



“An entire generation of Afghan women is being sacrificed.”
Unesco chief Audrey Azoulay urges pressure on Taliban over girls’ education ban

The Daily Star

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SHAHJALAL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TERMINAL-3 operations face further delay

RASHIDUL HASAN

The launch of Dhaka airport’s third terminal faces a further delay, as the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) is still negotiating an operation and maintenance agreement – a prerequisite for starting services – with a Japanese consortium.

In April, CAAB deferred the opening of the iconic terminal to the end of this year, which was originally scheduled for October 2024.

Officials involved in the project say that CAAB is likely to miss the revised deadline even though the terminal’s construction is almost complete. It will take one to two months to finalise the agreement and another five to six months for the consortium to recruit and train personnel.

Seeking anonymity, a senior CAAB official said the regulatory body and the Japanese consortium have yet to settle the

revenue-sharing terms for the terminal.

Contacted, CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq said, “The terms and conditions regarding the agreement with the Japanese consortium are yet to be finalised.”

When asked about a possible date for starting the terminal’s operation, he said, “We will be able to say the exact date of launching once the deal is signed.”

The CAAB boss further said it would take around six months for test run of equipment and other preparations after the construction company hands over the terminal to CAAB.

Asked, Air Commodore Abu Sayeed Mehboob Khan, member (operations and planning) of CAAB, could not provide a time frame for signing the agreement.

He, however, said at least a month would be needed to strike the deal.

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AT A GLANCE

Original deadline Oct 2024; revised deadline end of this year

Negotiation with a Japanese consortium for operation and maintenance still ongoing

It will take one to two months to finalise deal with Japanese consortium

5-6 months will be needed for consortium to recruit, train personnel

6,000 personnel needed to operate terminal round-the-clock

Soft launch of Tk 21,300cr project held on Oct 7, 2023



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

LDC GRADUATION Govt prepares for transition amid calls for delay

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The government is pressing ahead with Bangladesh’s planned graduation from the UN’s Least Developed Countries category in November 2026 despite private sector pleas for a six-year delay over fears of losing vital trade benefits.

The interim government is taking preparations to set the stage for the historic economic shift as scheduled, said Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, special assistant to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

“The LDC graduation is a sovereign decision of the country,” he told The Daily Star over the phone, adding that officials have already started consulting with stakeholders in key sectors such as garments, pharmaceuticals, leather and leather goods, and visiting factories to identify challenges.

“Let’s take the preparations,” the special assistant said.

A careful implementation plan must show how extra time would strengthen preparation [for LDC graduation].

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque
Economist and chairman of RAPID

He, however, did not clarify whether the government is considering the option to seek a deferment from the UN, as urged by businesses.

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin said, “My ministry will act according to the government’s final decision on the matter.”

Business leaders, at a roundtable organised by The Daily Star on Tuesday, cited a confluence of pressures, including a nearly 40 percent currency devaluation, higher tariffs in the US, elevated interest rates, and a difficult investment climate, as reasons they are unprepared for the graduation.

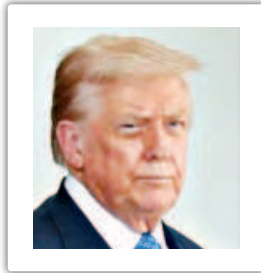
Their primary concern is the loss of preferential trade benefits, particularly duty-free, quota-free access to the European Union.

They warn this could reduce annual exports by up to 14 percent, or about \$7 billion, severely impacting the ready-made garments and footwear sectors, which

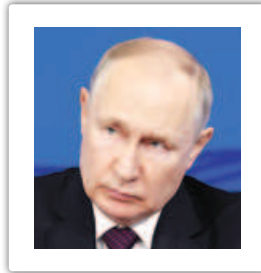
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Trump, Putin in Alaska to end Ukraine war

Kyiv counting on US president as Zelensky not invited



AFP, Moscow



Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin flew to Alaska yesterday for a high-risk summit that promises a stern test of the US president’s promise to end the bloody war in Ukraine.

