need to provide women-friendly alternative livelihood options using local resources, especially for those involved in catching fish fry, as many of these women lack skills for other types of work.

Speaking as chief guest, Dr Md Abdur Rouf, director general of DoF, assured that the definition of fishers will be revised to explicitly include women, as the 2016-17 registration guidelines currently omit specific mention of female fishers.

Illegal fishers are also being removed from the registration list, while genuine fishers are newly included.

Women fishers make up of 12 percent of the registered fisherfolk across the country, he said, adding that in the past six months, 37,910 fishers have been newly registered, and 23,644 registrations have been cancelled.

Lawyers scuffle

FROM PAGE 3
MK Rahman argued that Haque, who retired a decade ago, had been detained on July 24 in a murder case filed a year earlier.

He condemned the treatment Haque received, including being brought to court with his hands tied behind his back, and criticised the judiciary's silence on the matter.

Mohsen Rashid, another lawyer for Khairul, urged DAG Rasel not to dictate the court and highlighted the humiliation faced by Haque. "Insulting judges has become a trend in South Asia," he said.

A government-backed lawyer held Haque responsible for the judiciary's decline and the killing of around 1,500 people.

This statement was opposed by lawyers supporting Haque, leading to shouting, chaos and scuffle despite repeated requests from the judges to calm down.

Justice Haque was arrested on July 24 from a house in Dhaka's Dhanmondi by the detectives in connection with the murder of 16-year-old Jubo Dal activist Abdul Kaiyum Ahad, killed in Jatrabari on July 18 last year.

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HC upholds life term for two former cops

FROM PAGE 3
Both Zahidur and Qamaruzzaman will have to pay Tk 2 lakh each in compensation to Jonny's family and Tk 1 lakh each as a fine to the state.

Meanwhile, former assistant SIRashedul Islam's life sentence was reduced to 10 years in prison. He was ordered to pay Tk 25,000 in compensation to Jonny's family and Tk 50,000 as a fine to the state, said defence lawyer Md Abdur Razzak Razu.

Police informer Russell, sentenced earlier to seven years in jail, was acquitted. Another informer, Sumon, who had also received a seven-year sentence, has already served his term.

Delivering the verdict on the appeals of three convicted accused, the court said documents and evidence, including inquest and post-mortem

reports, proved that Jonny, an innocent young man, was illegally detained and brutally tortured to death by police in custody.

As a state institution, the police cannot avoid responsibility for the illegal detention, inhuman torture, and death, the court observed.

The court also said the fact that there were 86 police personnel present at Pallabi Police Station during the incident, none of whom reported it to the verdict but urged the state to take responsibility for Jonny's two children and provide them with compensation.

According to the case statement, police informers Sumon and Russell called law enforcers after Jonny slapped Sumon for stalking and harassing women at a wedding programme in Pallabi's Idrani Camp area.

Then, a team of 25-26 police officers, including

that he was satisfied with the upholding of Zahidur's life sentence but expressed concern for his safety following the commutation of another sentence and the acquittal of Russell.

"I was already living in fear and panic. Now that one accused has been acquitted, I don't know what will happen," he said.

Jonny's mother Khurshida Begum said she was satisfied with the verdict but urged the state to take responsibility for Jonny's two children and provide them with compensation.

According to the case statement, police informers Sumon and Russell called law enforcers after Jonny slapped Sumon for stalking and harassing women at a wedding programme in Pallabi's Idrani Camp area.

Qamaruzzaman remains on the run, while Russell, who had been absconding during the trial court verdict, later surrendered.



**Request for Expressions of Interest (National)
Selection of Individual Consultant – 01 Position**

Date: 11 August, 2025

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

1	Ministry/Division	Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Division
2	Agency	Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme
3	Client Name	Project Director, Aspire to Innovate Programme
4	Client Code	Not used at present
5	Client District	Dhaka
6	Expression of Interest for Selection of	1. Consultant (Data & SDG) – 1 position
7	EOI Ref No	56.83.0000.006.11.001.25.
8	Date	11 August, 2025

KEY INFORMATION FUNDING INFORMATION

9	Source of Funds	Development Budget and Government of Bangladesh.
10	Development Partners (if applicable)	UNDP

PARTICULAR INFORMATION

11	Project / Programme Code (if applicable)	223038900
12	Project / Programme Name (if applicable)	Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme

13	EOI Closing Date and Time	27 August, 2025	11.45 AM (BST)
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INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT

14	Brief Description of Assignment	Selection of the 1. Consultant (Data & SDG) – 1 position
<i>For detail Terms of Reference (ToR) please visit: https://a2i.portal.gov.bd/site/view/jobs/</i>		

15	Qualification and Experience	Academic Qualification & Years of Experience: • As per Terms of Reference (ToR)
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16	Other Details (if applicable)	Aspire to Innovate Programme invites the interested eligible applicants to indicate their interest in providing the services in accordance with the Terms of References (ToR) provided in RFA. This shall require confirmation through submission of application forms and other documents described in the Request for Application (RFA).
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Expression of interest shall be submitted by **11:45 am (BST), 27 August, 2025** via email recruitment@a2i.gov.bd or hardcopy.

