

"It will be equipped with modern technology and capable of striking the enemy from all directions."

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif on formation of the Rocket Force Command

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Over one lakh stranded in the north as rivers swell

P3



Putin hails US efforts to end Ukraine conflict

P5



Is Bangladesh ready for the post-LDC era?

P6



Sheikh Mujib's killing deserves a nuanced reading

P7

JULY CHARTER

Commission to press parties for binding deal

MD ABBAS

Following demands from several parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, National Citizen Party, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, the National Consensus Commission is considering a proposal to make the July National Charter a legally binding document.

The commission is likely to urge political parties to pledge to enact an ordinance with special constitutional provisions, giving the charter the highest legal authority with precedence over all other laws and court rulings.

According to pledges for the parties in the latest draft of the July National Charter 2025, parties are likely to be asked to commit to ensuring full legal and constitutional protection at every stage of implementing it. If any word, sentence, or policy of the charter conflicts with the constitution or other laws, the charter would prevail.

The commission will also seek a pledge from the parties to give constitutional and state recognition to the uninterrupted struggle for democracy, human rights, and justice, and to the historical significance of the 2024 anti-discrimination democratic movement and mass uprising.



Workers even out recovered stones on the Dhalai river at Sada Pathor in Sylhet's Bholaganj yesterday. Law enforcers and security forces intercepted trucks and boats loaded with stones stolen from Sada Pathor and forced the thieves to bring those back to the river. Boatloads of stones were dumped in the river yesterday. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

- ➔ July Charter might take precedence over all laws, court decisions
- ➔ Appellate Division likely to hold sole authority over charter interpretation
- ➔ Some recommendations to be implemented before the election
- ➔ Nine-point pledge for parties prepared after talks with legal, constitutional experts
- ➔ Proposed pledges include justice for killings and honours for 2024 martyrs

Prof Ali Riaz, vice-president of the commission, told The Daily Star yesterday that they hope to send the draft to the political parties today or tomorrow. "Our work on the draft is at the final stage," he said.

Asked whether the document will be legally binding, he said the commission was holding discussions with legal experts on the matter.

Prof Riaz yesterday briefed Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on the overall progress of the July Charter. Asked when the commission would hold its third-phase meetings with political parties on the implementation and legal basis of the charter, he said no decision has yet been made.

The pledges to be sought from the parties also include ensuring constitutional recognition of the July uprising, justice for those killed during the uprising, granting state honours to the martyrs, and arranging treatment and rehabilitation for the injured.

"Any recommendations in this charter deemed immediately implementable will be carried out by the government and relevant authorities without delay and with effective measures before the next national parliamentary election," one of the pledges in the draft states.

On Sunday and Tuesday, the commission held talks with constitutional and legal experts and, according to sources, prepared a nine-point pledge for implementing the charter.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Reforms before polls needed to stop return of fascism: Yunus

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus stressed the need for carrying out necessary reforms and trials before upcoming national election, saying that without them, people's hopes of preventing the return of fascism would remain unmet.

In an interview with Singapore-based news outlet Channel NewsAsia, he said his government's commitment to the people after the uprising was to carry out three basic tasks: reforms, trials of the crimes

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

LDC graduation now will be 'suicidal'

Business leaders tell govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders yesterday urged the government to take initiatives to extend the transition period for Bangladesh's graduation from the least-developed country bracket for six more years.

"LDC graduation at this moment will be a suicidal decision for the private sector -- it will be throwing away the advantage to others," said Syed Nasim Manzur, president of Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh.

The interim government has announced that the country will graduate from the bracket as per schedule on November 2026.

The economy has suffered both local and international shocks over the last few years, so Bangladesh needs six more years to graduate, he said.

Manzur's comments came at a seminar titled "LDC Graduation: Some Options for Bangladesh", organised by the International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC B) in collaboration with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceuticals Industries (BAPI).

"Today's question is not whether we graduate -- that is settled. The challenge is how we graduate successfully," said ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman while moderating the seminar.

He suggested signing free trade agreements, defending market access, building competitiveness, acting with urgency, and not just planning.

The local businesses could not do many things because of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

50 years since Bangabandhu's assassination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

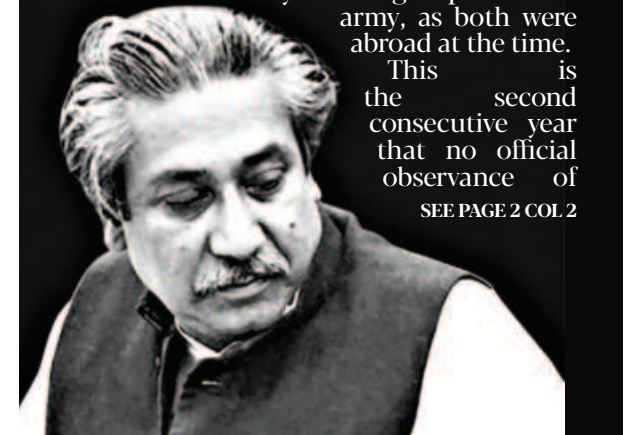
Today marks 50 years since the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On this day in 1975, in one of the darkest chapters of the nation's history, Mujib was shot dead along with most of his family at his Dhanmondi 32 residence.

His daughters, Sheikh Hasina, who later became prime minister for several terms but was ousted from power on August 5 last year following a mass uprising, and Sheikh Rehana, survived the carnage carried out by a rebel group from the army, as both were abroad at the time.

This is the second consecutive year that no official observance of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



SURVEILLANCE Govt forms body to probe AL regime's violations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a committee to investigate how the state's surveillance infrastructure had been used to violate the rights of citizens during the Awami League regime.

The cabinet made the decision following an investigative report published by The Daily Star into Tk 1,382 crore worth of surveillance equipment that was purchased by Rab, police and the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC), and a report published by Tech Global Institute simultaneously on the same issue.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, chief adviser's special assistant for the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, has been made the head of the committee.

Chief Adviser's Press
SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

With the pavements on Asad Avenue under renovation for a week, schoolchildren, their parents, and teachers are forced to share road space with cars and other vehicles. Workers there could not say for certain when the work would be done. The photo was taken yesterday.

246 more reform proposals 'ready for implementation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has identified 246 more reform proposals as "ready for immediate implementation", Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, told reporters yesterday.

Earlier, 121 proposals were designated for urgent implementation. An additional 246 have now been added to that list, bringing the total to 367.

"Thirty-seven of those have already been implemented," Shafiqul said after the 38th meeting of the advisory council, chaired by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka yesterday.

Of those implemented were the amendment of the International Crimes Tribunal Act and the issuance of guidelines on election observation and media policy, as per the Election Reform Commission's proposals; the appointment of Supreme Court judges and the establishment of 'information desks' in courts, according to the Judiciary Reform Commission's recommendations; the creation of a legal framework to ensure witness protection and protection for crime victims, and the organisation of gender-sensitive training for all relevant service providers, as per the Women's Affairs Reform Commission's suggestions, among others.

The proposals were given by the 10 reform commissions formed by the interim government, excluding the Constitution Reform Commission.

Of the 246 newly prioritised proposals, 82 were from the Labour Reform Commission; 71 from the Women's Affairs Reform Commission; 37 from the Local Government

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

MY DHAKA

Mental trauma is real, counselling can make all the difference

RBR
Recent tragedies in Bangladesh has brought to our attention the urgency to recognise the need for mental trauma healing.

Psychological trauma is an instinctive emotional response to any disastrous tragedy you have personally experienced or witnessed; you cannot just snap out of such emotional trauma. These are intangible feelings that are difficult to put into words.

The undercurrent of emotional upsets leads to depression, anxiety, reckless and self-destructive behaviour, often leading to major problems if not addressed via proper psychiatric treatments, interventions, and counselling.

Today, I just want to zero in on the mental trauma aspects of mental health. The recent major catastrophe that is the Milestone jet fighter crash, as well as the July Uprising from last year, have left many of us – young, middle-aged, and old – in severe emotional and psychological distress, affecting our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in profound ways.

Building on the experience

gained from the July Uprising trauma counselling initiative by SAJIDA Foundation, with the help of the government, the foundation has started to give trauma-focused counselling support to those injured during the plane crash at Milestone School and their bereaved family members.

The children who survived the Milestone tragedy will remain emotionally scarred for life, unless they can process the tragic event.

"It is crucial to seek support from mental health professionals like psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, and primary care doctors for these students and witnesses trying to recover from the tragic incident. Professional psychological support can prevent mental trauma. This is exactly where the on field experience of health care centres like Sajida Foundation comes in handy," says Farjana Sharmin, head of programme, Mental Health, Sajida Foundation.

The foundation has already set up a trauma counselling programme on the Milestone school premises.

While sharing their counselling experience and the outcomes of the July



Uprising in a roundtable titled "Healing Pathways: SAJIDA Trauma Counselling Initiative" in Dhaka recently, they emphasised the necessity for trauma counselling.

National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) Deputy Director SK Muhammad Atiqur Rahman, at the roundtable, explained that while he can nurse and operate upon a physical wound, he has no expertise to help the patient with trauma counselling.

"It is the job of a mental health care practitioner, and it shows how important their job is for the well-being of the patient," he points out.

"It is time to reinforce our

resolution to take mental health into serious cognisance and allow it to be integrated into the mainstream healthcare system of the country," says Professor Kamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, of Dhaka University's Clinical Psychology Department.

McKinsey Health Institute (MHI) analysis shows that each US\$1 invested in scaling mental health interventions could have an economic return of US\$5-6; this statistic was one of the most discussed parts of the panel discussion. This should encourage policy makers to invest in mental health care.

The need for allotting a governmental budget, specifically for mental health

care, building an adequately skilled workforce, and engaging community leaders to promote an attitude in people to seek help regarding mental health care came under scrutiny as well.

"After July, came the Milestone tragedy, reinforcing and reminding us how important it is to set up trauma counselling initiatives in all medical colleges and hospitals across the city and country, irrespective of whether it is a government or private initiative," says SK Muhammad Atiqur Rahman.

Upsetting political developments, tragedies resulting from violence, accidents, and natural disasters can compound our distress, leading to unresolved emotions that can be hard to work through. And healing from any such disturbing episode is as important as nursing any of your physical injuries.

So, if you go to a counsellor seeking help, it is not because you are going mad but because you want to cure your mind of traumatic sufferings.

Dhakaites are on edge now, and we need to learn to cope with the mental exhaustion and trauma in our evolving new normal.

Khaleda's birthday to be observed in low-key manner

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP will observe the birthday of its Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia today in a low-key manner with only prayer programmes.



The party's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said they would pray for their leader's good health and speedy recovery through doa and milad mahfils, instead of celebrating with cake-cutting or other events.

He said the doa and milad mahfils will be held at BNP offices across the country, including the headquarters in Dhaka, and in mosques after Juma prayers, seeking Khaleda's good health and long life, as well as eternal peace for those martyred during the 1971 Liberation War, the 1990 democratic movement, and the 2024 mass uprising.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6

Man stabbed to death at Banani shisha lounge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was stabbed to death early yesterday while leaving a shisha lounge in the capital's Banani.

The deceased, Rahat Hossain Rabbi, 31, a resident of Mohakhali, was attacked around 4:30am on the staircase of the second floor of a shisha lounge in Banani, said Russell Sarwar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Banani Police Station.

Rabbi was leaving the establishment when six to seven men, led by a suspect identified as Munna, attacked him, the OC said.

"He was taken to Kurmitola General Hospital in critical condition, where doctors declared him dead."

Police are conducting drives to arrest the attackers, the OC added.

Govt forms body

FROM PAGE 1

Secretary Shafiqul Alam disclosed the development while briefing the media at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday following a weekly meeting of advisers.

"What is clear from the reports is that the past autocratic regime used surveillance equipment and spyware to illegally conduct surveillance on citizens and violate their constitutional right to privacy."

According to the press secretary, the committee will investigate how much money was spent on surveillance, which countries these supplies came from, and how they were used.

Shafiqul asserted that the government's surveillance mechanism is not being used unlawfully at the moment.

In addition, the government has also launched an investigation into the procurement of lethal weapons for the police and how they were used, he added.

This decision also follows a report by The Daily Star on how the police stockpiled seven times as many lethal weapons as non-lethal weapons.

246 more reform proposals

FROM PAGE 1

Reform Commission; 33 from the Health Reform Commission; and 23 from the Media Reform Commission.

Meanwhile, another 316 proposals remain under review.

Shafiqul also highlighted the success of Yunus's recent visit to Malaysia.

He said Bangladeshi workers there will now enjoy social protection benefits similar to those of Malaysian nationals and will be able to lodge complaints in Bangla.

Calling it a "landmark tour", he added that Bangladesh requested employment opportunities for private security guards, caregivers, and students in Malaysia.

The Malaysian authorities responded positively, and discussions also covered free trade agreements and defence cooperation, he added.

China offers help in Thai-Cambodia row

AFP, Beijing

Beijing yesterday offered to help Thailand and Cambodia patch up relations after their deadliest border clashes in decades, as the three nations' foreign ministers met for talks in China.

Last month, a long-running border row between the Southeast Asian neighbours boiled over into conflict involving artillery bombardments, air strikes and infantry clashes, killing at least 43 people and forcing over 300,000 to flee their homes.

The two sides struck a ceasefire after five days of violence – following intervention from US President Donald Trump – and agreed last week to extend the deal after talks between defence officials in Malaysia.

50 years since Bangabandhu's assassination

FROM PAGE 1

The day is taking place, marking a break in tradition that had been maintained since 2008.

August 15 was introduced as National Mourning Day in 1996, following the the Awami League's rise to power for the first time since the tragedy.

From 2002 to 2007, the day went unobserved at the state level after the then BNP-led four-party alliance government cancelled the observance of National Mourning Day and the August 15 public holiday.

However, a High Court order in July 2008 revoked the cancellation.

On August 13 last year, a week after assuming power, the interim government decided that there would be no national holiday on August 15.

Since yesterday morning, police have tightened security on and around Dhanmondi Road 32.

Speaking to this newspaper, Kyashinyu Marma, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station, said they are on high alert. "A team is always stationed there. However, an additional police platoon has been deployed at the site since this [yesterday] morning so that no kind of sabotage can take place. The deployment will remain in place throughout August 15."

During the AL's tenure, besides

top government and party leaders, AL supporters, activists, and the general public would gather at the site to pay tributes to the architect of the nation's independence.

The building, deeply entwined with Bangladesh's political history – having borne witness to the Six-Point Movement, the 1969 mass uprising, and the 1970 general election – torched and torn down on the night of February 5 this year.

THE CARNAGE

In the pre-dawn hours of August 15, 1975, tanks rumbled down empty roads toward their targets – then-president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence.

A contingent of security personnel composed of police and army was on duty there. Nurul Islam Khan, the then deputy superintendent of police, was supervising the guards that night.

Inside the house, everybody was still asleep: Mujib, his wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, his sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel, daughters-in-law Sultana Kamal and Rosie Jamal, and his brother Sheikh Naser.

A few tanks stopped at the entrance to Road 32 while others went in, coming to a stop at the gate of the residence.

Within minutes, a barrage of

bullets shattered the windowpanes and hit the wall of the office room. The gunfire continued for a while as a group of disgruntled army officers carried out the assassination.

A few of them went up to the first floor.

As they reached the landing of the staircase, they saw Major Mohiuddin and his soldiers leading Mujib down.

"What do you want?" Mujib asked. Nobody answered. Then suddenly, two of them fired at him.

The president collapsed on the stairs.

After killing him, the soldiers ran riot throughout the residence, hunting down and killing the other family members, including Sheikh Russel, who was only 10 years old.

The same day, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni, nephew of Mujib and founding chairman of Awami Jubo League, was killed with his wife Arzu Moni in their Dhanmondi residence.

Also, Abdur Rab Serniabat, former water resources minister and Mujib's brother-in-law, along with some of his family members, was killed in his Minto Road residence.

Col Jamil Uddin Ahmed was killed while on his way to Bangabandhu's house.

Besides, 14 people died in mortar fire in Mohammadpur.

LDC graduation now will be 'suicidal'

FROM PAGE 1

severe fallout of the pandemic, the Ukraine war, the high bank interest rates and currency flight, said BAPI President Abdul Muktedir.

So the private sector needs another six years of LDC graduation deferment, said Muktedir, also the managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals.

Once Bangladesh graduates, it must comply with the World Trade Organisation's intellectual property (IP) rules (TRIPS) including 20-year patents on new medicines, said Sanya Reid Smith, legal advisor and senior researcher of The Third World Network (TWN), in her keynote paper.

If a new medicine comes out after Bangladesh graduates, the insulin prices in Bangladesh could be 11 times more expensive so 'the poverty rate among households needing insulin could increase by between 15 and 200 percent'.

According to a UN report, some of the implications of LDC graduation for Bangladesh include a reduction in preferential export market access such as the EU, the country's largest export market.