Both leaders voiced hopes of a productive meeting. However, while Trump warned that he could judge it a failure after just a few minutes if Putin did not budge, the Kremlin stated that the two would speak for at least six or seven hours.

For the Russian president, the summit marks his first foray onto Western soil since he ordered the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, triggering a relentless conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people.

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Police struggle to regain their ‘lost morale’

New leadership, policy measures fail to restore effectiveness

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

One year after the fall of the Awami League government, the police force is still reeling – its morale shattered, its chain of command in tatters.

These phrases were widely used in the early weeks of the new administration formed on August 8 last year. And for a time, they rang true.

The force faced intense public backlash for its role in the violent crackdown, including indiscriminate firing and excessive use of force against protesters. Its members were gripped by a crippling fear, fuelled by arrests of officers accused of killings during the July mass uprising.

Upon assuming office, the interim administration took a raft of measures to restore the force’s morale. It brought in new leadership, raised risk allowances, and rolled out a wave of promotions.

But these steps have done little

to improve the situation. In fact, “lost morale” has become a catch-all explanation for everything from rising crime rates to sluggish emergency responses. Fear of reprisal, the absence of seasoned officers, and a loss of public trust have left many officers hesitant to intervene.

Even the police chief, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Baharul Alam, recently admitted that the force is still underperforming.

Speaking to The Daily Star, several police officers said they are reluctant to engage in violent situations, fearing that they won’t get any support if they come under harm.

They noted that people have increasingly disregarded instructions from police since August last year. Some officers voiced frustration that no visible steps have yet been taken to

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4 of a family found dead in Rajshahi home

Note cites debt, hunger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday recovered the bodies of four members of a family in Bamunshikar village of Rajshahi’s Paba upazila.

In a room, a man was found hanging from a ceiling fan while his son lay dead on the bed. In the adjacent room, his wife and younger daughter were found dead. A two-page note was recovered beside the bodies.

The deceased were Minarul Islam, 35, a farmer, his wife Monira Begum, 28, their son Mahin, 13, and two-year-old daughter, Mithila.

Sayed Ali, chairman of Parila Union Parishad, told The Daily Star that Minarul had been mentally distressed. “He used to gamble. However, due to gambling, he had fallen into debt with some locals.”

His father, Rustom Ali, said his son had some debt in the area, but it was not much. “I sold my land to pay it off. I don’t know if he had taken any new loans without my knowledge.”

Following the incident, Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Abu Sufian visited the spot around 11:00am.

He said initial evidence suggested that Minarul suffocated his wife and children

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Rising waters of the Padma have flooded homes on river islands tucked away deep within its course. As residents pack their belongings onto a boat and head for higher ground, they pass a jujube tree on the verge of submersion -- a marker evident of how high the waters have risen. The photo was taken yesterday in Char Majhardia under Paba upazila of Rajshahi.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Damaged Teesta dyke threatens 1,000 families

River water levels fall in Rangpur, rise in Faridpur

STAR REPORT

A portion of the Second Teesta Road Bridge embankment in Rangpur’s Gangachara upazila has collapsed, threatening over 1,000 families in three nearby villages with the loss of homes and farmland to river erosion.

The 60 metre protection dyke in Mohipur village gave way after being struck by strong hill runoff currents, said Rabiul Islam, executive engineer of Rangpur’s Water Development Board (WDB).

“We are preparing to drop sand-filled geo-bags to stop the erosion,” he said. “Full scale repairs will begin once the water level drops.”

Ponir Uddin, a local farmer, said without urgent repairs, the entire bridge could collapse, causing permanent waterlogging in the village. If the bridge breaks down, road connectivity between Rangpur and Lalmonirhat will be severed.

Local resident Mansur Uddin alleged that the dyke had been damaged during the past two floods but was never repaired. “With monsoon water rising this year, concrete blocks are sinking one after another, forming deep holes that

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Dhaka's love hate relationship WITH RAIN

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

There are thousands of people in Dhaka, each living a different life. But a few things are constant for all. Apart from the unavoidable traffic and the signal at Bijoy Sarani, their love-hate relationship with rain unites most of them.