Interested applicants are required to submit their Expression of Interest in accordance with the application form (email or Hard Copy) which may be obtained (RFA) from the Aspire to Innovate Programme website: <https://a2i.portal.gov.bd/site/view/jobs/> or ICT Division website: <https://ictd.gov.bd> or Bangladesh Public Procurement Authority (BPPA) website: www.cptu.gov.bd Applicants may also obtain RFA document through email. Please send your request to: recruitment@a2i.gov.bd.

For those who are to submit hard copy, a box will be kept in 13th floor of ICT Tower, a2i Office, Agargaon Dhaka to submit application & necessary documents.

Consultants will be selected following PPA-2006 and PPR-2008. It is expected that the services will commence in **September 2025**.

For query, please contact: **Mohammad Arifur Rahman, HR Officer**
Address: Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, 13th floor, ICT Tower, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
Telephone No.: 9144848 Ext. 132, Mobile no. +88 01841030208

CLIENT DETAILS

17	Name of Official Inviting EOI	Md. Rashidul Mannaf Kabir
18	Designation of Official Inviting EOI	Joint Secretary & Project Director (Additional Responsibility), Aspire to Innovate Programme
19	Address of Official Inviting EOI	Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Division ICT Tower, E-14/X, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207
20	Contact details of Official Inviting EOI	Tel. No. 88025500693 Fax No. 88025500 e-mail pd@a2i.gov.bd 1-34
21	The Client reserves the right to reject all EOI's	


Md. Rashidul Mannaf Kabir
(Joint Secretary)
Project Director (Additional Responsibility),
Aspire to Innovate Programme
Information and Communication Technology
Division
E-14/X, BCC Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka

e-Tender Notice (NCT)

e-Tender for the office of the Superintending Engineer (P&S) invites in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following goods:

SL	Tender ID	Name of tender	Last selling and closing date & time
1	1138400	Construction of 33kV New Line from 33/11kV Sub-Station, Wzpdcl, Charfason, Bhola to PGCB	

SATYAJIT RAY'S 'Tagore' Films

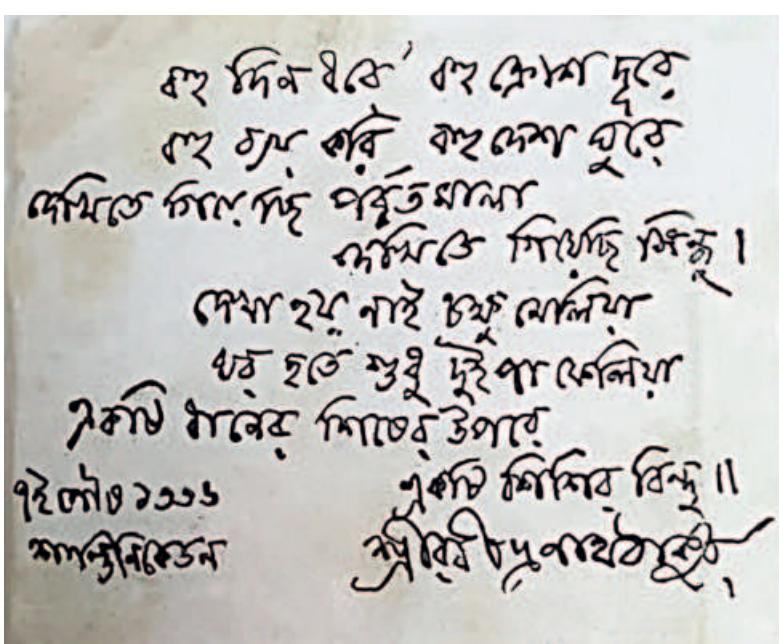
In 1961, Satyajit Ray made two films to make the centenary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore. One was a conventional bio-documentary, the other a triple bill, *Tin Kanya*, based on three of Tagore's stories focussing on women. Ray would go on to make two more screen adaptations of Tagore's writing – *Charulata* (1964) and *Ghare Baire* (1984).