The tariff rate to the EU will increase to 9.6 percent (under developing country preferences or 12 percent at the general rate) once Bangladesh graduates (and the



ICC-B President Mahubur Rahman speaks at a seminar titled "LDC Graduation: Some Options for Bangladesh" at Sheraton Dhaka yesterday

three-year smooth transition period is over) from zero at present.

It will increase to 18 percent from 16 percent for Canada and 12.8 percent from the existing 7.4 percent for Japan, she said.

Bangladesh can demand deferment for three more years but the case should be very strong, said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network for Economic Modelling.

However, the two other graduating countries, such as Nepal and Lao PDR, are not demanding deferment, he said.

The Maldives and Guinea fell into trouble after their graduation from

LDC status, said Taskeen Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The government's preparation for LDC graduation is far less than it should have been, said M Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange, Bangladesh.

Bangladesh can request a deferment from the UN, said ICC-B Vice-President Naser Ezaz Bijoy.

"This is not a good time for graduation – it will be a challenge for the survival of the businesses," said Abdul Hai Sarker, chairman of the Bangladesh Association of Banks.

Commission to press

FROM PAGE 1

Prof Riaz told The Daily Star that discussions were held on how to implement the July Charter and give it legal backing, and that various proposals were presented.

However, he added that the pledges for the charter's implementation and legal basis have not yet been finalised, and the discussion is ongoing.

The July 2024 mass uprising, led by students and the public, toppled the Awami League government. On August 8, an interim government headed by Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus took office.

After the Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government took charge following the fall of the Awami League regime in August last year, six commissions were initially formed to recommend basic reforms. Later, Prof Yunus formed the consensus commission with heads of the reform commissions. Under Prof Yunus, the consensus commission is tasked with preparing the July Charter through dialogues with and consensus among political parties, to serve as a blueprint for future governance.

In March, the commission held its first round of talks with 32 political parties and alliances on 166 proposals, reaching consensus on 62. In the second round, agreement was reached on 20 issues, while BNP, Jamaat, NCP and others placed notes of dissent on nine.

The preliminary draft of the charter, based on the 82 agreed proposals, was sent to the parties on July 28. In that draft, the commission asked parties to pledge to recognise and "enshrine the historical importance of the 2024 anti-discrimination democratic movement and popular uprising in the constitution with due prominence".

Reforms before polls

FROM PAGE 1

committed by the ousted regime and holding a free and fair election.

Asked what his priority was – elections first or reforms first – he said that holding elections without reforms would change nothing.

"Imagine holding an election without carrying out the two other things. Then you would go back to the same old problems," said Yunus.

However, the chief adviser vowed to restore democracy and deliver a credible election.

"There's no point in having elections if it's not legitimate. My job is to make sure that an acceptable, clean, enjoyable election takes place," he told CNA on Wednesday.

"We are coming close to achieving the goals that we have set for ourselves. There were lots of things to be reformed because the political system that we had was rigged, misused and abused."

On August 5 last year, an uprising ended Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule. She fled to neighbouring India following her ouster and has been put on trial in absentia.

Ties between India and Bangladesh have been strained since, as Bangladesh seeks her return. India has not responded to the extradition requests.

That version, however, made no mention of constitutional and state recognition for the broader democratic struggle or of ensuring justice for the killings.

Clause 3 of that draft proposed implementing the recommendations within two years after the next general election, which is now slated for February 2026. BNP and like-minded parties supported this, but Jamaat, NCP, Islami Andolan, and others demanded full implementation and legal backing within the tenure of the current government, threatening to withhold their signatures otherwise.

In response, the commission began preparing an outline for swift implementation. The integrated draft now being developed will include the background of the uprising, the formation of reform commissions, the 82 agreed proposals, and the nine-point pledge for implementation, according to commission sources.

The pledges state that jurisdiction over the charter's interpretation and legality will rest solely with the Appellate Division. They also state that the charter will be fully legally effective, and that no court may question its legality, necessity, or authority.

They also stipulate that necessary ordinances will be issued to ensure its provisions prevail over article 93(2) of the constitution or any other law or judgment.

One of the pledges, if approved by the parties, will allow amendments to the constitution, judiciary, electoral system, public administration, policing, and anti-corruption measures, as well as the enactment or revision of laws, rules, and regulations, to implement the charter's recommendations.

Dhaka also urged New Delhi to stop Hasina from making "false and fabricated" statements after she urged supporters online to resist the interim government.

Referring to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Yunus said, "He explained that India could not control social media."

"We are not going to kind of get into a battle trying to get Hasina out of India. We said, 'You can keep her. Our trial will go on'."

"But in the meantime, she should not be given any chance to destabilise Bangladesh. She still has many followers within Bangladesh – they will follow the same thing that they did before to destabilise the whole country."

The 85-year-old said he does not plan to stay on in government after the elections.

Amid his decision to step back from politics, Yunus said he hopes his leadership leaves a lasting legacy.

"I would hope that from now on, Bangladesh will be on the right track, it will not be derailed again," he said.

Yunus spoke to CNA in Kuala Lumpur during his three-day official visit to the Malaysian capital, where he met Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

EC to declare polls roadmap next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said it would publish the roadmap for the 13th national election next week.

EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said they were unveiling the roadmap so that everyone could learn about the EC's preparations.

Akhtar, at the Nirbachan Bhaban in Agargaon, told reporters that the EC would also meet journalists next week to discuss arrangements for media personnel to cast their votes while on duty on election day.

The government sent a letter to the EC to begin preparations for holding the national election in the first half of February next year.

The EC said the election schedule will be announced in the first half of December.

According to the commission, there could be

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

'My father was a victim of judicial killing'

Claims SQ Chy's son; vows to prove 'innocence' in war crimes case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Humam Quader Chowdhury, son of BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, who was executed for 1971 war crimes, has expressed hope that he can prove his father's "innocence" and expose what he calls a "judicial killing".

Speaking at a press conference at his father's Dhanmondi residence yesterday afternoon, Humam said the family possesses evidence that could support their claims.

"With this evidence, we will approach the court," he added.

Humam alleged that the war crimes tribunal, which convicted his father, was controversial and influenced by political actors.

"During my father's case, the Skype scandal came to light," he said at the press conference, where Salauddin's wife and two other children were also present.

Humam claimed that his father's verdict was not being written in the tribunal. "It was being written in the law ministry."

He also claimed

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

GRAFT CASE Papia and her husband get 3.5 years in jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced Jubo Mohila League's expelled leader Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman Sumon to three years and six months imprisonment in a case filed over amassing about Tk 6.24 crore illegally.

Judge Mohammad Abu Taher of the Special Judge's Court-3 of Dhaka handed down the sentence in presence of the couple at the courtroom. The two were on bail.

Soon after the verdict, the judge cancelled their bail and ordered police to send them to jail with conviction warrant.

The judge also fined them Tk 5 lakh each, in default of which they will have to serve six months more in jail.

In the verdict, the judge

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Even in the rain, crowds through a TCB truck in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to buy essentials at affordable prices. Some people cling to the vehicle in desperation to secure the goods. Only three items -- edible oil, sugar and lentils -- were on sale, but even this small relief can help ease the strain of soaring prices on low-income families.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Crores spent, but Ctg roads still crumble

WASA, various projects, heavy rains leave key roads riddled with potholes

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Commuters in Chattogram are enduring severe hardships due to the appalling condition of major roads, a crisis worsened by the apparent indifference of the authorities.

Ongoing sewerage line construction by Chattogram WASA during the monsoon has left roads riddled with potholes and ditches.

According to Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), the city has 1,442 kilometres of roads, 1,300km of which fall under its jurisdiction. Most are now in disrepair, causing immense suffering for residents.

Over the past decade, CCC has launched at least six road repair projects, completing five. In total, Tk 4,086.77 crore was spent on roads, footpaths, and repairs through both projects and its own funding.

CCC engineers blame heavy rains and frequent WASA excavations, while urban experts point to substandard construction and inadequate drainage as the root causes.

Swapan Kumar Palit, professor of civil engineering at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet), said the port city's poor drainage system causes roads to remain submerged during the monsoon.

One of the worst-hit roads is the Port Connecting (PC) Road.

Renovated and carpeted over six kilometres at a cost of Tk 180 crore in 2022, it deteriorated within 18 months due to heavy traffic and repeated digging by WASA and the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA).

A visit to the 2km stretch from Nimtala Biswa Road to Boropol revealed a deplorable state.

On one side, CDA is

Strand Road, connecting Barik Building to Sadarghat, where thousands of goods-laden trucks pass daily.

Similar situation prevailed on Fakir Mohammad Road, Kabir Ahmed Soudagar Road, Akmal Ali Road, Pran Hari Das Road, and several roads in Halishahar, along with Abdul Hamid Road in Shulakbahar, Nur Ahmad

the condition of PC Road is

worsening due to ongoing construction works. "Like me, passengers suffer daily, and traffic jams during rush hours are now routine," he said, adding that the stretch from Nimtala to Taltala is particularly hazardous.

Fazlul Karim Manik, a trader from Bahaddarhat, said small roads and lanes in his area are damaged due to torrential rains and frequent digging. "Even a short rickshaw ride is bumpy," he added.

Other damaged roads include Jamal Khan, Shaheed Saifuddin Khaled, CDA Avenue, Shah Amanat Bridge Link, Arakan, Muradpur-Oxygen, Bayezid, DT, Halishahar, Kapasgola, and Alkanan.

Locals say peeling bitumen and deep potholes have made commuting a nightmare.

Ahsan Khaled, joint secretary of the Chaktai Shilpa and Traders Association, said traders have been suffering for seven to eight months as roads like Madhyam Chaktai and Rajakhali are in the worst condition.

"Nearby Mokbul Soudagar Road and Sobhan Soudagar Road are muddy and broken. At least five roads in the market area are in similar shape, and they're used by vehicles coming from Khatunganj," he said.

Chattogram City Corporation Chief Engineer Anisur Rahman

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



building ramps for the elevated expressway; on the other, WASA's sewerage project has torn up the road. Bricks used for temporary coverage have broken apart under heavy vehicles and rainfall, forcing trucks, trailers, and passenger vehicles to sway dangerously while avoiding potholes.

The situation is similar on

Road, Jubilee Road, Ambagan Road, the stretch from Probartak Mor to Gate No-2, CDA Avenue, KB Aman Ali Road, and Ishan Mohajan Road, are also in poor condition. Travel through CEPZ, Karnaphuli EPZ, the Customs area, and Patenga Sea Beach via Airport Road.

Omar Faruk, a private jobholder from Nimtala, said

BANGLADESHI WORKERS Dhaka, KL push for transparent hiring process

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia and Bangladesh have agreed to work towards establishing a more transparent recruitment process for Bangladeshi workers, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus told Malaysia's state news agency Bernama in an interview published yesterday.

He said the matter was discussed in depth during his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in Putrajaya on August 12.

Prof Yunus also acknowledged flaws in the current process and stressed the need to "clean it up" to avoid problems for either side.

Malaysia froze recruitment of foreign workers on May 13 last year following massive irregularities involving a syndicate of 101 recruiting agents, who were accused of charging each worker between Tk 450,000 and Tk 600,000. There were numerous reports of joblessness, non-payment of wages and other forms of exploitation.

"We had a very elaborate discussion on how to proceed without having trouble for the Malaysian government. We both promised ourselves to clean up the system and to make it easier and transparent," Prof Yunus told Bernama.

The Nobel laureate said while Malaysia needs foreign workers, Bangladesh seeks to ensure that the recruitment of its citizens is transparent, allowing them to work abroad with dignity, proper rights and benefits.

"Malaysia needs people, and we need to have these

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Looted stones being restored at Sada Pathor

35,000 of an estimated 1.80cr cft recovered so far

STAR REPORT

The district administration, during a joint operation in Bholaganj of Sylhet's Companiganj upazila and parts of Sylhet city, has recovered over 35,000 cubic feet of stones previously looted from the Sada Pathor tourist spot.

The operation, which began shortly after midnight on Wednesday and continued till yesterday afternoon, was in coordination with law enforcement agencies.

The administration also seized 70 trucks that were carrying the stones.

According to officials concerned, there were

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

RANGPUR MOB KILLING Four suspects on 3-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Rangpur court yesterday placed four men on three-day remand each in connection with the mob beating that killed two persons in Taraganj upazila on August 9.

Rangpur Judicial Magistrate Court Judge Krishna Kamol Roy pushed the order after hearing the remand petition submitted by police around noon, said Taraganj Police Station's Officer-in-Charge MA Faruk.

The OC said, "I have collected several video footages of the mob attack. These are being reviewed, and many of the attackers have already been identified. The drive to arrest them is ongoing."

The arrestees are Akhtarul Islam, 45, of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Over one lakh stranded in north as rivers swell

STAR REPORT

Over 100,000 people have been stranded as the Teesta and Dudhkumar rivers swelled above danger level, flooding vast areas of cropland, homes and low-lying regions in northern Bangladesh.

In Nilphamari alone, around 10,000 families in two upazilas have been marooned, with large tracts of Aman paddy, vegetables and homesteads submerged, said Amitav Chowdhury, executive engineer of the Dalia Water Development Board (BWDB). Heavy rainfall and hill torrents from upstream India, which opened all gates of the Gojaldoba Barrage, sent a surge of water through the Teesta, he added.

According to the BWDB in Dalia, the Teesta was flowing at 52.30 metres at 9:00am yesterday, 15 centimetres above the danger mark of 52.15 metres, up from 11 centimetres above just three hours earlier. On Wednesday, the river was 7 centimetres above danger level.

Zahangir Alam, chairman of Khagakharibari union parishad, said 80 families from a shoal attached to Pagolpara had moved to safer ground in the past 24 hours, with more preparing to leave as floodwater swept into their homes. They are in urgent need of drinking water and food, he added.

Hafizur Rahman, acting chairman of Purbo Satnai Union, reported that 1,500 families in his union had been affected.

In Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts, the Teesta and Dudhkumar rivers are also flowing above danger level, flooding extensive char and riverside areas.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



Residents wade through waist-deep floodwater in Lalmonirhat after days of heavy rain and upstream hill torrents pushed the Teesta and Dudhkumar rivers above danger level. Inset, a house in Kurigram, almost entirely submerged, with only its shed visible above the water. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Rabeya Akhter passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rabeya Akhter, wife of the late Md Ismail Mia, former Inspector of Kalia Chapra Sugar Mills and noted social worker, passed away on Wednesday night at her residence in Batrish, Kishoreganj.

The funeral was held yesterday after the Zohr prayers on the Shahidi Mosque premises.

She is survived by her only son, Main Uddin Khoka, an employee of City (NA) Bank, and her only daughter, Meera, a homemaker.

The Sugar Mills Children's Forum has expressed deep sorrow at her death and requested all to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



PARTHA CHAKRABORTY,
Bagerhat

The main building of Bardia Bahumukhi High School in Lohagara upazila of Narail has become so dilapidated that it could collapse at any time, putting more than 600 students and 25 teachers in danger.

Built in 1997, the structure has never undergone renovation. Large chunks of plaster have fallen away, leaving the steel rods in the pillars and beams exposed.

When it rains, water seeps through the ceiling, soaking students, teachers, books, and



furniture.

While all the classrooms are facing similar issues, the sixth-grade classroom is particularly unusable now, with water dripping onto benches and the floor remaining damp.

"It is impossible to hold classes in the sixth-grade room," said Assistant Teacher Saiful Islam.

"The teachers' room is also unsafe — plaster often falls from the ceiling while people are moving around."

Students in other grades face the same hazards. "In our class, plaster often falls during lessons, sometimes hitting us," said ninth grader Sanin Mahmud. "Water leaks from above and even blocks

our view of the board."

Another ninth grader, Tamjid Mollah, said, "Our classroom is in no condition for lessons. Plaster peels off the board, and during exams, water leaks onto our answer sheets."

Lohagara Upazila Education Officer Md Anwar Hossain acknowledged the seriousness of the situation. "I have visited the school and found the building in critical condition. It needs to be removed quickly to prevent accidents. A decision on the next steps will be made soon," he said.

Teachers said the unsafe building is disrupting classes, damaging the learning environment, and driving down attendance.

"This building has not been fit for teaching for a long time," said teacher Khan Ashraf Habib. "We are working at the risk of our lives. We urge the authorities to take immediate action."

BARDIA HIGH SCHOOL IN NARAIL School building on the verge of collapse

CU returns to merit-based hall seat allocations Food quality, cleanliness issues still persist, say students

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University's residential halls, once marked by political dominance and disorder, are witnessing a shift toward greater discipline in the wake of last year's July uprising.

For the first time in seven years, seats are being allocated based on merit rather than political affiliation.

Students said they can now live without intimidation or pressure; although water shortage, poor food and cleanliness issues still persist.