There are those who say they love rain and identify themselves as pluviophiles, a term I had to look up and now have many questions about. Do they have a club? Do they gather on weekends and soak in the rain and mud together? What do they do in winter? I am curious.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

wishing for rain. "May it rain as hard as it can," I say to no one in particular, staring out the window. Yet this same me was hoping for a dry afternoon this past Friday because I wanted to meet some friends.

Call me whatever you want – a hypocrite, a narcissist, or any other name you can think of – but I know exactly what I am: just a regular Dhaka resident.

While most people enjoy the white noise of continuous rainfall, the cool weather it brings at night, and the tempting feeling of peaceful slumber while tucked under a sheet as it rains

cats and dogs, they also loathe getting wet in office attire. It's bad enough having to get all suited and booted for work; it's unbearable getting drenched in that state. Even worse if you are carrying important documents.

I enjoy the sentiment of khichuri bilash like the next person during these rainy days. In fact, I look forward to mota chaler khichuri with aubergine fry, but I cannot bear the feeling of wet shoes as I struggle to get home. Sometimes I wonder if the opportunity cost of khichuri versus getting soaked in the streets is even fair.

Like any other Dhaka resident, I love waking up to see the drizzling rain and

the fresh air it brings. Fresh air is a rare commodity in this city, after all. But the next moment, I start nursing a temper because it will be a herculean task to get to work. The rickshaw-pullers will become dictators, the CNGs will be as rare as a meteor shower, and buses will become inhospitable.

The idea of stepping into waterlogged roads that might contain hidden holes – and water as dark as the eyeliner of a goth teen – is disgusting. But it's a deed we cannot escape in this city.

Like most people, I love watching the rain from a higher floor because it offers a peaceful landscape that is refreshing and has a natural charm. But my annoyance returns quickly, because the number of umbrellas I have lost in the last three months is unhealthy. It feels like I am in a toxic relationship with my umbrella, and it leaves at the first chance it gets.

What's even more annoying is the mud. It does wash away if it rains heavily, but if it only drizzles, the capital becomes a muddy mess. And it does not help that I am a fast walker. I am no Jackson Pollock, but the back of my trousers often looks like an abstract canvas after a walk on Dhaka streets.

So, if you ask me, or the average Dhaka resident, whether we love or hate rain, the answer will be far from simple.

Let's just say it's complicated and leave it at that.

Yunus sends birthday bouquet to Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday sent a bouquet of flowers to BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, extending warm wishes on her birthday.

"The chief adviser has sent a bouquet for Madam (Khaleda) this afternoon (Friday). His officials delivered it to her residence in Gulshan," said party Standing Committee member Professor AZM Zahid Hossain.

Zahid, who is also Khaleda's personal physician, said the BNP chief herself was not celebrating her birthday.

"She does not host any celebrations herself, but our party is holding milad and doa mahfils across the country," he said.

The bouquet was handed over to Khaleda's private secretary ABM Abdus Sattar at 4:00pm by the chief adviser's private secretary Shazzeb M Khairul Islam and Director of the Chief Adviser's Office Mohammad Nazmul Islam.

BNP Executive Committee member Belayet Hossain, Media Cell member Sayrul Kabir Khan and officers from the chairperson's personal wing, including Masud Rahman, were also present.

Outing turns tragic as child drowns in Tanguar Haor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A family outing ended in tragedy yesterday when a five-year-old boy drowned after falling from a tourist houseboat in Tanguar Haor of Sunamganj's Tahripur upazila.

The victim, Masum Mia, was the only child of Kabir Hossain, who is a resident of Sylhet city.

OC Delwar Hossain of Tahripur Police Station, said a group of 15-16 people travelled from Sylhet earlier in the day and boarded a tourist houseboat.

"While the boat was heading towards the watchtower area in Tanguar Haor, Masum suddenly fell into the water. His father immediately jumped in to rescue him but failed," the OC said. The incident happened around 2:00pm.

A rescue operation was launched soon after the incident. The body was recovered around 5:00pm.

Damaged Teesta

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worsen the erosion," he said.