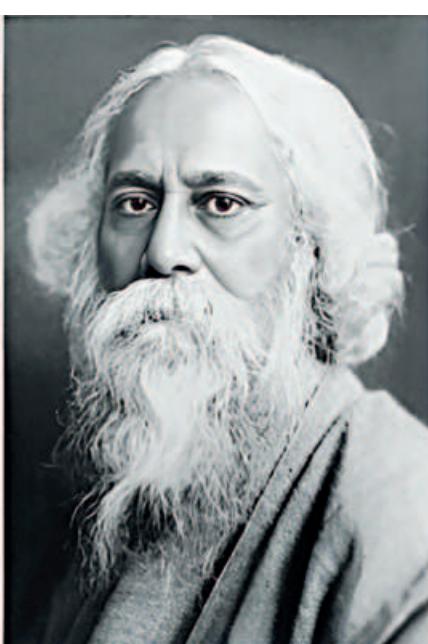
Both travelled widely and left their artistic marks in many different countries, yet were profoundly Bengali at heart, choosing to live and work in Bengal.

JOHN W. HOOD

Before taking a close look at the three feature films that comprise Ray's tribute to Tagore we might note a few similarities between the two cultural giants. There is ample evidence in Ray's notebooks of his talent in the visual arts where we find countless illustrations of so many of his cinematic ideas, while Tagore took to painting when he was close to 60. Ray was more than competent as a musician, composing the music for all his films from *Tin Kanya* on, while Tagore wrote some 2,232 songs. Ray too was a writer – of filmscripts, of course, but also of detective stories and science fiction, of essays and criticism. It is a popular truism that Tagore wrote in one lifetime more than most people could read in a lifetime – novels, short stories, plays, essays and nearly 60 volumes of poetry. Both men had a global outlook that reflected their versatility. Tagore was a devoted Indian who yearned for his country's freedom, yet his artistry and intellect could never be limited by just that one country; Ray was also



When young Satyajit Ray visited Tagore with his mother, Suprabha Ray, to seek the poet's blessings, he handed Tagore an autograph book. Instead of signing it on the spot, Tagore took the book home. The next morning, when Satyajit arrived at Tagore's residence in Uttarayan, he received the book back—with an eight-line poem written inside by the poet himself.



whereas Ratan is domesticated and responsible in her work, Mrinmayi – a veritable tomboy – is at one with the freedom of the outside, at play with her group of mostly boys and her pet squirrel.

The film is full of fun, as *Postmaster* is full of touching sentiment, most of it sad. It might also be said that *Samapti*'s fun is more prominent in Ray's version than in Tagore's, for so much of it can be transmitted visually – somebody seen slipping over in the mud can be much funnier than being told about it by some lines in a book.

Like *Postmaster*, narrative progresses by development of the contrast between the two central characters; unlike *Postmaster*, *Samapti* ends in a union, not a separation. However, there is one element of melancholy here: Tagore would seem to be unconvinced about the rightness of the marriage of young girls, for Mrinmayi's endearing

more than its dialogue. The opening titles roll over shot of a pair of hands embroidering the Roman 'B' on a handkerchief. (B for Bhupati, Charulata's husband.) The titles are immediately followed by Charulata's call to the servant for tea, and then there is a period just short of eight minutes without any dialogue at all. The visuals during this time show Charulata selecting a book – Bankimchandra's *Kapalkundala* – from a bookshelf, indicating both her literacy and her delight in Bengali writing. She also observes with evident delight the goings on in the outside world through a pair of opera glasses – a trainer and his two monkeys, a palanquin passing the house, an apparently amusing fat man. Then she sees Bhupati – in long shot coming along the upper storey veranda, lost in thought, not noticing his wife. He enters a room, from which he emerges a few moments later with

that Bhupati is dedicated to his own work, which is steeped in British India, while Charulata is kept busy by her place in Indian India. However, it would indeed be missing the point to make a comparative judgement about the quality of each India, or to assert that one is worthier than the other. Both Tagore and Ray, I imagine, would come down on the side of an intelligent synthesis of the two. Unfortunately husband and wife remain separate from one other, and this dichotomy is at the heart of the drama that will develop.

Germaine to this drama is the visit of Amal, a young cousin of Bhupati, a lively, spirited and educated young man; a vibrant and creative relationship quickly develops between him and the somewhat older Charulata. It is at first an innocent relationship, based on a mutual passion for writing (in Bengali). But as this literary passion becomes more and more intense, the relationship might be seen to take on the appearance of an affair. However, there is nothing in the novella or the film to give definite substance to this, except for an emotional moment when Charulata sobs intensely, embracing Amal with her face resting on his chest. It must be noted that this moment does have a profound effect on Amal – he does not smile or laugh again in the remainder of the film – and it would seem that his departure is inevitable.