Many students at the university's residential halls, especially first-year students, are complaining about the poor food quality and unhygienic conditions. While some halls have seen minor improvements, most remain unchanged.

"The food quality is terrible. But repeated complaints have lead nowhere," said Mirza Hasib, a resident of Atish Dipankar Hall.

Prof Dr Fuad Hasan, provost of Shahjalal Hall, said the university's administration only handles "structural issues like electricity, water, and

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Mannan's orchard of global delights

MINTU DESHWARA

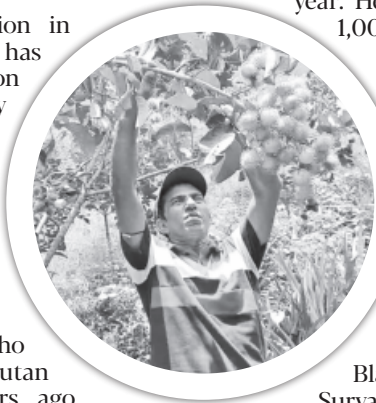
In the hills of Akbarpur, a green revolution is taking root — not driven by large corporations, but by the vision and hard work of one man.

Md Abdul Mannan's orchard is no ordinary farm; it is a living mosaic of tropical abundance, where rare fruits from across the globe grow alongside local favourites.

Since its inception in 2018, the orchard has garnered attention for its diverse array of fruit trees, including exotic species such as rambutan and the peanut butter fruit, which add both variety and beauty to the landscape.

Mannan, who introduced rambutan seedlings four years ago, said they cost between Tk 500 and Tk 1,200 each, with trees bearing fruit just a year after planting.

"Last year, I sold rambutan at Tk 500-600 per kilo, earning about Tk 10,000," Mannan said. This year, he expects higher earnings from the fruit. Of the 25 rambutan trees in his orchard, 10 to 15 are expected to bear fruit this season.



Beyond its commercial value, the fruit has earned a reputation among locals, who visit the orchard to pick it themselves.

Another unusual crop is the peanut butter fruit, somewhat similar to an elongated plum, known for its red ripe appearance and light yellow flowers. Mannan has 13 trees, planted three years ago, which began fruiting last year. He sold the fruit for Tk 1,000.

Spanning five acres and 44 percent of land use, the orchard's largest portion, 32 percent, is devoted to dragon fruit.

Mannan has already sold Tk 40,000 worth this year. He also grows 20 varieties of mangoes, including Black Stone, Brunei King, Suryamani, and Amrapali,

with nearly 900 trees in total, earning Tk 55,000 from mango sales this year.

His 100 jackfruit trees also yielded Tk 55,000.

Around 18,000-20,000 pineapple plants brought in Tk 1,30,000 this year, while other crops include 55 litchi trees, 15 jam trees, and various

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Three killed, 7 hurt in Faridpur bus collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Three people were killed and seven others injured in a head-on collision between two buses on the Dhaka-Khulna highway in Faridpur's Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Atiar Sheikh, 55, of Damurhuda upazila in Chuadanga; Sadhona Akter, 23, of Badalgachhi upazila in Naogaon; and Ranjit Chandra Das, 48, of Bamna upazila in Barguna, said Md Salauddin Ahmed Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Karimpur Highway Police Station.

Quoting eyewitnesses, the police said the crash occurred around 12:30pm on the eastern side of a bridge near Kanaipur Bazar, where a Dhaka-bound Royal Express bus and a Darshana-bound Darshana Deluxe bus collided head-on.

The front sections of both vehicles were badly damaged, leaving at least 10 passengers injured.

Sub-Inspector Md Shafiquddin said the injured were taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital, where the three were declared dead on arrival.

The accident brought traffic to a standstill for about an hour, causing long tailbacks on both sides of the highway.

Normal traffic resumed after the wreckage was cleared with a tow truck, the OC said.

SEDITION CASE Court issues warrant to arrest Hasina, 285 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against 286 people including ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina in a case filed for conspiring to overthrow the interim government through a civil war.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Ariful Islam passed the order after taking cognizance of the charges brought against them in the sedition case filed by Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Details of the accused names could not be known immediately.

The magistrate directed officers-in-charge of different police stations to submit by September 11 the reports on execution of arrest warrants issued

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Man killed over Tk 350 loan in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An auto-rickshaw driver has been beaten to death by a group of people over dues of only Tk 350 in the Mankon Boardghar area of Muktagacha upazila in Mymensingh.

Fahim, 25, a father of a seven-month-old girl, was beaten indiscriminately on Monday afternoon and admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), where he died the following day, said police.

His body was sent to MMCH morgue for autopsy.

Quoting the case statement, Ripon Chandra Goop, officer-in-charge of Muktagacha Police Station, said there was a dispute between Fahim's uncle Moznun Mia and local grocer Rasel Mia over the due of Tk 350. Rasel allegedly had an altercation with Moznun on Sunday. After that, Rasel and his accomplices asked Moznun to come to his shop to settle the matter.

On Monday afternoon, Moznun along with Fahim reached the spot. At one stage, Rasel along with Sajib Hasan, Mankon Union Jatitabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) unit president, started beating them with pieces of wood, injuring four people including Fahim.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Papia and her husband

FROM PAGE 3

said the prosecution was able to prove the charges brought against them undoubtedly and so they were punished.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 22 prosecution witnesses, including the complainant of the case. On November 30, 2021, the same court framed charges against the couple in the case.

On March 30, 2021, ACC's Deputy Director Shahin Ara Momtaz, also investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge

sheet to the Senior Special Judge's Court.

The ACC filed the case against the couple with its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka on August 4, 2020.

According to the case statement, Papia paid over Tk 3.23 crore cash to the Westin Hotel for services between October 12, 2019 and February 22, 2020.

A team of Rab 1 arrested Papia, her husband and their two accomplices from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport when they were trying to leave the country on February 22, 2020.

Four suspects

FROM PAGE 3

Burirhat village; Ebadat Hossain, 27, of Balapur village; Rafiqul Islam, 33, and Mizanur Rahman, 22, of Rahimapur from Soyar union in the upazila.

According to police, victims Ruplal Das and his nephew-in-law Pradip Das were beaten to death around 9:00pm on August 9 at Burirhat Botoila in Soyar union on suspicion of stealing a rickshaw van.

The following day, Ruplal's wife Maloti Rani filed a murder case with Taraganj Police Station, accusing around 700 unidentified individuals.

Ruplal, from Ghonirampur Dangapara village of Kursha union, earned a living making and repairing shoes at Taraganj Bazar. Pradip, from Shyampur in Mithapukur upazila, worked as a rickshaw van puller.

Crores spent

FROM PAGE 3

said the mayor has instructed the immediate restoration of damaged roads.

"Rain and construction works by CDA and WASA have damaged many main roads, but we are working on repairs," he said.

Mohammed Ariful Islam, project director of Package-1 of Chattogram WASA's STP, said, "We have already paid 82 crore takas to the city corporation to permanently repair the roads where our work is complete. We have held coordination meetings and are implementing the project with the CCC's cooperation.

"In areas where roads are completely unusable, we are covering them with bricks or, in some cases, casting concrete at our own expense. If the city corporation carpeted the

roads immediately after we finished, people would not have to suffer so much."

CDA Elevated Expressway Project Director Mahfuzur Rahman told The Daily Star, "We had excavated the roads and later repaired them after completing the work. We did not take any permission from the CCC. For the elevated expressway construction, we re-carpeted the roads that were damaged during the process."

He added, "We also re-carpeted roads damaged during the construction of the expressway ramps. In the Nimitala area, we recently carried out carpeting after completing our work, but now WASA's construction is underway there, and they have damaged the road again. We are not responsible for that."

IOM
UN MIGRATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Date: August 15, 2025 Reference # CO/BD10/MPSPD/2025/061

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1951 and is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits both migrants and society.

IOM Bangladesh Mission now invites interested authorized bidders For Mobile Financial Services (MFS) to submit their "Proposal" as per the requirement listed below.

Sl. No.	Item Description	QTY	Unit	Pre-Proposal Meeting	Submission Deadline
1	Request for Proposal for Facilitate Disbursement of Training Allowance to 4500 Beneficiaries for 4 districts in Bangladesh	1	Job	17 August 2025 Time: 11:30am Through MS Teams	27 August 2025 Time: on or before 11:59PM (GMT+6).

For more information including a complete set of bidding documents for this RFP is available at IOM website (<https://bangladesh.iom.int/procurement>) from 13 August 2025 to 27 August, 2025.

A Pre-proposal conference as mentioned above will be arrange virtually over the Microsoft Teams platform. The conference link is specified in the Request for Proposal (RFP) document.

IOM Bangladesh Mission

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ID	Title of Works	Last date & time of selling/downloading	Closing & Opening Date and Time
1134188	Procurement of 132 kV Current Transformers for different Grid Sub-Station under Power Grid Bangladesh PLC.	10.09.2025 at 12:00	10.09.2025 at 14:00

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GD-1804

China and India eye border trade resumption

AFP, New Delhi

India and China are discussing resuming border trade five years after it was halted, foreign ministry officials on both sides have said, as US tariffs disrupt the global trade order.

Past trade across the icy and high-altitude Himalayan border passes between the neighbours was usually small in volume, but any resumption is significant for its symbolism.

The two major economic powers have long competed for strategic influence across South Asia.

But caught in global trade and geopolitical turbulence triggered by US President Donald Trump's tariff regime, the countries have moved to mend ties.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is expected for talks in New Delhi on Monday, according to Indian media.

Heavy rain in Indian Kashmir leaves 38 dead Over 200 missing

REUTERS, Srinagar

At least 38 people died and more than 200 were missing following sudden, heavy rain in Indian Kashmir, officials said yesterday, the second such disaster in the Himalayas in a little over a week.

The incident occurred in Chasoti town of Kishtwar district, a stopover point on a popular pilgrimage route. It comes a little over a week after a heavy flood and mudslide engulfed an entire village in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand.

The flood washed away a community kitchen and a security post set up in the village, a pit stop along the pilgrimage route to the Machail Mata temple, one of the officials, who declined to be named because he was not authorised to speak to the media about the incident.

"A large number of pilgrims had gathered for lunch and they were washed away," the official said, and offered "condolences to the bereaved families".

Jitendra Singh, from PM's office, said the reported cloudburst could result in "substantial" casualties.



Rescue teams evacuate victims from the rubble following a blast in Idlib, which, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, struck "a base for non-Syrian fighters containing a weapons depot" in the northwestern Syrian province yesterday. Four people were killed and five were injured in the explosion, state media said.

PHOTO: AFP

BID TO END UKRAINE CONFLICT

Putin praises 'sincere efforts' by the US

Floats the prospect of a nuclear arms deal ahead of a summit with President Donald Trump

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that the United States was making "sincere efforts" to halt the war in Ukraine and suggested Moscow and Washington could agree a nuclear arms deal as part of a wider effort to strengthen peace.

Putin was speaking to his most senior ministers and security officials on the eve of a summit in Alaska with US President Donald Trump, who is pressing for an end to the war.

He said in televised comments that the US was "making, in my opinion, quite energetic and sincere efforts to stop the hostilities, stop the crisis and reach agreements that are of interest to all parties involved in this conflict".

This was happening, Putin said, "in order to create long-term conditions for peace between our countries, and in Europe, and in the world as a whole - if, by the next stages, we reach agreements in the area of control over strategic offensive weapons."

His comments signalled that Russia will raise the issue of nuclear arms control as part of a wide-ranging discussion on security when he sits down with Trump in Anchorage for the first Russia-US summit since June 2021.



This handout video grab shows a scene from a reported Ukrainian strike in Belgorod, Russia, yesterday.

Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov said earlier that Putin and Trump will also discuss the "huge untapped potential" for Russia-US economic ties, as well as the prospects for ending the war in Ukraine.

Ushakov told reporters that the summit would start at 1930 GMT, which would be 1130 am local time in Anchorage, with the two leaders meeting one-on-one, accompanied only by translators.

He said delegations from the two countries would then meet and have a working lunch, and the presidents would give a joint news conference.

Ushakov said it was "obvious to everyone" that Ukraine would be the

focus of the meeting, but broader security and international issues would also be discussed.

Russia and the United States have by far the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world. The last remaining treaty between them that limits the numbers of these weapons is due to expire on February 5 next year.

The New START treaty covers strategic nuclear weapons - those designed by each side to hit the enemy's centres of military, economic and political power - and caps the number of deployed warheads at 1,550 on each side. Both are likely to breach that limit if the treaty is not extended or replaced.

Taliban use force to divert aid

Says US watchdog

REUTERS, Washington

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers divert international aid by force and other means, block minority communities from receiving aid and may collude with UN officials to seek kickbacks, a US watchdog said.

The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said its findings were based on input from nearly 90 current and former US officials, UN officials and others. The sources included Afghans in Afghanistan, the report said.

"In Afghanistan, SIGAR found that the Taliban use every means at their disposal, including force, to ensure that aid goes where they want it to go, as opposed to where donors intend," the report said.

Taliban spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat denied the allegations. He said international aid is distributed independently in Afghanistan and government agencies cooperate "to ensure transparency" and prevent diversion.

India wants US ties based on mutual respect

REUTERS, New Delhi

India said yesterday that it hoped relations with the United States would move forward based on mutual respect and shared interests, seeking to temper worries that ties were headed downhill in the aftermath of high tariffs imposed by Washington.

A US defence policy team will be in New Delhi this month for talks with Indian officials and its arms purchases from the US are on course despite the strain in ties, the Indian foreign ministry said.

A new friendship built between the two countries has hit a rough patch after President Donald Trump raised tariffs on Indian goods to 50 percent last week from an earlier 25 percent saying it was a penalty for India's continued imports of Russian oil.

Asif Mahmud denies

FROM PAGE 12

"But after August 5, 2024, I have neither met him nor spoken to him. And this Riyadh - I don't know him," he said.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, Asif said he often goes to Nila Market on 300 Feet Road in the wee hours to have duck meat.

"If it's too late and the market is closed, we go to The Westin. But I can't recall if I went there that night or if I was present there at that time," he said, referring to the allegation.

"I don't think anyone has yet been able to present any evidence of my involvement," he added.

Referring to the allegation made by Opu's wife that Opu was taken to a political leader's house before the arrest, Asif said, "That is a serious accusation. It has come from the family and, so far, it seems credible. The claim that I was involved is entirely motivated."

OPU'S WIFE'S ALLEGATIONS

During a press conference at Shahbagh, Kazi Anisha, who claimed to be Opu's wife, alleged that BNP leader Ishraque Hossain was behind the leaked video. She also claimed that the video had been recorded at Ishraque's home.

She also alleged that the BNP leader was behind Opu's arrest.

According to Anisha, Opu was kept at the BNP leader's Gopibagh home between

11:30pm on July 31 and 7:00am the next day. She claimed that the video was shot there.

Anisha said Opu spoke to her over video call from Ishraque's home and sent her screenshots and photos, which she claimed matched the video circulating online.

When she met Opu at Kashimpur jail on August 8, he told her that he was kept at the Gopibagh house and pressured during remand to implicate Asif Mahmud and NCP Convener Nahid Islam.

The Daily Star tried to contact Ishraque several times, but calls and messages, including on WhatsApp, went unanswered.

WHAT WAS IN THE VIDEO
The footage, apparently recorded indoors, shows Opu speaking to someone off camera. In response to a query, Opu describes how, on the night of July 16 and into the early hours of July 17, he stopped in front of The Westin hotel in Gulshan and spoke to Asif, who was on a white motorbike, wearing a helmet.

Meanwhile, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said it must be clarified whether any adviser is involved in the extortion incident.

"A question has been raised about whether any adviser of the government is involved [in extortion]. This must be clarified."

"This matter should be investigated. We want to see the full picture of this incident," he added.

Khaleda's birthday

FROM PAGE 2

The BNP leader said a milad mahfil will be held at 11:00am at the party's Nayapalton central office.

Rizvi urged the leaders and activists of BNP and its associate bodies to take part in the programme spontaneously.

A doa and milad mahfil will also be arranged at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office after Asr prayers.

Born on August 15, 1945, in Dinajpur, Khaleda was elected the first female prime minister of Bangladesh in 1991. She served as the prime

minister three times.

She is the fourth among four sisters and two brothers. Her father was Iskandar Ali Majumder and her mother Begum Tayyeba Majumdar.

Although her ancestral home is in Fulgazi Upazila of Feni, she spent her childhood and adolescence in Dinajpur, where her father worked.

Khaleda entered politics after the assassination of her husband former president Ziaur Rahman on May 30, 1981. She first became the party's vice-chairman and was elected chairperson in 1984.

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Talks at risk of ending with no deal

Oil-producing nations against curbs on production of virgin plastics

REUTERS, Geneva

Talks to create the world's first legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution are at risk of ending without a deal as countries race to find a potential compromise on the final day of negotiations in Geneva.