Nazarul Islam, a schoolteacher from Mohipur, stressed the need for a long-term protection plan. "If the embankment collapses completely, the damage will be irreparable," he warned.

FLOOD FORECAST AND SITUATION
The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) reported that water levels in the Teesta, Dharla, and Dudhkumar rivers may drop over the next 48 hours but could rise again on the third day to warning levels and threaten low-lying areas in Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, and Kurigram.

The Padma River is expected to rise over the next two days, possibly reaching warning levels and flooding riverside areas in Rajbari, Faridpur, Pabna, Manikganj, Shariatpur, Madaripur, Munshiganj, and Dhaka. The Brahmaputra-Jamuna river system may also swell over the next three days, while the Atrai River in Naogaon could cross the danger level within 24 hours.

By 9:00am yesterday, the Teesta water level at the Teesta Barrage point in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha had dropped to 20cm below the danger mark, while the Dudhkumar's level at Pateshwari in Kurigram's Nageshwari fell to 4cm below danger.

"With no rainfall today, water is receding quickly," said Shunil Kumar, executive engineer of Lalmonirhat's WDB. "Since the Brahmaputra is below danger level, the Teesta water is draining into it rapidly, improving the flood situation."

Despite falling river levels, many areas remain inundated. Sekendar Ali from Bagdora village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said roads are still under water. Shamsul Alam from Char Bamondanga in Nageshwari said his family remains displaced on roadsides until water fully recedes.

PADMA SWELLS IN FARIDPUR

Meanwhile, river levels in Faridpur have risen due to upstream inflows and continuous rain, worsening conditions for residents along the Padma, Madhumati, and Arial Khan rivers.

According to Faridpur WDB, the Padma rose by 0.9 metres in the past 24 hours till 7am Friday and is now flowing 8cm above the danger level. The Arial Khan is 109cm above danger, while the Madhumati has also risen, reports UNB.

Flooding has affected 13 unions across four upazilas, disrupting transport and daily life and triggering severe erosion. In Sadar upazila's Dikrichar and North Channel unions, residents are relying on boats for movement.

Md Mostakuzzaman, former chairman of North Channel Union Parishad, said prolonged flooding could cause fodder shortages on the chars.

District WDB executive engineer Md. Rakib Hossain said erosion in several areas has forced authorities to place sand-filled geo-bags at critical points to prevent further damage.

Terminal-3 operations face further delay

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According to CAAB officials, the consortium, comprised of Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz, and Narita International Airport Corporation, will carry out operational activities, while CAAB will oversee security.

Around 6,000 personnel, including 4,000 for security, need to be deployed in four shifts to operate the terminal round-the-clock.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will manage passenger and cargo handling services for two years under the consortium's supervision. Data security will be under CAAB's jurisdiction, they said.

All equipment – from baggage handling systems to explosives detection devices – must be checked before the terminal is put into operation, said Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan, the immediate

past CAAB chairman.

The Japanese consortium will carry out trial runs and CAAB will monitor them, he added.

Business leaders have been calling for the terminal's swift launch – a demand that gained urgency after India abruptly suspended third-country transshipment on April 8, posing significant challenges for Bangladeshi garment exporters.

Air transshipment through India became popular due to faster services and lower costs compared to Dhaka airport. Moreover, inefficiencies and mismanagement in ground handling have long plagued the airport.

CAAB officials believe that exporters' concerns will be largely addressed once the third terminal goes into operation.

On October 7, 2023, the previous government went for a soft launch of the Tk 21,300 crore project, promising

to make it fully operational by the end of 2024.

However, frequent changes in project leadership, delays in receiving some materials from abroad, and last year's political changeover pushed back the deadline.

Of the total project cost, Tk 5,000 crore was provided by the government, and the rest was covered by loans from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The terminal's construction began on December 28, 2019, with a floor space of 230,000 square meters. It houses 115 check-in counters, 66 departure immigration desks, 59 arrival immigration and 3 VIP immigration desks.

Once it becomes fully operational, Dhaka airport's cargo handling capacity will double to 1 million tonnes annually, and its passenger handling capacity will triple to 24 million a year.