It must also be stressed that Bhupati is a good husband and a loving one, and that Charulata is devoted to him. The opening line of the film shows her concern for the master's tea being late, a simple indication of wifely devotion. The slippers that she embroiders for Amal might be seen as extravagant in comparison with the mere handkerchief she embroiders for Bhupati, but the point of the slippers is to indicate naivete rather than unfaithfulness, and to allow a simple suggestion of Amal's rejection in leaving the slippers behind on the night on which he leaves the house.

As noted in an earlier context, *Charulata* is one of the 'Tagore' films marked by visual Anglophilia, particularly in the architecture and décor of the house and Bhupati's choice of clothes. This apparent Anglophilic beggs the contrast to Charulata's passion for reading Bengali literature and writing in her mother tongue.

Twenty years later Ray made *Ghare Baire*, the first of his last four films, indicating that much of the shine had gone out of his work. *Ghare Baire* is over-long and dense with dialogue, most of which is dry and polemical.

The contextual basis of the film is Curzon's Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the protests that mostly took the form of the public burning of foreign cloth, a form of protest to which Tagore was strongly opposed. The drama is structured around three characters: Nikhil, his wife Bimala and his close friend Sandip. The friendship would seem unlikely – Nikhil is gentle, rational and opposed to the protest fires, while Sandip is something of a rabble-rouser, an ardent cloth burner and organiser of demonstrations. Bimala is there for Sandip to try to win over, and as Charulata is infatuated somewhat by Amal, Bimala is infatuated for a time by Sandip. It is when the protests become violent that Nikhil orders Sandip to leave and Bimala realises her foolishness in being influenced by him. Ultimately Nikhil is killed in the midst of protest violence.

These five 'Tagore' films of Satyajit Ray make up a somewhat uneven group, but *Postmaster*, *Samapti* and *Charulata* stand out as masterly.

Dr. John W. Hood is a film critic, translator, and former teacher.



A scene from the film *Charulata*.

proud of his Indian heritage, yet was happy to take whatever he wanted from the cultures of other countries. Both men spoke and wrote in English as well as they did in Bengali. Both had close connections to the Brahmo Samaj, which lent them, perhaps, a more streamlined religiosity, and both were noted for their profound humanism. Both wrote a lot for children, writing that could also be enjoyed and admired by people of all ages. Both travelled widely and left their artistic marks in many different countries, yet were profoundly Bengali at heart, choosing to live and work in Bengal. Yet remarkable as Ray's artistic scope was, it could not match that of Tagore; indeed, no one's could. However, similarities such as this brief summation do suggest a closeness of the poet to the filmmaker.

The three films of the triple bill and the two longer films all deal with male-female relationships, and except for *Postmaster*, the first of the three short films, they all focus on marriage. It might also be noted that *Postmaster* and *Charulata* offer significant allusions to literacy and literature.

Central to the narrative of *Postmaster* is the notion of dislocation. Nandal, a young man of the Calcutta *bhadralok*, is posted to a rural post office and is confronted by a totally different way of life, one into which he simply cannot fit, and this cultural or societal conflict is the sole cause of his constant and worsening depression. Eventually he applies for a transfer after contracting malaria and leaves the village – and presumably, rural life – for good.

Perhaps Nandal does not elicit much sympathy, being what would seem to be a pampered and probably over-mothered city boy. However, a great deal of sympathy is ensured by

the simple narrative deals with Phanibhusan's obsession with his wife, Manimalika, and her obsession with jewellery, her venality and her infidelity. Indeed, she elopes with a lover, while justice would seem to prevail when the boat on which they are travelling sinks and they drown.

We might note certain visual similarities with *Charulata*. The architecture and decor in the houses of Phanibhusan and Bhupati are notably Western in style as are the clothes that the two men wear. This serves as a reminder that the story-cum-film is set in two Indias – Indian India and British India – and that Tagore and, to a lesser extent, Ray, also lived through a time of two Indias. This point is rather significant in *Charulata*, but mostly it is merely cosmetic in *Monihara*.

The third short film is the delightful *Samapti*, which is remarkable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it is one of the earliest films to bring to the screen Aparna Dasgupta who, later in life as Aparna Sen, would achieve fame as one of Bengal's finest actors and one of the foremost filmmakers in India.

The focus here is the character of Mrinmayi, a village girl of much the same age as Ratan in *Postmaster*, but

childlike features must fade as Mrinmayi the homemaker must emerge. Ironically, it would seem that her childlike features are what endear her to Amulya, as they indeed endear her to the film's audience.