Talks headed into their final hours yesterday after countries who want an ambitious plastics treaty threw out the text proposed on Wednesday.

States pushing for a comprehensive treaty, including Panama, Kenya, France and Britain, shared frustration that key articles on the full life cycle of plastic pollution from the production of polymers to the disposal of waste, as well as the harm to health, had been removed entirely from the text.

Oil-producing nations are against curbs on the production of virgin plastics derived from petroleum, coal, and gas, while others want it to be limited and

to have stricter controls over plastic products and hazardous chemicals.

"It's proving unlikely all countries will be able to bridge their differences," said Zaynab Sadan of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), adding that agreement was as far away as it had ever been in nearly three years of talks.

Panama described the new draft text as "repulsive" and called for a complete rewrite. Saudi Arabia, which is resisting major curbs, said nothing could be agreed until the treaty's scope is clearly defined.

More than 1,000 delegates gathered in Geneva for the sixth round of talks, after a meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5) in South Korea late last year ended without a deal.

The OECD warns that without intervention, plastic production will triple by 2060, further choking oceans, harming health, and exacerbating climate change.



WASHINGTON CITY

Trump wants to extend federal control over police

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he would ask the Republican-controlled Congress to extend federal control of Washington's city police force beyond 30 days, escalating his campaign to exert presidential power over the nation's capital.

Trump also asserted that any congressional action could serve as a model for other US cities. He has previously threatened to expand his efforts to other Democratic-run cities such as Chicago that he claims have failed to address crime.

The Republican president's extraordinary moves in Washington are reflective of how he has approached his second term in office, shattering political norms and legal concerns to test the limits of his office's power.

It was not clear how Trump's takeover of Washington's Metropolitan Police Department could be replicated elsewhere. In seizing control on Monday, Trump took advantage of a federal law, the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, that permits the president to do so under emergency circumstances for up to 30 days.

There is no basis for Trump to attempt similar takeovers in other cities, according to John P Fishwick Jr, a former federal prosecutor in Virginia, who said that Washington represents a "unique situation."

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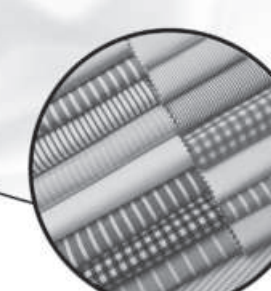

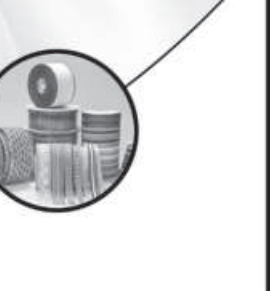
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The Daily Star

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Remembering Aug 15 as a national tragedy

It derailed the trajectory of a newly independent nation

The assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along with most of his family members, on August 15, 1975 is a dark chapter in Bangladesh's history. The cold-blooded way in which they were murdered—including his minor son, wife, and daughters-in-law, as well as individuals with no familial ties—was shocking and reprehensible. It was also destabilising for a nation still grappling with the trauma and devastation of a nine-month bloody war.

Carried out by a group of army officers, Bangabandhu's assassination was followed by another dastardly act on November 3 of the same year: the brutal jail killing of four national leaders Tajuddin Ahmad, Syed Nazrul Islam, M Mansur Ali, and AHM Qamaruzzaman. Some researchers allege a foreign conspiracy behind both the assassinations of August and November, while others attribute them primarily to internal reasons and power struggles. But these were the very men who had formed a provisional government in April 1971 while Bangabandhu was imprisoned in Pakistan, trained ordinary citizens to become freedom fighters, and led the fight for liberation against a well-equipped occupying army.

Their assassinations steered the country further away from the ideals it was founded on and towards years of military rule. The governments that followed shunned democratic principles and legitimised these heinous crimes. The precedent set on August 15 made future political assassinations more conceivable, including repeated attempts on President Ziaur Rahman, one of which ultimately led to his death in a 1981 military coup, again creating a national crisis.

History must assess Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in two distinct phases: as a leader who inspired a nation to fight for its freedom, and as the prime minister after 1971, whose controversial actions, including the formation of the one-party BAKSAL system, failure to curb corruption, and perceived inability to prevent the 1974 famine, led to public disillusionment.

But it is unfortunate that such a pivotal figure in our history is now often met with contempt and narrow partisan judgement, largely due to his daughter Sheikh Hasina's obsessive dedication of him and monopolising the narrative of the Liberation War. She politicised and weaponised both the war and Bangabandhu's legacy in order to extend her rule and clamp down on anyone she considered an opponent, whether political rivals or ordinary citizens showing signs of dissent. The student-led people's uprising of July-August 2024 was a consequence of her 15 years of abuse of power, culminating in the killing of around 1,400 citizens. As a result, anything associated with Mujib is now anathema to many of those who suffered during her rule.

But Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's foundational role in our struggle for independence is indisputable and cannot be ignored, no matter how politicised his memory has become. Attempts to rewrite history only repeat the mistakes of past regimes.

August 15 should be remembered as a national tragedy that derailed the democratic trajectory of a newly independent nation. Commemorating it is not about political allegiance. It is not about overlooking Bangabandhu's mistakes and failures. It is about acknowledging a truth that shaped the course of our history. Let history judge him in all his contradictions, and not through the narrow lens of politics as we often tend to do.

Save Sada Pathor from total ruin

Illegal stone extraction pushing this tourist spot to the brink

It is disturbing to see the peril facing Bholaganj's Sada Pathor, a broad, shallow stretch of the Dholai River where smooth white stones once lay against the backdrop of Meghalaya's hills. Long considered as one of Sylhet's top tourist attractions, this area, according to a report, now resembles a ravaged quarry—scarred with pits and mud, with its iconic boulders almost gone—following months of rampant extraction. It is equally unfortunate that the plunder, estimated to be valued at hundreds of crores of taka, has surged rather than declined after the Awami League's ouster from power, despite expectations that a so-called environment-friendly, non-political interim government would be able to at least keep the worst excesses in check.

Sada Pathor's plight recently drew national attention after videos and photos of massive stone looting went viral, with hundreds of people, accompanied by small "Barki" boats, seen extracting stones in broad daylight while excavators are also seen tearing into the riverbed. The Zero Point area of Jallong in Gowainghat has been similarly plagued by such looting, which reportedly occurs even at night. According to environmental groups, illegal stone extraction, especially in Companiganj and Gowainghat upazilas, has become an organised crime with mass participation and backing from politically influential quarters.

What is most alarming is the administration's relative inaction and helplessness in this regard. Even after the government decided in April to halt stone extraction from eight Sylhet quarries, the looting has continued unabated. Locals allege that while the previous syndicate at least operated under a regulated system, a resurgent sense of impunity has opened the floodgates to indiscriminate plunder, with syndicate members encouraging boat owners to supply stones from anywhere, regardless of their legality. They have even used organised pressure tactics, including transport strikes, to resist government restrictions. As Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan recently observed, there appears to be "an all-party consensus" when it comes to stone extraction. Indeed.

The government has now reportedly decided to go tough amid mounting criticism. Planned interventions include round-the-clock deployment of joint forces at the Jallong and Sada Pathor areas, continuous drives to dismantle illegal crushing machines and cut off their power supply, identification and arrest of all involved in stone theft, etc. Already, an overnight drive has resulted in the recovery of around 12,000 cubic feet of stones looted from Sada Pathor. Such efforts must be sustained regardless of any pushback from the syndicate. That said, for these measures to be really successful, political parties, especially the BNP, must do more than public condemnation and token disciplinary action. They must actively resist party members abusing power to extract stone and commit other crimes against our nature.

GRADUATION OR DEFERRAL

Is Bangladesh ready for the post-LDC era?



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SELM RAIHAN

Bangladesh is set to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status in November 2026. This will be considered as a milestone once celebrated as a triumph of development. However, the national conversation has shifted; the feeling that was once a cause for celebration now evokes worry. Business leaders warn that the economy's foundation is fragile, strained by macroeconomic instability, elevated interest rates, evolving and uncertain political transition, and waning investor confidence. With almost 85 percent of exports concentrated in ready-made garments, the loss of duty-free access to major markets threatens to erode export volumes and put millions of livelihoods at risk.

The hard truth is that in the past few years since graduation was confirmed, Bangladesh has made little tangible progress in addressing the structural reforms required for a smooth transition. The earlier celebratory tone overlooked the fact that time alone does not guarantee readiness. The question is, if we could not deliver meaningful reforms in the past decade, what gives us confidence that they can be achieved in the short run-up that remains?

The challenges are well-known. Our export base remains dangerously narrow. Even pharmaceutical exports, currently benefitting from TRIPS waivers, will lose their cost advantage post-graduation, not just for Bangladesh but also for the millions in other countries who rely on affordable medicine. Bangladesh is already far behind competitors like Vietnam and India in securing important free trade agreements (FTAs) with major markets. An FTA between India and the UK and FTAs for Vietnam with the EU and Canada are stark contrast to Bangladesh's limited progress, a small preferential trading agreement (PTA) only with Bhutan.

Global conditions are no less demanding. Trade tensions, such as the US's reciprocal tariffs under the Trump administration, highlight how



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

the rules of World Trade Organization (WTO) are ignored in ways that are less sympathetic to the LDCs. Post-graduation, Bangladesh will face higher compliance costs related to labour standards, environmental sustainability, and intellectual property rights. In the EU, our single largest export destination, duty-free access will remain for another three years until 2029, but new challenges, including ESG reporting and stricter labour compliance, will impose additional costs and uncertainty.

The government and development partners have explored the notion of a "smooth transition," with the Economic Relations Division producing two reports on graduation and private investment and the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) assessing investment diversification. These are important steps, but reports alone cannot deliver reforms. Without alignment among political and business stakeholders and bureaucracy, the reform agenda risks stalling. And herein lies the danger: deferring graduation could

more time. There is nothing wrong in seeking for this breathing space when the current domestic and global headwinds are strong. But such an appeal must be very well-grounded on evidence-based arguments. Three of the LDCs, namely Bangladesh, Nepal and Lao PDR, are scheduled to graduate simultaneously in 2026. The problem is, if only Bangladesh seeks for an extension, it may not gain the required traction internationally, while a collaborative appeal with Nepal and Lao PDR could carry more weight. However, initial indications suggest that the deferral debate is not particularly active in those two countries, which could complicate the possibility of a coordinated approach.

While attempting to seek a deferral of graduation, the bigger question is whether a deferral would actually help. Without an urgent, coordinated reform drive spanning trade policy, industrial diversification, investment facilitation and skills development, any extension would be wasted time. The forthcoming political transitions (with

through accession of regional blocs such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and prepare the private sector to face increased compliance requirements. It has to reform investment facilitation frameworks, improve institutional capacity, and advocate diversification of both exports and export destinations. A reinvigorated commitment to attracting substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) is also fundamental to the reform project, since FDI can provide not only capital but also technology, managerial skills, and entry into new markets.

Ultimately, LDC graduation is not voluntary; entry into the club may be, but exiting is inevitable once the criteria are met. The choice we have is whether to make it a symbol of sustained capability or an exposed vulnerability. If reforms are deferred under the guise of a graduation delay, we risk turning a historic milestone into a prolonged stumble.

A path to trauma healing for Milestone survivors



Gawher Nayeem Wahra is a writer, disaster management expert, and child rights advocate. He can be reached at wahragawher@gmail.com.

GAWHER NAYEEM WAHRA

Initially, the father of two students of Milestone School and College was not feeling comfortable talking with me. Perhaps he was forced to put himself under self-embargo due to the meaningless inquiries from a group of "news hunters." He was in his office when the incident happened. He rushed to the location to learn that both his sons were unharmed. The older one, a 10th-grader, was at home, but the younger one was at school that day.

After assuring him that I wouldn't reveal his name to anyone, the father began to share. "My younger boy has been extremely frightened ever since the incident. He was stuck in a room adjacent to the Hyder Ali Building where the plane crashed," he said. "He used to not talk much to begin with; now he speaks even less. And he gets anxious whenever the topic of going to school comes up."

The school authority, with the help of Bangladesh Air Force, Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Hospital, and BRAC, opened medical camps and mental health services on the campus.

On July 28, a week after that terrible afternoon, I went to the crash site and

saw parents picking up their children's school bags. The bags were stacked in rows in a room of a single-storey building. The stack created a gloomy sculpture. Every bag had a story. A sheet of paper with the pupil's name, roll number, class, and branch written on it was attached to each bag. One black bag stuck out among the others. It was badly burnt in the fire.

The snooping mob was still there. A few of them were filming and taking photos. An air force delegation reached the crash site at around 10 in the morning. They gathered some evidence and debris. Many students who came to avail medical services at the campus with their parents seemed visibly scared and wanted to leave right away.

"I've been to the medical camp three times since the incident," a fifth-grader informed me. "Every time I enter the campus, my heart races and I can hear the loud sound of the plane," he said. The sound of the jets and planes became intolerable to him. Another girl from the same class joined him, "Every time I hear the sound of an aeroplane, I feel like I'm about to get hit and feel the urge to flee."

I met a survivor whose ears were hurt in the incident. His ears were still

swollen, and his face and hands had burn marks. He was examined by the camp doctors and offered medication and advice. According to the health aid provider, he was going to be taken to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) if necessary.

I came across three pupils who were grieving the loss of their best friends. One of them said he went to the cafeteria to eat something and bring food for his friend just before the plane crashed. The incident claimed the life of his friend.

Another student who lost two friends now gets frightened every time he hears a plane fly over their house. In his dreams, the deceased buddies visit every night.

This kind of trauma cannot be treated with medication. The attending physician from the camp suggested that parents must encourage their children to play with friends rather than being alone. The doctor also suggested that the parents take their children out. These steps aid in the healing process. It is important to remember that not all traumatised children need professional counselling or clinical treatment, but all of them require assistance from their parents and others around them. Having a supportive network of family, friends and teachers, as well as reassurance and open communication can help many kids recover from traumatic events. However, clinical assistance such as trauma-focused therapy could be required if a child's symptoms have a substantial influence on their everyday functioning, mental health, or quality of life.

Instead of conventional class

activities, children should spend more time engaging in age-appropriate games and creative art. Playing is an effective healing strategy for traumatised kids because it offers a fun and safe space for resolving feelings and developing resilience. Children can rebuild healthy relationships, examine their vulnerabilities, and learn coping skills at their own pace with play therapy. Those who may find it difficult to vocally communicate complicated emotions associated with trauma might be able to do so through play.

Games can be designed with the assistance of child psychologists to teach coping skills like emotional control, problem-solving methods, and relaxing techniques. Additionally, via play, kids can gain a sense of mastery, control, and self-worth—all of which are essential for fostering resilience in the face of hardship. Through play with classmates and caregivers, traumatised children can lessen feelings of loneliness, develop a sense of belonging, and re-establish social ties.

Children must return to school because it will aid in the process of restarting "life as usual." Initially, the focus should be on socialising, playing games, singing, painting, and conversing with friends rather than typical academic pursuits. They can progressively re-enter the demanding job of studying and taking tests, etc once these activities have helped settle their thoughts. Additionally, parents ought to be able to visit the school whenever they choose. In a variety of ways, they (parents and caregivers) should also receive emotional support.

50 years on, Sheikh Mujib's killing deserves a nuanced reading



Mohiuddin Ahmad is a writer and researcher of Bangladesh's political history.

MOHIUDDIN AHMAD

During 1974-75, all the opposition political parties wanted Sheikh Mujib's ouster, but it was not possible to remove him through street agitation. He had amended the constitution and concentrated absolute power in his own hands, leaving no constitutional or electoral means to change the government. Therefore, it can be said that, in a way, he himself had created the conditions conducive to a potential removal from power.

At that time, Sheikh Mujib's popularity had hit rock bottom. If we look at the backdrop, apart from the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Muzaffar Ahmed's NAP (National Awami Party), every political party outside of BAKSAL wanted Sheikh Mujib's downfall. That downfall eventually came, but it happened through a military coup—and a brutal one at that.

After the horrific tragedy of August 15, 1975, many were forced to accept it, many were stunned, some were saddened, and some were happy—we saw a range of reactions. As a result, those on the outside welcomed the coup, while Mujib's followers remained inactive. Some were arrested, some went underground, and quite a few fled to India.

Afterwards, a vacuum was created within Awami League, which then saw multiple internal splits. Such coups happened in various countries around the world—they were bloody, and in many countries, the

head of government was killed. What was exceptional here was that in Sheikh Mujib's house, all the family members present were killed. The same thing happened in two other houses—the homes of Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni and Abdur Rab Serniabat—because they were close relatives of Sheikh Mujib. I would say that the coup was, on the one hand, an Awami League-centric political overthrow, but at the same time, it was an attack on the family of Sheikh Mujib. There were two elements: one was the change of power, and the other was the massacre. Both happened together.