Govt prepares for transition amid calls for delay

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together account for nearly 90 percent of exports. Currently, Bangladesh enjoys LDC trade privileges in 38 countries, covering 73 percent of its exports.

Economist Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and member of the UN Committee for Development Policy, said any deferment request must come from the head of government and demonstrate economic damage warranting the delay.

Bhattacharya, however, sounded optimistic about the graduation. "All the numbers are very much in favour of graduation," he said, stressing that the focus should be on ensuring a smooth transition.

He noted that major markets, including the EU, UK, Canada and Australia, have agreed to extend LDC trade benefits by three years after graduation, until 2029, for preparations. The economist urged negotiations with India and China for similar terms.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, also questioned whether deferment is feasible given that Bangladesh already received a three-year extension due to the pandemic.

"You have to build a case with strong arguments," he said, noting Nepal's deferment was granted after a massive earthquake. He also said Bangladesh should not risk its reputation with faulty economic data for building the case in favour of a deferment.

"I think the train has left us. Better let's prepare for a smooth graduation," he said.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network for Economic Modelling (SANEM), believes Bangladesh should take the opportunity if there is a possibility of deferment. In the UN, there is no clear stance whether Bangladesh can defer the graduation or not.

He said Bangladesh's case for deferment would weaken if fellow November 2026 graduates Nepal and Lao PDR do not also seek delays.

Raihan, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, urged coordination with those countries but cautioned that any unsuccessful bid would waste valuable time that could be spent on economic reforms for a smooth transition as per the schedule.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), also thinks Bangladesh should apply for a deferment and work with the UN to find out what needs to be done.

But success will depend on multiple factors, including smart diplomatic engagement in a tense global trade environment, he said.

"A careful implementation plan must show how extra time would strengthen preparation," he said, adding that graduation is under UN purview and cannot be influenced by the WTO.

Despite business concerns, Bangladesh qualified for graduation by meeting all three UN criteria: per capita income, human assets, and the economic vulnerability index.



Family members break down in tears after receiving the bodies of their relatives from police in Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Police struggle to regain

FROM PAGE 1

deliver justice over the killings of at least 44 police personnel during and immediately after the uprising.

Many officers shared that their family members strongly discourage them from engaging in situations that involve high risks.

They said their low morale stems primarily from the absence of superior officials who have been either sacked or are absent from duty.

The current officials – many without experience in leadership roles – are struggling to effectively guide their subordinates, they mentioned.

Seeking anonymity, an officer in charge of a police station in the capital said, "When I ask constables to visit the scenes of incidents, many of them hesitate. This is because police members are occasionally assaulted or verbally abused by locals."

An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) stationed in Dhaka said, "During the tenures of political governments, police always got support from the administration. But that support is no longer available. That's why officers now think twice before making any decision."

Echoing him, another ASI said, "Many officers believe that it is now pragmatic to avoid a conflict situation because if they get into trouble, no one is there to protect them."

EXAMPLES OF POLICE INACTION

Over the last couple of months, several video clips of criminals committing crimes in the presence of law enforcers have gone viral on social media. Police personnel were seen playing the role of mere spectators while the offenders simply walked away after committing crimes.

On August 6, a journalist was assaulted by extortionists in broad daylight in front of a policeman while investigating alleged extortion of auto-rickshaw drivers in Gazipur. The policeman was seen taking no action.

Video footage of the attack went viral a day later, sparking widespread outrage.

Earlier, a video of a machete-wielding man went viral on social media on July 18. He was seen casually walking past an on-duty traffic police after mugging a person near Dhanmondi road 32 the previous night.

Another mugging incident occurred at Malibagh rail gate on June 7, with a police patrol vehicle parked just 30 to 40 yards away.

Yet, no officer responded to the victim's screams. CCTV footage confirms both the attack and the presence of the vehicle that belonged to Shahjahanpur Police Station.

The figure represents a fraction of the police force with a total of 2.13 lakh members.