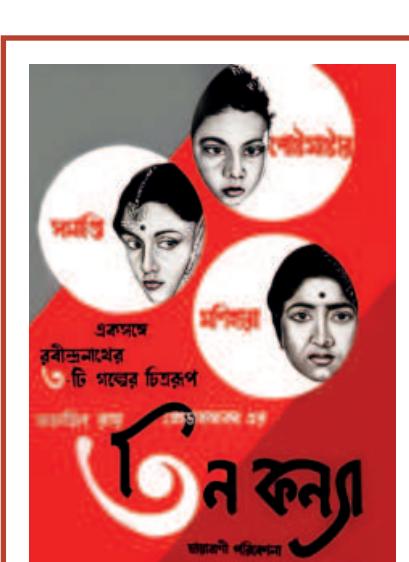
There are distinct similarities between *Postmaster* and *Samapti*: both focus on a young girl and her relationship with an older, Western-educated man, and both have a rural context. But there are distinct differences too: a parting in one, union in the other; the poignancy of one, the light-heartedness of the other; simplicity of *Postmaster*, complex development of *Samapti*. Yet the two films compliment each other very well and strengthen the argument for *Tin Kanya* as a double rather than a triple bill.

In 1964 Ray made the exceptionally beautiful *Charulata*, a film remarkable for its visual experience

a book, opened and claiming his full attention. This opening section very skilfully reveals Charulata as isolated – from the outside world, connected only by opera glasses, and from Bhupati. It also highlights her restlessness.

The shot of Charulata selecting the Bengali novel is indicative of her Bengaliess, or her belonging to the Indian India. Bhupati is very much inspired and preoccupied by British India, even by just Britain. He sees British political liberalism to be the great hope of civilisation, and it is this that drives his own newspaper, *The Sentinel* (in English, of course), the appeal of which is limited to the Western-educated elite of Calcutta; he has no interest in the Bengali writers so much loved by his wife. And so, while it would be quite wrong to say that the marriage is in any way a loveless one, it is to be noted

that the Bengali novel is



Posters featuring some of Satyajit Ray's Tagore films.

'We have to be realistic'

STAR SPORTS DESK

"Like snakes and ladders, what goes up sometimes comes down," Bangladesh women's football head coach Peter Butler reflected on the team's landmark climb in the FIFA rankings.

Following their breakthrough campaign in Myanmar in June-July this year, the women in red and green surged from 128th to 104th in the latest FIFA rankings, the biggest leap by any nation.

The ranking boost mirrors Bangladesh's commanding qualifying performance at the age group level, as the U-20s on Sunday secured their first-ever berth in the AFC Women's U-20 Asian Cup, sealing the ticket to Thailand for April next year, as one of the three best runners-up among eight groups.

"I'm mindful that it can come tumbling down pretty quick, it can go up pretty quick," Butler said via a video shared by the Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

Butler credited this progress to a "competitive and healthier working environment" and said, "The girls deserve the recognition and accolades they're receiving."

The U-20s entered the qualifiers as reigning



SAFF champions, riding a six-match unbeaten streak, and carried that strong form through their campaign in Laos.

After emphatic wins over the hosts and Timor-Leste, the final group game pitted them against a world-class team like South Korea, a test they ultimately lost 6-1.

Reflecting on the defeat, Butler was candid: "I was proud of the girls, but at half-time I knew they were spent, they were done. We'd had fevers, injuries, and other issues... the South Koreans really put us to the sword in the second half."

"Having worked with FIFA and AFC, I've seen football federations worldwide are run by government funds, but in Bangladesh we run it with sponsors' money... We should've a training centre where the girls can stay comfortably, with gym and swimming pool facilities. Without a ground to practice properly, how can we expect anything good?"

Mahfuza Akhter Kiron, head of BFF women's wing, told reporters yesterday.

This was a match where Bangladesh had hoped to at least avoid a big-margin defeat but they conceded three late goals. Ultimately, the outcome did not spoil the party for Butler's charges.

Rejecting a defensive approach, the former Liberia and Botswana coach explained, "We could have parked the bus, just gone route one, smashed it down the pitch and just defended that for our lives, but that's not how I work."

"We went toe to toe in the first half, and at half-time it was one apiece. I admire the girls' durability and spirit."

"But it was a great learning curve yesterday [Sunday] against probably one of the best sides in world under-20 women's football."

Looking ahead, he opined, "So, we have to be realistic and keep striving, keep working to actually try and maintain that FIFA ranking and bring it down below 100."

Ultimately, Butler's reflections struck a balance between pride and pragmatism. The double dose of historic qualification and rankings rise mark significant milestones for Bangladesh women's football, but competing with Asia's elite will demand continued commitment, growth, and resilience.