One thing is clear here: the incident that took place in 1975 was not unprecedented. Similar events have occurred in some other countries. After the Russian Revolution, all members of the Tsar's family, who were in captivity, were executed; we called that a revolution. In Iraq, when the monarchy was overthrown under the leadership of Brigadier Karim Qasim, all members of the Iraqi royal family were killed. These are just two examples I can think of; there may be more. So, historically, this was not the first such incident.

However, I would say that killing Sheikh Mujib might still have been given some form of political legitimacy had he been the only one killed. But killing all his family members had no moral legitimacy whatsoever.

Among those killed, his two elder sons faced allegations for many reasons, and people may have harboured resentment against them. But the way his wife and youngest son were killed had nothing to do with the coup, and the killing of his two daughters-in-law was nothing short of cold-blooded murder.

Sheikh Hasina has always said that Sheikh Mujib's assassination was the result of a massive conspiracy, with many players



SOURCE: PHOTO BOOK BY AFTAB AHMED

Given his legacy pre and post 1971, what score should we assign Sheikh Mujib and what is his place in history?

working behind the scenes. After 1975, she had plenty of time—she was in power for 20 and a half years in total. She repeatedly claimed that the masterminds behind the scenes would be identified and brought to

justice. She made politics out of it, but never managed to form a commission of inquiry. Had she set up such a commission, it could have shed light on the matter. This shows that she was not truly serious or sincere about investigating Sheikh Mujib's assassination; rather, she used it for political gain.

In the years following Sheikh Mujib's assassination, his positive image was gradually revived. This continued until the election at the end of 2008, when Sheikh Hasina came to power. Then it became clear that Sheikh Hasina could not think beyond her own family. For her, the country, the nation, and the party all revolved around her family. She began building establishments in her father's name, her mother's name, her brothers' names, her grandparents' names, and so on. Many universities were established under Sheikh Hasina's relatives' names. Ironically, in so doing, the image of Sheikh Mujib, which had gradually been restored, once again began to erode.

During Hasina's regime, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the ability of opposition political parties to operate all came under threat. Finally, last year, widespread protests against her rule swept the country. We witnessed a mass uprising in which, outside of Awami League, practically every party and its supporters united. At one stage, Sheikh Hasina was overthrown and she fled to India. But in people's eyes, Sheikh Mujib became the symbol of Sheikh Hasina's misrule and tyranny because Sheikh Hasina had ruled by using Sheikh Mujib as a political commodity.

Though Sheikh Mujib himself was not responsible for Hasina's misrule, people began to see him as the icon of that authoritarianism. His statues were pulled down, all the establishments bearing his name were changed, his house in Dhanmondi—which had been turned into

the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum—was attacked and demolished. In the end, he became a victim of his daughter's misrule.

In Bangladesh today, there are still two opposing views about Sheikh Mujib. One side believes that he was a great hero of history, that without him, Bangladesh would never have become independent. The other side believes that Sheikh Mujib was a traitor, that he deceived the people, and therefore, the fall of a traitor took place. These two streams of thought represent a kind of psychological civil war between two camps. I see no possibility of it being resolved unless one group completely annihilates the other, metaphorically speaking. That's how the situation continues.

A question might arise about how we should view the coup or Sheikh Mujib after 50 years of his assassination. The answer lies in the fact that human beings have both good and bad qualities. All things considered, it is difficult to place a person on a scale and assign them a score.

There is no denying that Sheikh Mujib was the main leader of the nationalist movement in this country, and the Liberation War was fought in his name. Until 1971, he could be called the great hero of this nation—he had no rivals in politics. From 1972 onwards, however, he exercised state power, and many opposed him. So, in the post-1971 period, we see him as a ruler. At one time, he was a leader loved by the masses; later, he became a ruler disliked by many.

Combining these two phases, what score should we give him, and what is Mujib's place in history? Where does he stand? If we are to judge that, we must inevitably look back and acknowledge the process of forming a nation-state through the bloody war of 1971, from which we achieved our independence. Therefore, as long as this country exists, we cannot erase Sheikh Mujib from our history.

The hope of a new dawn for RTI and democracy

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SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

Two recent developments have alleviated, at least temporarily, the creeping despondency among right to information (RTI) enthusiasts in Bangladesh, which was triggered by the September 2024 departure of all three information commissioners, following the July uprising and the assumption of power by the interim government. The departure of the commissioners made the Information Commission of Bangladesh virtually dysfunctional.

The first development was the release of draft amendment to the RTI Act, 2009 by the information ministry last month, seeking inputs from citizens for further improvement to the law. The draft was based on the recommendations of Public Administration Reform Commission, one of several such commissions set up by the interim government to strengthen and safeguard democracy. It raised hope that the government was at last focusing on the beleaguered RTI Act, which is considered to be the most effective instrument for citizens to monitor the work of government bodies.

The second development was the declaration on August 5, 2025 by the chief adviser of the interim government on the much-awaited July Charter that aims to concretise the aspirations of July uprising.

Added to it is the announcement, on the same day, of the equally anticipated general election, to be held by February 2026 to elect a new government. Together, they raised hope that the momentous developments which followed the violent overthrow of the previous regime would lead to a new dawn of democracy in Bangladesh.

A close look at the two developments would reveal a close link between them and the avowed aspirations of the July Charter. On several occasions in the past, this column has sought to underline the importance of the RTI Act for democracy in the country and recognising its proper use by citizens to be as important, if not more, as their right to vote. The reason is that elections are held every five years, while the right to seek relevant information on the work of the government is available to citizens at all times. Elections lead to a government chosen by the people, but once completed, there is little citizens can do to change it during its term of office. RTI empowers them to monitor its work continuously and contribute to good governance.

Good governance requires that public offices abide by the policies, laws and rules of the land. Failing to follow them leads to arbitrary abuse of power and corruption, as witnessed frequently in our country and all over the world. The RTI Act, 2009 seeks to eliminate/avoid them. The preamble to the law asserts that its primary objective is to increase "the transparency and accountability of all public, autonomous and statutory organisations," as well as "other private institutions constituted or run by government

or foreign financing," so that "corruption shall decrease and good governance... shall be established." It is unfortunate, however, that the promise of the law is little appreciated by the majority of our population, including our youth who spearheaded the July uprising. Otherwise, its use would not have been so limited even after 16 years of its adoption.

The time is ripe, therefore, for our civil society and political workers to come together and devise a strategy before the upcoming

This column has cited many success stories of the RTI Act in the country over the years, while bemoaning that more could be achieved if only both citizens and the government gave more attention to promoting the law.

The amendment to the act proposed in the draft recommendations will hopefully result in an improved law, but the need of the time is to put it to a greater and more effective use by citizens. We know that NGOs and civil society groups have already submitted their inputs for

and its citizens with an effective mechanism to keep the government on guard at all times. Traditionally, government bodies and bureaucracy are wary of open governance for well-known reasons. The interim government should have no such qualms and will earn the country's gratitude for such a gesture.

The interim would also be well-advised to set the Information Commission in full motion with prompt appointment of the commissioners, long before they hand over power to an elected government. It will set in motion a healthier interaction between citizens and public officials, which is essential for good democracy. An effective Information Commission, supporting the efforts of well-meaning citizens to keep the government on guard, will be a lasting legacy of the interim government that will perpetuate the spirit of the July uprising in the country's governance system. It will also end the frustrations of ardent users of the law who have been lamenting the absence of the mechanism for almost a year now.

We ask the readers to ponder a situation where, after the much-anticipated election, there is a mechanism for well-balanced interaction between citizens and the new government, where transparency and accountability of public offices are well-established. Where there is a smaller scope for abuse of power by public authorities, and citizens can play their roles as effective watchdogs for democracy and whistleblowers against corruption without fear or intimidation. It will be the fulfilment of a long-held dream of the nation.

The time is ripe, therefore, for our civil society and political workers to come together and devise a strategy before the upcoming general election to secure the commitment of political parties to unstinted implementation of the RTI Act. We now know how effective the RTI Act can be in supporting a watchdog role for citizens to monitor the work of public offices and act as whistleblowers against corruption.

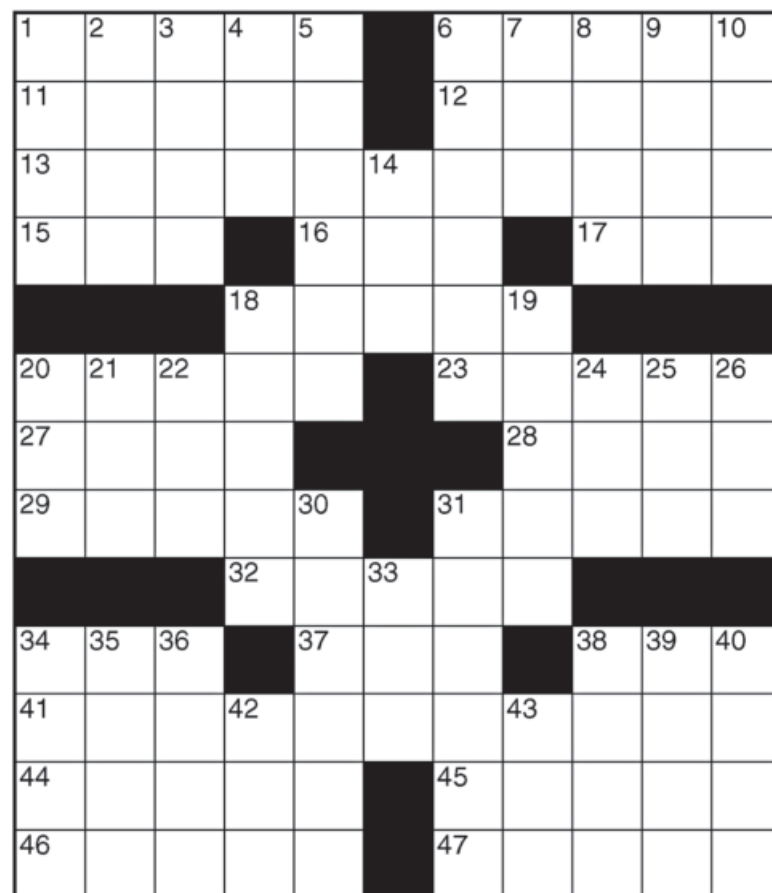
general election to secure the commitment of political parties to unstinted implementation of the RTI Act. A strategy to include such a commitment by the political parties in their election manifestos was adopted by civil society groups before the 2008 election, which many consider to be perhaps one of the fairest elections in the country. This should be done this time too, but with greater force, since we now know how effective the RTI Act can be in supporting a watchdog role for citizens to monitor the work of public offices and act as whistleblowers against corruption.

the amendments. If accepted, we can expect more citizen-friendly provisions, including stricter adherence to them by public bodies. One particular provision that we would like to emphasise is the inclusion of a specific "public interest override" clause. It exists in the laws of most advanced democracies in the world. It seeks to ensure that, in balancing between the government's interest while dealing with RTI requests and the public interest at large, the latter should prevail. It is worth noting that the interim government is uniquely positioned to provide the country

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Nuisance
5 Writing tablets
9 Shire of "Rocky"
10 Aids in crime
12 Some golf clubs
13 Extend, as a subscription
14 Kansas capital
16 By way of
17 Pub drinks
18 Natural gift
21 Homer's neighbor
22 Tool kit tool
23 Painting holder
24 Some silverware
26 Inquire
29 Desire for a drink
30 Pinnacle
31 Mine yield
32 Texas capital
34 Full of caffeine, perhaps
37 "Don't cry over - milk"
38 Audacity
39 Enters the pool
40 Acute
41 High cards

- DOWN**
1 Convict's hope
2 Wed in secret
3 Trig functions
4 Gofer's work
5 Golf goal
6 Lincoln nickname
7 Colorado capital
8 Beer hall vessels
9 Moon of Saturn
11 Try for a fly
15 Georgia capital
19 Goals
20 Director Spike
22 NFL players
23 Gift tag word
24 Cry of terror
25 South Dakota capital
26 On the go
27 Obeys the photographer
28 Superman's adoptive family
29 Hamlet
30 Jellied dish
33 Meat-rating org.
35 Genesis woman
36 Cozy retreat



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



Dameer steps out of his 'Khancha'

ZAREEN NAWAR

"I might have been making a name for myself during the tail end of my teenage years, but that also entailed eventually making deals and working with questionable people," divulged Dameer Khan. The once-emerging, unprecedented talent recently spoke with The Daily Star over a call from Canada to share his story — involving a critical legal dispute with his former management and the rise of his nightlife business prior to the release of his brand-new song, *Khancha*.

Earlier this year, the *Amar Jaan* singer had shared what he legally could about his situation online. Now, he sounds enthused, with an assured confidence. "I had some terrible experiences that revealed how corrupt certain ranks in the industry are, but I got lucky to some extent because I am a man. It also made way for me to begin DJing."

"Generating music is my craft, but once the legal dispute began, it unfortunately kept me from making my music. However,



DESIGN: ZAREEN NAWAR

the booming nightlife in Canada saved my life," said Dameer. He acquired business skills he wouldn't have learned otherwise.

The young Bangladeshi diaspora in Canada, whom he called "stubbornly patriotic," sought Bangladeshi music over other South Asian genres. "This led to my partners and me launching a show booking venture, eventually working with artistes from

other countries."

On finding his way back to music, he made the most of his contacts. "To maintain my relevance, I DJed and kept my existing music around people. I negotiated with labels, secured funding for new music, and worked with a team of Bangladeshi creatives—we shot a music video last March."

He was referring to the *Khancha* music video, directed by Monzur Anik. It was released on August 5, aligning with

the day of the July Uprising. A reflection on the revolution, the track is intrinsically artistic. He recounted, "Remember how we were terrified that our phones might be tapped before and during the Internet shutdown last July? We collectively felt as if we were caged in by our government, on top of witnessing their brutalities. It made me think of the Bangla proverb, 'If you clip a bird's wings, you don't need a cage.' The concept of the song originated from that thought."

Khancha boldly calls out the lies constructed by the previous regime, serves as an anthem for Bangladeshis to have a backbone, and flaunts Dameer's dynamic vocal range, with the promise of fresher music ahead.

Looking ahead, Dameer believes Gen Z must restructure artist management to move forward effectively for the future. "We barely have institutional strength. A person with talent doesn't always have business sense, especially in a country where IP law is ignored and musicians aren't properly paid. We need labels, support, and legal protection. Don't get me wrong—the industry has many well-intentioned people. I survived thanks to my community and family. But it's a cold world, and new artistes need to be careful."

'Noya Manush' headed to Toronto Multicultural Film Festival

Bangladeshi feature film *Noya Manush* and stars Moushumi Hamid in a pivotal role. Adapted from AMM Hasanzaman's novel *Bedonar Balu Chore*, the screenplay and dialogues were penned by Masum Reza.



Boyati described the film as a reflection of Bangladeshi hearts and the humanism of marginalised communities. The cast also features Rawnak Hasan, Ashish Khondokar, Jhuna Chowdhury, and Nilufar Wahid.

Directed by Sohel Rana Boyati, the film premiered in Bangladesh on December 6, 2024,

Cillian Murphy leads Netflix drama 'Steve'

Academy Award winner Cillian Murphy returns to the screen in *Steve*, a gripping Netflix drama where the stakes are as high for the man as they are for the school he's trying to save. Adapted by Max Porter from his 2023 novel *Shy*, the film premieres at the New York Film Festival (Sept 26-Oct 13), streams globally Oct 3, and opens in select theatres Sept 9.

Set in mid-1990s England, it follows headteacher Steve's battle against mounting pressures while forging a fragile connection with troubled student Shy (Jay Lycurgo).

Directed by Tim Mielants (*Peaky Blinders*), with a cast including Emily Watson and Tracey Ullman, *Steve* blends personal redemption with the lingering shadows of political and personal violence.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Agunjatra'



Prachyanat's 41st production, *Agunjatra*, adapted and directed by Azad Abul Kalam from Mahesh Dattani's work, follows researcher Uma as she delves into the hijra community and uncovers the truth behind Kamla's murder. The gripping narrative intertwines mystery, family ties, and political intrigue into a powerful stage experience.

DATE: Saturday | August 16, 2025
TIME: 7pm onwards

VENUE: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



'Notun Kuri' returns after 20 years

After two decades, Bangladesh Television (BTV) is reviving its iconic children's talent hunt, *Notun Kuri*. Applications open from August 15 to September 5, with the country divided into 19 regions for preliminary rounds, leading to divisional selections and the final in Dhaka.

The competition features nine categories: acting, recitation, storytelling/comedy, general/classical dance, patriotic/modern song, Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Sangeet, folk song, and Hamd-Naat. The *Ka* group is for ages 6-10, and the *Kha* group for ages 11-15. The finals will take place from November 2-6.

First aired in 1976 and last held in 2005, *Notun Kuri* has launched the careers of many celebrated Bangladeshi artistes.