FIRM ACTION NEEDED

Stressing the need for firm directives to improve law and order, former IGP Nurul Huda said that those taking the law into their own hands should be brought to justice immediately.

He noted that there had been fears of escalation in revenge attacks and counter-violence following the uprising, but that didn't happen.

"Eventually, revenge killings stopped... people didn't resort to counter-violence. That's why I would say the situation is comparatively better," Huda added.

general of police at the PHQ, said, "Police personnel are carrying out their duties with professionalism. Members of the force at all levels are working tirelessly to maintain law and order.

"If police officers are found guilty of not performing duties properly, departmental actions are taken against them... There is no scope for negligence in duty," he told The Daily Star.

CONCERN OVER LAW AND ORDER

Evaluating one year of the interim government, Ain O Salish Kendra recently said Bangladesh continues to witness human rights violations amid a deterioration of law and order.

"Arbitrary arrests continue along with custodial deaths and extrajudicial killings, which are reminiscent of the previous regime's repressive tactics. The deterioration of law and order has left citizens increasingly anxious about their safety," said the rights organisation in a statement on August 7.

The police headquarters' database also indicates a rising trend in crimes.

PHQ statistics show 4,180 murder cases were filed in 11 months from August last year to June this year. Many of these cases, according to the PHQ, were filed between August and December last year over killings during the mass uprising.

Of the 4,180 cases, at least 1,933 were filed from January to June this year, averaging 11 cases per day.

During the same period last year, the number of murder cases was 1,533, meaning eight cases were filed every day, shows PHQ data.

At a press briefing on July 19, IGP Baharul Alam said the police force has yet to fully regain its effectiveness.

"Our main challenge is to make the force one hundred percent effective after such a traumatic experience [last year]... You could say we haven't been one hundred percent successful – perhaps not even fifty percent. We need to find a way, given the scale of what we're facing."

Following the AL government's ouster, at least 50 officers with 25 years of service were sent into forced retirement, while another 23 officers holding ranks of ASP and above were arrested in connection with cases related to the mass uprising.

At least 57 officers – from ASP to additional DIG – have been absent from duty for more than 60 days.

In addition, 119 top and mid-level officers, including DIGs, additional DIGs, and SPs, have been attached to various units without specific responsibilities, meaning their primary duty is limited to attending office and handling paperwork.

The figure represents a fraction of the police force with a total of 2.13 lakh members.



Farmers wash jute fibre in a ditch at a village near Khulna recently. Cultivating jute, the once-renowned cash crop, is no longer a profitable option for farmers. Earnings from it are often lower than those from paddy or even vegetables, claim growers.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

THE FADING FIBRE

Jute cultivation in Khulna declines sharply as prices fall, costs rise

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The Khulna district, once renowned for its thriving jute cultivation, was home to government-owned jute mills that formed the backbone of its economy.

Over the decades, however, these state-run mills shut down one after another, while privately owned mills were pushed to the brink of closure due to mounting losses.

As a result, cultivating jute, the once-renowned cash crop, is no longer a profitable option for farmers. Earnings

jute on more than 300 decimals of land. This year, he planted just one bigha, mainly to produce fibre for household use and improve soil fertility.

"I can easily earn two to three times more by cultivating fish," he said. "It's also less tiresome than jute."

In his village, about 700 farmers once cultivated jute on nearly half their land. This year, only 30-35 farmers did so.

The situation is similar in Pathorighata, Hatbati, Hogol Bunia, Hetalbungia, Mailmara, Surkhali, Boyerbhanga,

The target for 2025-26 has been set at just 1,257 hectares, with an expected yield of only 3,114 tonnes.

RISING COSTS, FALLING PROFITS

Jute cultivation costs farmers Tk 10,000-10,500 per bigha and takes about three months to harvest. After this hard work, a bigha of jute is sold at Tk 12,000-13,000, leaving farmers with little to no

fish farming, which they say offers better returns and less labour.

Labour costs have also surged. Mrinal Bagchi, a farmer from

Khalashibunia in Batiaghata upazila,

said, "Ten years ago, daily wages for agricultural workers were Tk 200-250.