PRODIGY'S GAMBIT

Already the youngest to earn a Woman GM norm, British chess prodigy Bodhna Sivanandan has now become the youngest female to beat a grandmaster. Aged 10 years, five months and three days, she outmanoeuvred 60-year-old English GM Peter Wells in the final round of the 2025 British Championships, surpassing American Carissa Yip's 2019 record. The daughter of Indian Tamil parents, Bodhna learnt chess during lockdown at five. In February last year, Indian-born Singaporean Ashwath Kaushik became the youngest ever to beat a GM, defeating Jacek Stopa at eight years, six months and 11 days.

PHOTO: FIDE

Proteas pace prodigy takes flight

AGENCIES



In just over a year, Kewa Maphaka has gone from dominating schoolboy cricket to unsettling some of the world's best batters.

On Sunday night in Darwin, the 19-year-old left arm quick once again underlined why many believe he is South Africa's next great fast-bowling hope.

Against Australia in the opening T20I, Maphaka returned career-best figures of 4-20, dismissing Mitchell Owen with a 144kph thunderbolt in just his fourth delivery and later removing power-hitter Tim David after conceding only 14 runs from 11 balls to him.

He capped his night with the scalps of Adam Zampa and Ben Dwarshuis, while also holding two sharp catches in the Powerplay.

It was the latest chapter in a rise that has been nothing short of meteoric. Maphaka burst onto the global stage at the ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2024, where his 21 wickets at 9.71 earned him player of the tournament honours despite being just 17.

His exploits caught the attention of IPL scouts, leading to a Mumbai Indians contract before he had played senior international cricket. Rajasthan Royals snapped him up in 2025.

International cricket followed swiftly. In his maiden ODI against Pakistan last December, Maphaka was clocked at 151kph. Two weeks later, he became South Africa's youngest Test debutant at 18 years and 270 days, showing the pace, skill, and temperament to trouble seasoned batters.

Maphaka's edge lies not just in his physical attributes - his whippy action, ability to move the ball at high speed, and athleticism in the field - but in his mindset. Teammates describe him as quiet off the field but fiercely competitive on it, unafeared of verbal exchanges with senior pros. Against Australia, he stood toe-to-toe with David, a decade older, and refused to blink.

With a T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka less than a year away, Maphaka has already made a compelling case to be a key figure in South Africa's plans.

If his development continues at this pace, the Proteas may have unearthed a bowler capable of leading their attack for the next decade.

'Satisfying to see the group evolving'

After winning a bilateral YODI series in South Africa 2-1, Bangladesh Under-19 team capped off their month-long Africa tour with a tri-national YODI series win in Zimbabwe involving the hosts and South Africa. U-19 team head coach Naveed Nawaz talked to **The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan** about the successful tour and the team's preparation for next year's U-19 World Cup. The excerpts are as follows:

DS: How do you rate the overall performance of your side in the last two series?

NN: It's very satisfying to see the boys performing really well. South Africa was quite different from Bangladesh in terms of wickets, and conditions. We played some really good cricket there. When we came to Harare, we found that things were quite different. The ball was keeping up and down and there was a bit of seam movement. But when the ball got older, it became easier to bat. These were the challenges for us throughout the series.

DS: How satisfying was it to see a different player emerging as the match winner in every game?

NN: We saw different players coming up with solutions to the problems they faced in the middle. They performed well to make an impact on the result as well. It was satisfying because you can see the group is evolving. It also means we are building a strong unit, with players who have confidence to handle situations under pressure and also make their presence felt in the middle.

DS: As the next U-19 World Cup will be held in Zimbabwe and Namibia, how important was this tour?

NN: It was important for the boys to have some understanding on how the wickets will play. Although we will play in Bulawayo, which we didn't go to this time as we played all the matches in Harare, still it's not going to be a lot different. This tour will help the boys and all of us



as well to help them prepare for the World Cup.

DS: This group of players won the Asia Cup, did well in Sri Lanka and now had a great tour in Africa. Do you feel your side is developing into a top contender for the next World Cup?

NN: As a team, we never speak about outcomes. We only speak about the roles the people will have to play and the process that we follow and the discipline that we need to maintain. If the players can play their roles well and as a team, if we can play good cricket, the outcome will take care of itself. We are looking forward to the World Cup but we really don't want to feel under pressure because of it. The main objective is to produce good

cricketers for Bangladesh.

DS: Do you see any similarities between this and the 2020 batch, which you coached to World Cup glory?

NN: It's too early to say, but yes, there is definitely potential here.

DS: Are you satisfied with the preparation for the World Cup so far?

NN: We have played around 20 YODIs starting from the UAE in 2024. We have a series in September against England and then a home series against Afghanistan in October. Asia Cup will probably happen in December. So, there are more games to play and it will add to the players' experience, which will be good for them. So far, I'm very happy with the developments and outcomes as well.