NEWS

They won't boycott polls

FROM PAGE 12
He said the chief adviser, in his speech to the nation, clearly said that reform proposals with national consensus will be implemented by the next parliament.

"We have given our commitment to it. We have also promised to sign the national charter," he added.

Replying to a question, Salahuddin said that there is no possibility for an electoral alliance with Jamaat.

Saying people have fought for 16 years for their voting rights, Salahuddin said parties discouraging voting would be rejected by the public.

He said some parties, as a political strategy, are making various statements to put pressure on the BNP.

"I will call on everyone that, in

the national interest, we should rise above narrow party interests and work together on this path of democratic transition."

Salahuddin said, "We hope they will realise that there is no alternative to holding a free and fair election. So, to avoid the uncertainty like in the past, all political statements should be made keeping this in mind. This is our advice."

When asked if there could be attempts by any political groups to obstruct the polls process, Salahuddin said, "I don't think any party will take that risk."

He said certain political leaders are making "street talks" for various strategic reasons to create pressure, but it seems they do not genuinely intend to boycott the polls.

The BNP leader said the party has already announced its election strategy, which is to take part in the polls as part of an alliance with those who participated in the movement against the Awami League's fascist rule.

Salahuddin advised the parties with doubts about the polls to contact the government and the Election Commission and hold discussions to settle the differences.

He said an operation by joint forces to recover illegal weapons should be carried out under a proper plan, which would bring relief to the public.

"If these illegal weapons remain in the field, the fallen fascist forces could create a chaotic situation during the polls. This cannot be ruled out."

CA's Malaysia tour boosts Dhaka, KL ties

FROM PAGE 12
two lakh more Rohingya fled to Bangladesh since 2023 amid conflicts between the Myanmar military and rebel group Arakan Army.

Former ambassador M Shafiqullah said Bangladesh wants to improve relations with the ASEAN bloc plus the regional countries by joining the regional grouping like Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, where Malaysia is an important player.

"Being an important country in ASEAN, it can play an important role in addressing Rohingya crisis. This is crucial for us," he told this correspondent, adding that Bangladesh and Malaysia share the burden of the Myanmar and Rohingya crisis.

On the trade front, he said, Bangladesh traditionally imports energy from the Middle Eastern countries. Malaysia, comparatively, is closer.

"It's great that we are diversifying our sources of energy imports," Shafiqullah, a former senior research fellow at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.

Also, Malaysia is a market and producer of halal food and the semiconductor industry — which were discussed as priorities during Yunus's visit.

"We can enter new fields of cooperation with Malaysia if we can follow up properly," he said.

Rights activists say ensuring a fair recruitment system while holding

accountable the perpetrators, who were engaged in labour exploitation in the past, should have been top of the agenda.

"We haven't seen any notable progress towards this end. Rather, we found Bangladesh's law enforcers cleared the syndicate of agents and other related officials of labour trafficking charges," said Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Oviabashi Karmi Unnayan Programme.

That was done following Malaysia's request to withdraw the cases for the sake of its reputation.

A syndicate of 101 recruiting agents selected by Malaysia sent 480,000 Bangladeshis there between 2022 and 2024.

Under a memorandum of understanding, the recruitment cost was fixed at Tk 78,000 but the actual cost was between Tk 450,000 and 600,000.

Earlier in 2017-2018, there was another syndicate of 10 agents who similarly charged hefty sums from the workers.

"The most important thing now should have been the regularisation of more than four lakh undocumented Bangladeshis, because they spent huge amounts of money and went there legally but became victims of syndication," Islam said.

They remain jobless, underpaid, unpaid and were not issued work permits — not their fault but of the employers and agents, he added. Many migrants also often face

crackdowns in various parts of Malaysia and detention for reasons they are not responsible for, he added.

"We had expected the interim government to be tough against the syndicate and create an example," Islam said.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit Chair Tasneem Siddiqui said she thinks Dhaka has not forgotten the issue of fair recruitment, regularising the undocumented migrants and other welfare.

However, there are elements on both sides preventing the end of the syndication in recruitment, she added.

According to government officials, Bangladesh discussed the labour welfare issues and making the recruitment system fair and transparent; Yunus too discussed it with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

"But the syndicate and their affiliates are very strong — political elements are involved in it," said ambassador M Shafiqullah.

Anwar Ibrahim is in a coalition government and he alone cannot take many decisions because of the pressure from the coalition members, said another labour migration expert.

Experts lauded Malaysian officials' confirmation that Bangladeshi workers will now be entitled to the same social security benefits as Malaysian workers and will be able to lodge complaints in Bangla.

BTRC moves to punish

FROM PAGE 12
However, services or content with a legal ownership or entity status shall not be included under this definition.

Under this definition, intermediaries would include platforms like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Telegram and other social media platforms.

Upon written instructions from the government, the BTRC will have the authority to instruct any telecom service provider, intermediary, or social media intermediary to block or remove such content without providing any explanation.

Failure by a service provider to comply with such directives immediately will also be considered a criminal offence, carrying the same maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, or a Tk 300 crore fine, or both.

For the purposes of this section, the term "government" refers to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, or any relevant ministry, depending on the matter.

In the BTRC's proposal, section 66-ka has been made non-bailable.

However, it will be compoundable in applicable cases upon payment of compensation and administrative fines.

Earlier, under the Awami League regime, a similar non-bailable clause in the Digital Security Act was widely abused, and experts had slammed it for its repressive nature.

Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, principal at Stratagem, a consultancy firm and telecom policy analysis expert, said the proposed section 66-ka of the draft telecom ordinance "risks reviving the spectre of the Digital Security Act."

"Without a precise definition of the offence and clear parameters for what constitutes "anti-state" or "anti-sovereignty" the provision leaves wide scope for abuse, enabling suppression of legitimate freedom of expression."

He said that while safeguards are necessary against incitement, misinformation, or hatred that genuinely threatens national security, such measures must not erode constitutional rights.

"Any such clause should be accompanied by a clear, detailed definition, illustrated with examples, and be subject to mandatory judicial oversight before punitive action is taken."

He also said that a penalty of Tk 300 crore is very high and should be reduced. "Penalties should be based on actual impact."

Barrister Shahed Alam, chief

corporate and regulatory affairs officer at Robi Axiata, said the newly introduced non-bailable provision is likely to stifle innovation and curb freedom of expression.

"The authority can impose these measures without prior justification."

Besides, the draft ordinance poses significant risks to Bangladesh's digital development, he added.

"By introducing provisions such as the power to freeze accounts, impose substantial penalties on digital services, and levy fines of up to Tk 300 crore, the draft moves away from internationally recognised regulatory practices toward a more restrictive framework."

Notably, certain provisions, previously considered for removal to encourage sectoral growth, are now being reintroduced, alongside elements reminiscent of the more rigid 2010 telecom law, he added.

Given the scale of Bangladesh's \$3 billion digital economy, there is a real risk that the ordinance could slow innovation, constrain open communication, and discourage investment.

"We therefore urge consideration of withdrawing the current draft, reverting to the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act 2001 as a base, and pursuing amendments aligned with modern communications needs, fundamental rights, and sustainable economic growth through a transparent, participatory process."

BTRC Chairman Maj Gen (retd) Md Emdad Ul Bari said the fines were not newly introduced but were a continuation of provisions from previous laws.

"Earlier, the law focused on crimes committed using telecom networks or related issues. It has now been expanded to cover social media, as technology has evolved," he said.

On the non-bailable provision, Bari said it was introduced for offences deemed anti-state activities.

"This is just a draft, and it will go through further scrutiny. It can be altered if the government and stakeholders deem it unnecessary," he added.

The BTRC's draft came after the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, on July 28, instructed the regulator to prepare proposals for amending and updating the Telecommunication Act, 2001.

Following the directive, the BTRC submitted a proposal with several amendments to the ministry on August 12.

Israeli forces

FROM PAGE 12
Khalil Al-Hayya.

He told mediators in Cairo on Wednesday that Hamas was ready to resume ceasefire talks to achieve a temporary truce, and was open to discussing a comprehensive agreement that would end the war, Egyptian and Palestinian sources said.

Meanwhile, new Israeli legislation regulating foreign aid groups has been increasingly used to deny their requests to bring supplies into Gaza, according to a joint letter signed by more than 100 groups published yesterday.

According to the letter, whose signatories include Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders (MSF), at least 60 requests to bring aid into Gaza were rejected in July alone.

Ties between foreign-backed aid groups and the Israeli government have long been beset by tensions, with officials often complaining the organisations are biased, reports AFP.

The rocky relations have only gotten more strained in the wake of Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel in October 2023.

"Israeli authorities have rejected requests from dozens of NGOs to bring in lifesaving goods, citing that these organisations are 'not authorised to deliver aid,'" the joint statement reads.

ACC sues Joy

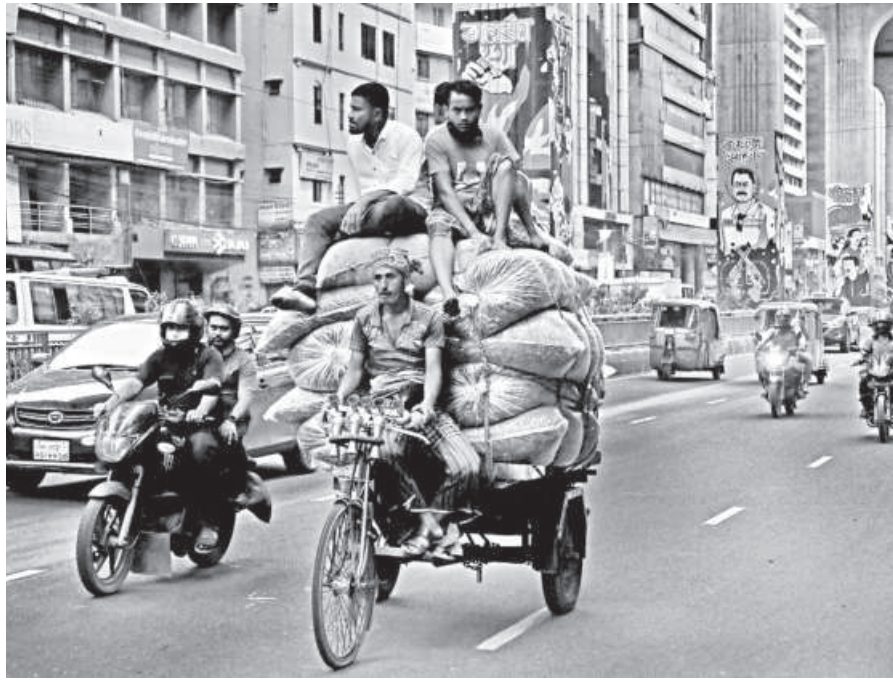
FROM PAGE 12
"Meanwhile, Joy's total assets, both movable and immovable, amount to Tk 61.18 crore. Upon investigation, his legitimate income amounted to Tk 1.32 crore.

"This indicates that Tk 60.14 crore was acquired illegally."

Akhtar also alleged that Joy laundered an additional Tk 54.04 crore through hundi or other channels to purchase or invest in two properties in the United States.

"This money was not declared in Bangladesh's income tax records and was illegally transferred abroad," he added.

The ACC has decided to file a case against Joy under Section 27(1) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004; Sections 4(2) and 4(3) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012; and Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, according to a press release issued by the ACC.



This rickshaw-van plying the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital, despite bans on such vehicles from using the VIP roads. Even worse, three people can be seen sitting on top of the van in a risky manner, which could lead to an accident at any moment. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Court issues warrant to arrest

FROM PAGE 4

against Hasina and others.

Earlier, Md Enamul Haque, an assistant superintendent of police of CID (cyber investigation and operations) and also investigation officer of the case, submitted a probe report accusing Hasina and others of conspiring to overthrow the interim government through the civil war.

On March 27, the CID filed the case against Hasina and 72 others for their alleged involvement in the conspiracy.

After the hearing that day, the magistrate directed CID to submit a report after an investigation into the matter.

According to the case statement, the CID received information about an online meeting held on December 19, 2024, where participants formed a platform called the "Joy Bangla Brigade" and discussed plans to bring Hasina back to power by waging a civil war. A total of 577 individuals from home and abroad attended the meeting and showed

support for Hasina's directives.

Rabbi Alam, vice president of Awami League's US chapter who convened the virtual meeting, has been named as the second accused in the case.

CU returns to merit

FROM PAGE 4

furniture, not food services".

Prof Kamal Uddin, provice chancellor, said the previous monopoly by BCL over the halls had rendered them "uninhabitable" and deprived students of a proper study environment.

"Seats are now allocated on merit and students are living peacefully. The clashes we saw in the past are no longer happening."

Until recently, most halls were under the dominance of the now-banned BCL. Many seats were occupied by politically connected individuals, some of them non-students who often lived rent-free and ate at hall canteens without payment.

Prof Abdul Mannan, provost of Suhrawardy Hall, said after 2017, the halls were under "total control of Chhatra League."

"No one could get a seat on merit. They admitted only their own people and monopolised the halls. The administration at the time failed to act," he said.

Alimul Shamim, a resident of Shaheed Farhad Hossain Hall, said, "The atmosphere here is normal now. There's no political or other pressure. Students

move freely and live without interference."

Sakila Akhter from Khaleda Zia Hall said, "Previously, only politically connected students got seats. Now it's based on merit, which has reduced chaos inside the halls."

The provost also highlighted ongoing efforts. "Since the new administration took over, we've repaired reading rooms, washrooms, and provided proper furniture. Our aim is to create a study-friendly environment," he added.

CU has 15 residential halls; 10 for male students and five for female students, with a total capacity of about 7,000. However, this covers only around 18 percent of the university's 30,000 students. Of the seats, roughly 4,500 are in male halls and 2,500 in female halls.

Despite a policy prioritising first-year students, many are left without accommodation due to the acute shortage, the authorities said.

They said construction of two new halls is scheduled to begin this year, alongside renovations to abandoned rooms in the existing halls.

Dhaka, KL push

FROM PAGE 3

people come here to make a living for themselves and their families. So both sides need each other. There is no shortage of goodwill. It's a question of putting together and seeing where things go wrong, and then we track and clean it up."

As of February 2025, Bangladeshi nationals form the largest group of foreign workers in Malaysia, numbering 898,970, working primarily in the construction, manufacturing, plantation and service sectors. Around 400,000 Bangladeshis are estimated to be irregular due to malpractices by agents and employers.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Interior Minister Saifuddin Nasution bin Ismail described Prof Yunus's visit as a very positive development in Malaysia-Bangladesh bilateral relations, particularly in strengthening strategic and high impact multi-sector cooperation.

In a Facebook post yesterday, he said the Malaysian home ministry (KDN) believes that regional peace can only be achieved through close ASEAN cooperation and support from the international community.

Mannan's orchard

FROM PAGE 4

bananas, oranges, and Darjeeling malta. With six employees, Mannan spends around Tk 1.5 lakh annually on upkeep, estimating an annual profit of about Tk 2 lakh.

"I'm confident the yield will increase significantly next year," he said.

Visitors from the town, Amir Mia and Suman Das, said they came to see rambutan for the first time. "Its taste is unique. I didn't know it before. Now I've bought 6kg at Tk 500 per kg," one said.

Local resident Arjun

Benbangshi said, "I will start cultivating rambutan next season. I want this fruit to spread among more farmers in the area."

District Agriculture Extension Department Additional Deputy Director (Plant Conservation) Nilufar Yasmin Monalisa Sweetey said Mannan is the first to cultivate rambutan commercially in Moulvibazar.

"We want this fruit to spread further in the district. Our priority now is to increase awareness and provide advice and assistance to those interested."

EC to declare

FROM PAGE 3

more than 45,000 polling centres and 2.8 lakh booths in the next election.

Following EC's latest count, the number of voters may reach 12.7 crore.

In the 12th general election, there were 11.9 crore voters, 42,148 polling centres, and 2.6 lakh polling booths.

On August 7, Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said besides updating the voter list, the EC is redrawing parliamentary constituencies and making arrangements for

expatriate voting.

As part of its preparations, complete tasks like training 931,131 polling officials, voter registration, and procurement of election materials by September.

Once the proposed amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) and the Election Conduct Rules are forwarded to the law ministry for swift approval, the printing of manuals and guidelines will begin.

The materials will serve as key resources for training election officials.

Looted stones

FROM PAGE 3

around 1.80 crore cubic feet of stones in the iconic landmark.

Police yesterday also arrested Purbo Islamul Union Parishad Chairman Alomgir Hossain Alom in connection with the looting incident, confirmed Uzayer Al Mahmud Adnan, officer-in-charge of Companiganj Police Station.

Alomgir is also the joint convener of Companiganj Krishak Dal and local government affairs secretary of the upazila unit BNP.

Meanwhile, the Sylhet district administration has vowed tough action against those involved in the large-scale looting of stones from the site, pledging full restoration of the area.