AFC CHALLENGE LEAGUE Abahani, Kings face stern tests in openers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's top two clubs, Abahani and Bashundhara Kings, kick off their AFC Challenge League campaigns today, with Abahani hosting Kyrgyzstan's Muras United in Dhaka and Kings facing Syria's Al Karamah SC in Doha.

Despite less than ideal preparation ahead of their first matches of the season, both sides are eager to produce positive results against higher-ranked opponents and progress from the preliminary stage to the 20 team final round of Asia's third-tier club competition.

Abahani, six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions, have not advanced beyond the preliminaries of an AFC competition since their 2019 AFC Cup inter-zonal semifinal run.

Participating in continental tournaments for the 13th time since 1985, the Sky Blues face a stern challenge from Muras United, a club formed in 2023 but already leaders of the Kyrgyzstan Premier League with 11 wins in 15 matches.

For AKM Maruful Haque's men, overcoming a foreign-player-laden Muras will require a disciplined performance.

In Doha, domestic powerhouse Bashundhara Kings -- five-time league champions in six seasons -- are aiming to break their continental jinx, having exited at the group stage in four straight AFC competitions, the last without a single point.

New Brazilian coach Sergio Farias has had just one training session with the full squad, as foreign signings and expatriates Tariq Raihan Kazi and Michel Orellana joined only yesterday.

Kings now face a daunting task against Al Karamah, eight-time Syrian league winners and former runners-up in both the AFC Champions League and AFC Cup.

With minimal preparation, they will be banking on resilience and flashes of brilliance to pull off a surprise in Qatar.

When the Mo magic goes missing

STAR SPORTS DESK



For all his reputation, records, goals, and moments of wizardry, Mohamed Salah's big-stage resume has left a lot to be desired. Sunday's Community Shield defeat to Crystal Palace was no different as the 33-year-old failed to make an impact, earning the lowest average rating based on his statistical output -- no goals, no assists, no chances created, no successful take-ons, and no accurate crosses.

Salah in finals (including Community Shield):
Finals: 13, Goals: 2, Assists: 2, Penalties scored: 2, Finals won: 5, Finals lost: 8

*Salah has yet to score from open play in a major final and has no assists in the seven he's started for Liverpool.



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(বিনামূল দারকারী শাখা : জিজিজিরা শাখা)

১২ আগস্ট ২০২৫, মঙ্গলবার



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ডাকঘর ৪ শুক্তরা পৰ্বতাড়া
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No reforms in foreign ministry amid global shifts

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh's foreign affairs apparatus did not see any major reforms over the past year when the country needed prudent diplomacy to navigate the complexities of rapidly evolving global and regional dynamics.

Foreign policy analysts say Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' 11 overseas visits helped secure international recognition for both the July mass uprising and the interim government. But the foreign ministry appeared somewhat sidelined.

"I don't understand why the government hasn't taken any initiative to reform the sector... There was political intention to do things differently," said former ambassador M Shameem Ahsan.

This inaction could either mean everything is fine on the foreign affairs front or it was given less importance, he told this correspondent, noting that the government set up 11 commissions to carry out reforms across various sectors but excluded foreign affairs.

"Over the last few months, what has been happening at the borders with India and Myanmar is unwanted. There are security concerns as well," said Shameem, also a former member of the Public Service Commission.

Given the global geopolitical sensitivity, the interim government should have at least formed a national foreign affairs council to help it with decision-making on critical foreign policy matters, he said.

"We, as a nation, cannot do things on an ad hoc basis," he added.

Foreign policy analysts further say Bangladesh's importance as a

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Teenager killed during clash at Geneva Camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenager was killed during a clash between two groups of alleged drug traders in Mohammadpur's Geneva Camp yesterday. At least 13 people were detained in this connection.

The 16-year-old victim, a resident of the camp, was stabbed to death by rival gang members, said Abul Alim, inspector (operations) of Mohammadpur Police Station.

According to the police official, there has been a longstanding dispute between the two groups -- one led by Mona Sohel and the other by Pichchi Raja, Selim, and Parmanu -- over the drug trade in the camp.

He said the teenager, who allegedly belonged to Mona Sohel's group, was stabbed to death around 3:00pm when the gang led by Pichchi Raja attacked the rival group.

Pichchi Raja, Selim, and Parmanu were among those who took part in the attack, he said, adding that the gangs had been fighting since the morning.

Later in the night, joint forces conducted a raid in the camp and detained at least 13 suspects.

Locally made sharp weapons were recovered at that time, confirmed Lt Col Nazim Ahmed, commanding officer of the 23rd East Bengal Regiment of the Bangladesh Army.



BANGLADESHI JUTE GOODS

India blocks their entry thru land ports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday banned the entry of certain categories of jute products, including sacks and bags, from Bangladesh through land ports with immediate effect.

The products are bleached and unbleached woven fabrics of jute or other bast fibre, twine, cordage and cables of jute besides sacks and bags of jute, said a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Indian commerce ministry.

However, the import of these jute products will be allowed only through the Nhava Sheva sea port in Maharashtra, said the notification signed by Ajay Bhadoo, director general of the DGFT.

"Imports from Bangladesh shall not be allowed from any land port on the India-Bangladesh border," the DGFT said, adding that the move "regulates" imports of certain goods with immediate effect.

last night's move came a little more than two months after India restricted the imports of a range of jute products and woven fabrics from Bangladesh via land ports, allowing them only through Nhava Sheva.

Similar steps were taken in April and May, covering ready-made garments, processed foods, flax tow, jute yarn, and other bast fibre products.

On May 17, India imposed port restrictions on certain goods from Bangladesh, while on April 9, it withdrew the transhipment facility that allowed Bangladeshi garment exporters to ship goods to destinations including the Middle East and Europe, except for Nepal and Bhutan.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES CID clears ex-minister, secy after KL's request

PORIMOL PALMA and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has cleared the former expatriates' welfare minister, its former secretary, several MPs and a syndicate of 101 recruiting agencies of charges of human trafficking and money laundering.

The move comes three months after Malaysian authorities requested Bangladesh to review or withdraw the charges in relation to the labour recruitment in Malaysia.

In the final report submitted on July 15 to the Anti Human Trafficking Special Tribunal of Dhaka on human trafficking, Md Rasel, police inspector (heinous crimes) of CID, said the investigation has found no proof of the allegations.

The report recommended actions against the plaintiff Altab Khan.

Khan, meanwhile, submitted a no-confidence petition to the court against the final report, saying that the CID inspector must have been influenced by the accused and hence submitted such a flawed report.

Earlier on April 23, Malaysian Human Resources Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Azman bin Mohd Yusof had written a letter to Expatriates' Welfare Ministry Secretary Neyamat

“These agencies collected varying amounts -- Tk 4 lakh, Tk 4.5 lakh, Tk 5 lakh -- but passengers only signed documents acknowledging Tk 78,900. If they paid more, they themselves must lodge complaints. So far, not a single victim has done so.”

Md Rasel, investigating officer

Ullah Bhuiyan requesting the review or withdrawal of the cases related to the labour recruitment in Malaysia.

"The allegations of human trafficking and money laundering -- largely unsubstantiated -- have impacted the Malaysian reputation," he said in the letter.

He also requested the secretary to prevent the revival of dismissed cases to ensure that Malaysia will preserve and enhance the US Trafficking in Person ranking by demonstrating continued commitment to ethical recruitment.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Graft trial starts against Hasina, others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of three graft cases filed against 23 people, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and daughter Saima Wazed Putul, began at a Dhaka court with depositions of three complainants yesterday.

The complainants are Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Md Salahuddin, assistant directors Afnan Jannat Kanya and SM Rashedul Hasan.

For over one and a half hours, the complainants described alleged corruption by Hasina, Joy, Putul, and 20 others, to acquire plots in violation of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) rules and provisions, said ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun of the Special Judge's Court-5 in Dhaka recorded their statements, said Ariful Islam, bench assistant of the court.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Plots afoot to obstruct return to democracy Says Tarique Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is a conspiracy underway to stop the country from returning to a democratic state and to deny the people's right to vote, said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday.

Efforts are being made to foil the return to democracy, he said while speaking as the chief guest at BNP's biennial conference in Naogaon.

"Many thought there was no opponent on the field, so why would the polls be so tough? I said back then that the next election would be the toughest in Bangladesh's history. One year ago, I said invisible forces were at work. Different kinds of conspiracies were happening and that it would not be so easy. Do you realise that now? It will be tough ahead."

People trust that if the BNP comes to power, it will do constructive work since it has experience in running the country.

"Everyone expects that the BNP will be able to move the country forward and make people's lives a little better. There is a conspiracy to ruin this plan."

To stop the ongoing conspiracy against democracy, voting rights and the BNP, Tarique urged his party members to avoid activities that could damage the public trust.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Makeshift stalls eat up much of the thoroughfare in the capital's North Jatrabari, leaving little room for traffic, resulting in frequent congestion. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DUCSU POLLS Nomination submission from today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The submission of nomination papers for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) elections is set to begin today.

According to the election schedule announced by Chief Returning Officer

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