Environment activists said the looting started almost immediately following the Awami League regime's fall on August 5, 2024, after a quiet period of nearly four years at the stone extraction sites in the Sylhet region.

They also alleged that the administration did almost nothing for months despite protests from environmental organisations.

The issue came to the limelight earlier this week following media reports showing the area completely stripped of the white stones.

Visiting the spot yesterday afternoon, Deputy Commissioner Md Sher Mahub Murad said, "The district administration has taken a strict stance to stop the looting. Those involved will face legal action... We aim to recover all the stolen stones and restore them here, but it will take time."

The DC also said a high-level meeting on Wednesday night decided to deploy joint forces in the area round the clock, set up police checkpoints in Gowainghat and Companiganj, and disconnect power supplies to illegal stone-crushing machines.

Also yesterday, the High Court ordered the government to form a five-member committee with representatives from the district administration, BGB and Rab to list those involved in the looting and submit the report within 60 days.

The HC bench of Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque

and Justice Aynun Nahar Siddiqua issued the directives and rule following a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh seeking necessary orders.

The petitioner's lawyer, Manzill Murshid, told the HC that stones worth around Tk 200 crore had been looted from Bholaganj under the watch of the administration and some locally influential people for a long time.

In this regard, Sylhet DC Mahub said, "We will follow the HC orders once we receive them."

Earlier on Wednesday, the Anti-Corruption Commission visited the site to collect evidence, while the district administration formed a three member probe committee to submit a report by Sunday (August 16).

Earlier on Monday, BNP suspended Companiganj unit president Shahab Uddin from all posts over allegations of his involvement in the stone looting.

Meanwhile, in a joint operation last night in Sarulia of Dhaka's Demra a large number of stones looted from Sada Pathor was recovered.

The drive was conducted by Narayanganj's Rab-II, the district administration, and the environment department's Dhaka unit.

Lt Col HM Sajjad Hossain, commanding officer of Rab II, confirmed the information in a press release issued at 9:30pm.

According to the statement, nearly two lakh cubic feet of white stone, worth an estimated Tk 200-250 crore, was illegally extracted from the area in recent times. Around six lakh cubic feet of sand, valued at about Tk 240 crore, was also looted.

Briefing journalists at the site around 9:15pm, he said, "We started intelligence work to find out where the looted stones were being unloaded. Here in Sarulia, we found Bholaganj's white stone stored in several warehouses - at least seven of them. On the banks of the Shitalakkhya, stones were being unloaded on one side and crushed on the other to conceal their origin."

Man killed over Tk 350 loan

FROM PAGE 4

However, Moznu alleged that after August 5 last year, a group of youths led by Sajib Hasan had been trying to take over his dish business.

On several occasions, Sajib demanded money but Moznu did not pay, making Sajib furious. So, Sajib took the issue of dues as an opportunity to attack him and his family, he further alleged.

Fahim's mother Rubi Akter lodged a case with the police station naming five persons with Sajib as the prime accused, said the

OC.

In a written statement signed by Md Monjurul Haque Arif, convener of Muktagacha upazila JCD and its member secretary Asad Farazi on Wednesday, the primary membership of Sajib Hasan and two other JCD activists - Abir and Maruf - was cancelled for alleged involvement in the party's anti-discipline activities.

Arif told this correspondent they met with the victim's family members on Wednesday and urged police to take

necessary legal steps.

Demanding exemplary punishment for the perpetrators, locals blocked the Mymensingh Jamalpur road for an hour when Fahim's body reached on Wednesday evening.

Later local officials and police brought the situation under control.

Soon after the incident, the accused fled the area and none were arrested yet, said the police officer.

Drives are being conducted to arrest the accused, said the OC.

Over one lakh

FROM PAGE 3

More than 1,00,000 people have been stranded in the Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Rangpur regions, according to the

Lalmonirhat District Relief and Rehabilitation Office.

Many residents have sought refuge on embankments and government roads, bringing cattle and belongings, and sheltering under makeshift polythene tents.

At the Teesta Barrage point in Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat, water was recorded at 52.30 metres, the same as in Nilphamari. At Pateshwari in Nageshwari, Kurigram, the Dudhkumar stood at 29.66 metres, 6 centimetres above danger level.

Shunil Kumar, executive engineer of Lalmonirhat BWDB, said chars and riverside areas of the Teesta shoal were inundated and water levels were unlikely to fall soon.

"All gates of the Teesta Barrage have been opened, so downstream water is also rising," he said.

The Teesta's above-danger-level flows have inundated 33 unions in 13 upazilas along its shoals in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari, and eight unions along the Dudhkumar shoal in Nageshwari upazila of Kurigram, affecting some 220 chars and riverbank villages.

Rakibul Hasan, executive engineer of Kurigram BWDB, warned that the Brahmaputra and Dharla rivers, currently below the danger level, could cross it within 48 hours if upstream flows continued. "If the Brahmaputra floods, the situation will turn severe," he said.

Large areas of Aman paddy and vegetables along the Teesta and Dudhkumar floodplains are submerged. Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy director of DAE, said that if water did not recede within three days, vegetables would face

major losses, though Aman paddy was likely to suffer less damage.

Villagers described the sudden inundation as devastating.

Sirajul Islam, a farmer from Kalmati in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said, "There's waist-deep water inside my home. I've taken my cattle to the roadside. Since last night, we've been in a polythene-covered hut. We're struggling with food shortages as we can't cook."

In Char Narayanpur, Nageshwari, farmer Delwar Sheikh said floodwater entered his home in the early morning. "We rushed to the shelter in panic. One goat and several chickens were swept away. We've been surviving on dry food," he said.

Local authorities are distributing relief, with boats ferrying people from high-risk areas.

Aminul Islam, chairman of Narayanpur Union Parishad, said over 8,000 people in his union were stranded, while Masiur Rahman, chairman of Dawabari Union in Hatibandha, estimated more than 10,000 people in his union were stranded.

HM Rakib Hayder, deputy commissioner of Lalmonirhat, said adequate relief stock was available and distribution was ongoing.

Kurigram DC Nusrat Sultana said control rooms had been opened in flood-hit areas and evacuations were under way. BWDB officials said all gates of the Teesta Barrage were open to discharge water quickly and that the situation remained under control for now.

PRAYER TIMING
AUGUST 15

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-25 12-30 4-45 6-38 8-00
JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-41 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

প্রকল্প পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

৮টি বিভাগীয় শহরে পূর্ণাঙ্গ ক্যান্সার, কিডনী এবং

হৃদরোগ চিকিৎসা কেন্দ্র স্থাপন শীর্ষক প্রকল্প

স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।

pd.8div.cancer@ld.dghs.gov.bd

স্মারক নং-স্বা/অধি/৮টি বিশপূর্কাকিহ প্রকল্প/মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়া/২০২৪-২৫/২৭০

তারিখ: ১৪/০৮/২০২৫ ইং।

মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়ার পুনঃদরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট উপস্থিতি শর্তে ঢাকা সিটি কর্পোরেশন/ঢাকার বাহিরে অর্থাৎ ৮টি বিভাগীয় শহরে পূর্ণাঙ্গ ক্যান্সার, কিডনী এবং হৃদরোগ শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের দাপ্তরিক কাজে ব্যবহারের নিমিত্তে মাসিক ভাড়ার একটি (৭সাত) আসন বিশিষ্ট শীতাতপ নিয়ন্ত্রিত উন্নতমানের ২০২৩ সালের রেজিস্ট্রেশনকৃত মাইক্রোবাস (এলপিবি/অকটেন চালিত) ভাড়া করার লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত পরিবেশন ব্যবসায়ীদের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

১।	মফলাদ/বিভাগ	ঃ	স্বাস্থ্য সেবা বিভাগ, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়
২।	সংস্থার নাম	ঃ	স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর
৩।	ক্রয়কারী প্রকল্পের নাম	ঃ	প্রকল্প পরিচালক, ৮টি বিভাগীয় শহরে পূর্ণাঙ্গ ক্যান্সার, কিডনী এবং হৃদরোগ চিকিৎসা কেন্দ্র স্থাপন শীর্ষক প্রকল্প
৪।	সংগ্রাহক সত্তার কোড	ঃ	১২৭০২-২২৪৩০৪৪০০
৫।	সংগ্রাহক সত্তার জেলা	ঃ	ঢাকা
৬।	যে কাজের জন্য দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হলো	ঃ	মাসিক ভিত্তিতে ড্রাইভারসহ মাইক্রোবাস (NOAH/ESQUIRE)
৭।	অর্ধের পদ্ধতি	ঃ	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (ওপেন)
৮।	অর্ধের উদ্দেশ্য	ঃ	জিওবি (রাজস্ব)
৯।	দরপত্র আহ্বানের নং ও তারিখ	ঃ	স্মারক নং-স্বা/অধি/৮টি বিশপূর্কাকিহ প্রকল্প/মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়া/২০২৪-২৫/২৭০, তারিখ: ১৪/০৮/২০২৫ ইং।
১০।	গাড়ী ভাড়ার মেয়াদকাল	ঃ	ভাড়ার তারিখ হতে ১(এক) বছর (নবায়নযোগ্য)
১১।	দরদাতাদের যোগ্যতা	ঃ	দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে- (১) সিডিউল ক্রয়ের মূল রশিদ। (২) ব্যবসা প্রতিষ্ঠানের ২০২৪-২৫ ইং অর্থ বছরের আয়কর পরিশোধের সনদ। (৩) প্রতিষ্ঠানের ২০২৫-২৬ ইং অর্থ বছরের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (Rent Microbus) গাড়ী ভাড়ার দেওয়া হয় এই সম্পর্কিত বিষয়ে উল্লেখ থাকতে হবে। (৪) ব্যাংক স্বাক্ষরতার সনদ। (৫) সরকারি/আধা-সরকারী/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত অথবা অন্যান্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের সরবরাহের মূল্যমত ০৩(তিন) বছরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্রের মূল কপি (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে)। (৬) দরপত্র দাতার ০২(দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজ ছবি (সত্যায়িত)। (৭) ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট। (৮) ড্রাইভারের জারী অথবা হালকা ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্সসহ প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রাদি। (৯) গাড়ীর রেজিস্ট্রেশন, ট্যাক্স টোকেন এবং ফিটনেসসহ প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রাদি। (১০) সকল প্রকার সনদের ফটোকপি (সত্যায়িত)। সত্যায়নের সব ক্ষেত্রে প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তার অবশ্যই নাম থাকতে হবে। অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে উল্লেখ আছে।
১২।	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	ঃ	অর্থনৈতিক কোড নং-১১১০২১৫ ১০২৪৩৮-১১০০০০০০০-তে সিডিউলের মূল্য বাবদ (অফেরত যোগ্য) ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা বাংলাদেশের যে কোন তফসিলি ব্যাংকে জমা প্রদান পূর্বক নিজস্ব লেটার হেড প্যাডে আবেদনের মাধ্যমে সিডিউল সজ্ঞহ করা যাবে।
১৩।	দরপত্র জামানত পরিমাণ	ঃ	৪০,০০০/- (চল্লিশ হাজার) টাকার (কেনত যোগ্য) পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট জমা দিতে হবে।
১৪।	সিডিউল বিরুদ্ধের স্থান	ঃ	টিবি সেইট শাহী মসজিদ সললয়, রোটারী ক্লাব ডিস্ট্রিক্টন ইউনিট, নিচ তলা, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।
১৫।	দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলার স্থান	ঃ	টিবি সেইট শাহী মসজিদ সললয়, রোটারী ক্লাব ডিস্ট্রিক্টন ইউনিট, নিচ তলা, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।
১৬।	দরপত্র বিরুদ্ধের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	২৪/০৮/২০২৫ তারিখ বেলা ৫.০০ ঘটিকা
১৭।	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	২৫/০৮/২০২৫ তারিখ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা
১৮।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	২৫/০৮/২০২৫ তারিখ বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা
১৯।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর নাম ও ঠিকানা	ঃ	প্রকল্প পরিচালক, ৮টি বিভাগীয় শহরে পূর্ণাঙ্গ ক্যান্সার, কিডনী এবং হৃদরোগ চিকিৎসা কেন্দ্র স্থাপন শীর্ষক প্রকল্প, স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।
২০।	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা	ঃ	কোন কারণ দর্শালে ব্যতিরেকেই যে কোন/সকল টেন্ডার গ্রহণ/প্রত্যাখ্যান করার অধিকার কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।
২১।	অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী	ঃ	পিপিএ ২০০৬, পিপিআর ২০০৮ (সংশোধনসহ) অনুসারে দরপত্র কার্যক্রম পরিচালিত হবে।

(ডাঃ মোঃ তৌফিক হাসান ফিরোজ)
প্রকল্প পরিচালক

৮টি বিভাগীয় শহরে পূর্ণাঙ্গ ক্যান্সার, কিডনী এবং
হৃদরোগ চিকিৎসা কেন্দ্র স্থাপন শীর্ষক প্রকল্প
স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

A last-minute detour into history

Md Abbas is a journalist at The Daily Star and an avid traveller.



MD ABBAS

The morning mist clung to the hills of northern China, softening the sharp lines of the mountains. Then, through the shifting veil, I saw it – the Great Wall of China.

It wasn't just its scale that stole my breath; it was the weight of time. This winding monument on the mountain ridges stood for centuries, bearing witness to human ambition, struggle, and endurance.

For years, I had pictured this moment. In photographs, the Wall had always seemed remote – a cold relic from another age. Yet here I was, touching its rough stones, standing in the shadow of ancient watchtowers. I felt small, but also strangely proud. Generations had laboured here to create one of history's greatest feats of engineering.

I was on an 11-day trip to China as a member of a Bangladesh delegation. With our days filled with official visits,

meetings, and cultural exchanges, the Great Wall wasn't even on our itinerary.

Then, on our ninth day, we stumbled upon a famous Mao Zedong quote: "He who has never been to the Great Wall is not a true man."

That was all the encouragement we needed. I voiced my wish to visit the Wall, and soon other delegates joined in. We went to our delegation head, Prof Rakibul Hoque, and Michael Zhu, asking if they could adjust the schedule, even if it meant cutting smaller stops. They saw our excitement and agreed.

On our last day, at exactly 7:00am, we boarded a bus for the 90-minute journey to the Mutianyu section of the Wall. Soon, Beijing's busy streets gave way to rolling green hills. At the main gate, a shuttle bus operated by the Wall authorities carried us to the mountain's base. From there, our ascent began with a cable car ride.

The Wall appeared and vanished through the trees as we glided upwards. Beside me was my closest companion on this trip, fellow delegate Saif Sujan. Together, we stepped off the cable car and onto the Wall.

We had only a little time to explore, and the Wall was huge. Sujan bhai and I decided to make the most of it. We walked quickly and sometimes even jogged along the stone steps and steep slopes, determined to reach the highest point open to visitors.

The climb was demanding. The steps were uneven, some knee-high, and the Wall curved like a serpent over the ridges. Yet the fresh mountain air and the excitement pushed us onward. In 40 minutes, breathless but elated, we stood at the peak.

From there, the Wall stretched into the horizon. Sujan bhai and I exchanged a smile. We were standing where soldiers once kept watch, centuries ago, scanning these same ridges for approaching enemies. The



freezing winters, and scarce food. Many never left, their lives and deaths becoming part of the Wall itself.

Tourists see postcard-perfect battlements and scenic landscapes. But the Wall is also a memorial to the human cost of empire-building. Thousands of workers and soldiers died in its construction and defence. That sacrifice lingers in its stones.

By midday, the quiet was gone. Footsteps echoed, cameras clicked, and voices in many languages filled the air. Yet, the Wall, which survived invaders, storms, and centuries of neglect, remained the main character.

China has preserved certain sections of the Wall, especially those near Beijing. I was struck by how it continues to be a symbol of China's national identity.

With the sun at its highest, we began our descent. Walking down was harder than climbing up – our legs trembled with every step. Still, the satisfaction was immense.

At the cable car station, I turned back for one last look. The Wall snaked into the distance, glowing under the afternoon light. It felt less like a monument and more like a living thing, breathing with the memory of those who built, defended, and now preserve it.

The Great Wall's claim as a wonder of the world is well earned. But what makes it truly remarkable is not its length or height – it's the way it invites reflection. Here, ambition meets endurance. Here, the past whispers to the present that greatness is built with both vision and sacrifice.

For me, it wasn't just a tourist stop. It was a reminder of what humans can accomplish with determination, and of the costs often hidden behind great achievements.

As our bus rolled back to Beijing, fatigue settled into my bones, but so did gratitude. This last-minute detour had become the highlight of my entire 11-day journey in China.

kilogrammes up these slopes, using only their hands, wooden carts, and simple tools. In the Ming era, they even mixed lime with sticky rice to make mortar, an ingenious solution for its time.

I studied the watchtowers, perfectly aligned along the jagged mountain line. Without drones or the advanced equipment we have today, like lasers, their precision is uncanny. Every stone seemed to hold the memory of human sweat and skill.

From the peak, I started to notice the finer details: the rough texture of the stones, the small watchtowers along the ridges, and the way the Wall merged with the mountains as if it had grown from the earth itself.

The Great Wall is often mistaken for a single wall, but it is a series of walls and fortifications built and rebuilt over many centuries. Work began as early as the 7th century BC, but the section beneath my feet dated to the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). At its height, the Wall stretched more than 21,000 kilometres, weaving natural barriers like mountains and rivers into its defences. It was built to repel nomadic invaders from the north, especially Mongols and other steppe tribes.

Pausing in a watchtower, I imagined the life of a soldier posted here: breathtaking but lonely views,

thought sent shivers down my spine.

How had they built this, hundreds of years ago, without cranes or bulldozers? I imagined workers hauling stones weighing hundreds of





In what was a rare move, UEFA displayed a banner that read "Stop killing children - Stop killing civilians" before the Super Cup final between PSG and Tottenham at the Stadio Friuli in Udine, Italy, on Wednesday. UEFA also had two refugee children from Gaza involved in the medal ceremony. The gesture comes after UEFA was criticised by Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah for not being specific about the killing of Suleiman al-Obeid, known as the "Pele of Palestinian football", in an Israeli attack while waiting for humanitarian aid in the southern Gaza Strip last week. Champions League holders PSG were the eventual winners of the contest, beating Tottenham 4-3 on penalties after coming back from 2-0 down in 90 minutes.

PHOTO: REUTERS/X

Champions Liverpool kick off PL tonight

STAR SPORTS DESK

Reigning Premier League champions Liverpool begin their title defence at home to Bournemouth on Saturday, with manager Arne Slot eyeing back-to-back titles after a record-breaking debut season.

Slot, who guided Liverpool to their 20th top-flight title last term, has already overseen nearly £300 million worth of new arrivals and could yet add more before the transfer window closes.

The Reds' revamped attacking lineup is led by German playmaker Florian Wirtz, expected to provide the creative spark for new striker Hugo Ekitike. On the flanks, Jeremy Frimpong and Milos Kerkez bring pace and width, while 18-year-old centre-back Giovanni Leoni, signed from Parma on the eve of the opener, strengthens a backline that has struggled with injuries.

Liverpool got off to a rocky start after a 3-2 defeat on penalties against Crystal Palace in Sunday's Community Shield.

Slot is cautiously optimistic Liverpool can retain their title.

"The main reason that it's so difficult [to

retain the title] is because there are so many competitors who can win the league," Slot said. "This year will be even harder. We've lost five to six players who played a lot of minutes last season, and brought in four, so it's normal there's adaptation."

Mohamed Salah, last season's top scorer with 29 goals, will once again be central to Liverpool's hopes.

Slot's first challenge comes against a Bournemouth side significantly weakened by departures. Goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga has joined Arsenal, while centre-backs Dean Huijsen and Illia Zabarnyi moved to Real Madrid and PSG respectively. Kerkez, too, has left for Liverpool.

The Cherrys have earned €186.96 million from sales and reinvested part of it in Balode Diakite, signed from Lille on Wednesday for €35 million plus €5 million in add-ons — the second-highest fee in the club's history, behind the €40.2 million paid for Brazilian striker Evanilson last summer.

Despite the exodus, manager Andoni Iraola will aim to build on last season's record 56-point haul, which matched Bournemouth's best ever Premier League finish of ninth.



Mushfiqur's exit wish EXPOSES RAJSHAHI RIFT

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

A storm is brewing in Rajshahi cricket. On August 7, the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) tournament committee chairman Akram Khan revealed that star veteran Mushfiqur Rahim had informed selectors of his interest to play for Sylhet Division in both competitions of the upcoming National Cricket League.

The news surprised many, as Mushfiqur, from Bogura, has represented Rajshahi Division throughout his career. Soon after, it emerged that several senior Rajshahi players, including skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, were also unwilling to play for the side this season, citing a unhealthy dressing room environment and the inclusion of an irregular yet influential player in the preliminary 30-man squad.

Their protest centred on Myshukur Rahaman, a 33-year-old batter from Bogura, who has not played for Rajshahi since 2018, representing other divisions such as Sylhet in recent years.

He was also accused of failing to pay Brothers Union players after the last Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League (DPL) edition, despite signing them under a bizarre 'one-page agreement' — which stated that they are interested to play alongside Myshukur.

However, four months on, several players are still awaiting full payment.

Players and officials allege that Myshukur used political connections to

return to Rajshahi's squad and influenced the inclusion of underperforming players while overlooking standouts from this year's first division league, such as Sujon Hawlader, Emon Ali and Shakir Hossain Shuvro.

Senior players Mizanur Rahman and Sunzamul Islam were accused of supporting him to protect their own places, while an utterly unknown cricketer, Nur A Rayan Shammo — son of a top political leader in Pabna — was also included.

"If he [Myshukur] keeps doing this, Rajshahi cricket will be destroyed. Mizanur and Sunzamul knew they'll lose their places soon, so they sheltered Myshukur," a Rajshahi Division cricketer, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

"He has pressurised coaches using political ties. Mushfiqur bhai hasn't been happy with the dressing room for the past year or two. The way everything is going, many senior cricketers might not play and juniors might follow."

Typically, divisional squads are formed after discussions between the coaches and captain, but this year's Rajshahi squad was finalised without following that

process. Alongside divisional coach Shahanowuz Shahid Shantu, assistant coach Alamgir Kabir and Rajshahi Divisional Sports Association secretary A.T.M. Golam Mahbob, Myshukur signed the primary players' list



sent to BCB for approval. When this reporter contacted Myshukur, he denied all allegations, claiming coaches and Shanto asked for his help in forming the squad.

"For the last six to seven years, I wasn't given a chance to play for Rajshahi Division. This year, they told me to play. We have two divisional coaches, eight district coaches and skipper Shanto, who

tried to form a 30-member squad as well as name a few backup cricketers. As I play in the [Dhaka] Premier League, I know cricketers who play in different domestic tournaments," said Myshukur.

"I was told to get involved in the matter, and the team was formed after taking consent from everyone involved in the selection matter. Shanto was absent from the meeting, so I signed on his behalf," he added.

Coach Shahanowuz later confirmed a new 30-man squad had been sent to BCB after backlash, with four changes from the initial list.

"We spoke to Shanto and formed what we thought was a good squad, taking suggestions from Myshukur as he was already practising with some of the cricketers. But Akram Khan didn't approve it, so we made changes and sent a new list. Then me, Alamgir and Shanto formed a new team and sent it to the BCB," Shahanowuz said.

Akram acknowledged the dispute but was optimistic of a resolution as Rajshahi have already sent a new team.

"Initially, the list came from two coaches and a current player. Senior players objected, so we told the coach to send a revised squad after consulting the captain. The players have started training. After the fitness test, selectors will finalise the 15-man squad — and decide whether Mushfiqur plays for Rajshahi or Sylhet this season."



Bangladesh 'A' appeared to be on course to chase down the 228-run target set by the Pakistan Shaheens, thanks to an 86-run second-wicket stand between opener Jishan Alam (33 off 17) and Saif Hassan (57 off 32) in the Top End T20 tournament opener at the T10 Stadium in Darwin, Australia, yesterday. However, the chronic batting woes of Bangladesh eventually reared its head, as the Nurul Hasan Sohan-led side lost their last nine wickets for just 56 runs, crashing from 92 for one in seven overs to being bundled out for 148 in 16.5 overs, suffering a crushing 79-run defeat.

PHOTO: BCB

Girona host Rayo in LaLiga opener

AGENCIES

The 2025/26 LaLiga season kicks off Friday at Estadi Montilivi, where Girona host Rayo Vallecano.

Girona, who finished a disappointing 16th last season after a stunning third-place finish in 2023-24, have refreshed their squad with four summer signings — Hugo Rincon, Axel Witsel, Vitor Reis and Thomas Lemar — while parting ways with several players. Without European commitments this term, Michel's side hope to focus solely on domestic success.

Rayo, meanwhile, secured eighth place last season, earning a Conference League playoff spot — only their second European campaign in history. Inigo Perez's team, bolstered by the permanent signing of goalkeeper Augusto Batalla, aim to push for the top seven again. The sides drew 0-0 in Girona last season, with Rayo winning the reverse fixture 2-1.

U-17 girls eye SAFF title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-17 women's football team are looking to continue the recent success of senior teams in the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship, which begins in Bhutan on August 20.

In order to acclimatise with the conditions in the Himalayan nation, a 30-member contingent will leave for Thimphu on Friday morning under the guidance of Mahbubur Rahman Litu as head coach Peter Butler was given rest due to his workload in recent past.

The four participating teams — Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal — will face each other twice in the 12-day tournament and the team to top the table will be crowned champions. Bangladesh will begin their campaign against Bhutan on the opening day.

Bangladesh finished behind champions Russia, the lone invitee in the competition's history, in the 2023 SAFF U-17 Women's Championship in Dhaka and emerged champions in the 2024 SAFF U-16 Women's Championship in Nepal.

"Butler gave us some guidelines to follow and the girls will follow the style of the senior side," assistant coach Litu said yesterday.

Erratum

The Daily Star Sports ran a story titled "Bijoy set to get another lifeline" on its print edition of August 14, 2025 as well as on digital edition. We regret to inform that the story should have been about pacer Anamul Haque instead of batter Anamul Haque Bijoy. We regret the mistake and pledge to remain more cautious about such issues in future. The story on our digital edition has been removed.

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SHAH CEMENT

They won't boycott polls

Salahuddin Ahmed says about parties threatening to pull out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday brushed aside any concern about the upcoming national polls amid boycott calls by some political parties.

Asked if he is concerned that Jamaat-e-Islami and other parties may boycott the election, the BNP leader said political parties which are now vocal about boycotting the polls "directly or indirectly are risking their political capital."

"Those saying there will be no election without all their demands met – reforms and justice – are just making street talks," he told reporters at his Gulshan residence.

"I don't think that a new political party and two other parties, who are giving various speeches and statements, will take such a decision to boycott polls," he added.



SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



WALTZING IN THE WETLANDS

A pheasant-tailed jacana, known as 'jol moyur' in Bangla, soars over a tranquil wetland in Chuadanga. Found across South and Southeast Asia, it thrives in shallow freshwater habitats with floating vegetation. In breeding season, its golden nape and elongated tail feathers make it unmistakable, as do its long toes that allow it to walk on lily pads -- a trait that has earned jacanas the nickname "Jesus birds". It feeds on aquatic insects, invertebrates, and seeds. Interestingly, this species has reversed gender roles: females are larger and polyandrous, while males incubate eggs and raise chicks. Listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, its populations are still threatened by wetland degradation.

PHOTO: MONJUR MORSHED

EXTORTION ALLEGATION

Asif Mahmud denies any involvement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A video clip has gone viral in which an expelled Bangladesh Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsaad leader is seen confessing to extorting money from former Awami League MP Shammi Ahmed.

In the video, the leader, Jane Alam Opu, claimed that on the day they took money from the former MP's house in Gulshan, he had met Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain in Gulshan.

However, Asif Mahmud yesterday denied having any involvement.

Police arrested Opu, who was a joint convener of Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsaad, on August 1 from Wari in the city over the extortion allegation.

In the 35-minute video, which surfaced on social media Wednesday night, Opu also said Riyad, a now-expelled leader of the same organisation, was involved in the extortion incident. Riyad has been arrested in the same case.

Speaking to BBC Bangla, Asif said he has known Opu since 2022, when Opu was involved with the Chhatra Odhikar Parishad.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6

'ANTI-STATE' CONTENTS

BTRC moves to punish social media platforms

Tk 300cr fine, jail time proposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BTRC has drafted an ordinance to enable the government to punish social media platforms for activities deemed harmful to national unity, security, and public order.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has included this provision in its draft of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

Under the newly proposed section "66-ka", any person using telecommunication or wireless equipment, or any digital or electronic medium, to transmit signals, messages, calls, or content that is considered anti-national, seditious, or capable of inciting hatred, division, unrest, or fear among the public, or harmful to Bangladesh's sovereignty, defence, foreign relations, public security, public order, rule of law, or economic interests, will be committing an offence.

The penalty would be up to five years in prison, or a fine of up to Tk 300 crore, or both.

The clause also extends liability to any intermediary or social media intermediary that engages in or facilitates such acts.

According to the draft, a "social media intermediary" means an intermediary primarily or solely used for online communication between two or more users and that allows such users to create, upload, respond to, disseminate, or modify user-generated content on the platform.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

ACC sues Joy over sketchy bank account transactions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has found suspicious transactions amounting to Tk 57.5 crore in two bank accounts belonging to Sajeeb Wazed Joy, son of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The anti-graft agency also found that Joy illegally acquired Tk 60.14 crore beyond his known sources of income.

Based on these findings, the ACC has filed a case against Joy, who served as Hasina's ICT adviser.

ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain disclosed this information during a press conference at the ACC headquarters yesterday.

He said between 2000 and 2025, suspicious transactions worth Tk 57.5 crore were recorded in Joy's two accounts at Sonali Bank's Gono Bhaban branch.



SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Israeli forces step up Gaza bombardment

Several districts hit by aerial, tank fire; 23 Palestinians, including 10 aid seekers, killed

AGENCIES

Israeli forces demolished houses in eastern areas of Gaza City yesterday, with aerial and tank fire killing at least 23 people, according to local health authorities, as the Palestinian group Hamas told mediators it was ready to resume ceasefire talks.

Residents and medics said eight people were killed when Israeli tank shelling hit a house in Zeitoun neighbourhood, while a man was killed in an airstrike on a building in the nearby Shejaia suburb. Two other people were killed in tank shelling in Tuffah, a third Gaza City suburb.

Local health authorities said they had received desperate calls from families trapped in the Zeitoun area, including from people saying they were wounded, and that ambulance vehicles could not reach them. "The explosions are almost non-stop in eastern Gaza areas, mainly Zeitoun and Shejaia. The occupation (Israel) is erasing homes there, as we hear from some friends who live nearby," said Ismail, 40, from Gaza City.

"At night, we pray for our safety as the sounds of explosions get louder and closer. We hope Egypt can secure

a ceasefire deal before we are all dead," he told Reuters via a chat app.

More than 22 months into Israel's military offensive in Gaza, residents have also been grappling with a worsening hunger crisis, reports Reuters.

- Gaza ministry records four more hunger-related deaths
- Egypt making latest push for ceasefire talks
- NGOs say new Israeli rules keep them from delivering aid

Four more people died of starvation and malnutrition in the territory in the past 24 hours, Gaza's health ministry said yesterday. That took the total to 239, including 106 children, since the offensive began, it said.

In an effort to avert the planned military escalation, Egypt has been trying to revive a push for a ceasefire in Gaza, hosting a Hamas delegation led by the group's chief negotiator

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

CA's Malaysia tour boosts Dhaka-KL ties

Labour welfare remains sidelined

PORIMOL PALMA

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's visit to Malaysia has opened new areas of cooperation – both bilateral and regional – especially in the efforts to address Myanmar conflicts and Rohingya crisis, as the two countries committed to building a future-oriented strategic partnership.

However, analysts say, labour welfare took a backseat to other priorities, despite the fact that over 1.2 million Bangladeshis work in Malaysia.

NEWS ANALYSIS

In the first state visit by a head of the government since 2014, the two countries signed five MoUs and three Exchange of Notes in the areas of defence, energy, education, investment, diplomatic training, business, research etc.

Malaysia has committed to working with Bangladesh and other ASEAN countries for peace in Myanmar and Rohingya repatriation. Malaysia will coordinate a delegation of ASEAN foreign ministers in the next few weeks for peace and humanitarian aid for the Rohingya and other communities in Myanmar.

This is a significant move provided that Bangladesh faces the burden of sheltering more than 1.2 million Rohingya, and that the foreign aid is declining fast. Moreover, nearly

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Smoke rises following an Israeli strike in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. The Israeli military has approved a framework for a new offensive in the region. PHOTO: REUTERS

JET CRASH

Another teacher of Milestone dies of injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teacher, who suffered critical injuries in the air force jet crash at Milestone School and College in Uttara's Diabari, died yesterday at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, 24 days after the incident.

Mahfuza Khatun, 45, breathed her last around 12:45pm at the intensive care unit, said Shaon Bin Rahman, resident surgeon of the burn institute.

With this, the number of deaths at the institute has risen to 19, while the total death toll stands at 35 as per the health ministry.

Earlier, two teachers – Maherin Chowdhury and Masuka Begum – died after being injured in the jet crash.

At least 23 survivors, mostly children, are still undergoing treatment at the burn institute, while 14 others have been discharged after receiving treatment so far, hospital sources said.

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