Now we have to spend Tk 800-900 per day."



CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD

Farmers say they are giving up jute cultivation due to a lack of fair prices, a shortage of quality seeds, increased wages, high cultivation costs, water shortages, and what they describe as indifference from the agriculture department.

Rising soil and water salinity, delayed flooding affecting sowing times, scarcity of high land, and heavy clay soil further hinder production. In some years, insufficient water disrupts the retting process, reducing both yield and quality.

Experts said addressing these issues through better water management, salinity control and improved cultivation practices is crucial to reviving the region's jute production.

"Lack of rain is a big challenge for jute farmers," said Mrinal. "Due to insufficient water, we suffer while retting the crop."

He said ten years ago he cultivated five to six bighas of jute, but in recent years, that has dropped to just four kathas.

Besides, farmers have long suffered

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Rising soil and water salinity, delayed flooding affecting sowing times, scarcity of high land, and heavy clay soil further hinder production. In some years, insufficient water disrupts the retting process, reducing both yield and quality.



from it are often lower than those from paddy or even vegetables, claim growers.

Subsequently, interest in farming jute -- known as the "golden fibre" -- has steadily declined, leading to a gradual but persistent fall in production across the region.

The impact of jute's decline is visible in villages across Batiaghata, Dumuria and Rupsha upazilas.

Around 15 years ago, farmer Brihespoti Boiragi of Hogol Bunia village cultivated

Debitala, Bandha, Rongpur, Soluya, Dhanibunia, Hajibunia, Bhulbaria, Noihati, Rupsha and Shihali.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), in 2021-22, jute was cultivated on about 1,493 hectares of land, producing around 17,892 tonnes. The following year, the cultivated area dropped to 1,316 hectares, with production falling to 16,020 tonnes.

profit.

Last year, production costs for each maund of jute ranged from Tk 2,200-2,700, while the selling price was Tk 2,300-3,000. This year, prices have fallen to Tk 2,100-2,200 per maund.

"Why should we take the risk of loss and the continuous burden of loans?" several jute growers asked. Many have switched to paddy, vegetables, or even

Sundarban market still a firetrap

Declared risky years ago, Gulistan market operates without safety measures



DIPAN NANDY

Like most other shopping malls in Dhaka -- a city of over 20 million people -- the Sundarban Square Super Market at Gulistan is a daily hub for thousands of buyers and sellers.

It's not just the people; goods worth crores of taka move in and out of its many floors every day.

Yet, like far too many establishments in this city, the market operates without an effective fire safety system -- disregarding not only the lives of those who work and shop there, but also the products that represent years of investment and sacrifice for traders.

Electrical wires dangle haphazardly, outdated meters sit dangerously in

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Several months ago, Dhaka South City Corporation cleared illegal structures from the banks of Jatrabari's 3km-long Kajla Canal. However, the encroachers have returned, building over 100 wooden bridges and shops across the waterbody. The area is once again crowded, and the canal is being polluted. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Dengue cases rise sharply outside Dhaka

Asian tiger mosquito emerging as a secondary vector in rural areas

HELEMUL ALAM

The number of dengue patients outside Dhaka has risen sharply this year, with many cases believed to be locally transmitted, a development health experts say is a serious concern.

While the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito has long been identified as the principal dengue carrier, experts suspect another species, *Aedes albopictus*, is contributing to the spread in rural and semi-urban areas as an epidemic mosquito vector.

Principal vector means the main mosquito species responsible for transmitting the dengue virus in a region, while species that normally play a minor role but can contribute to transmission, especially during severe outbreaks or under certain ecological conditions, are referred to as epidemic vectors.

When the surge becomes severe, epidemic mosquito vectors can become active alongside principal ones. While *Aedes aegypti* remains the principal dengue carrier, *Aedes albopictus* is emerging as a significant epidemic vector, particularly in rural areas.

A joint survey by the CDC, Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and IEDCR, conducted between December 2024 and March 2025 in seven districts, found a significant presence of *Aedes albopictus* outside Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF BANGABANDHU

Dhanmondi-32 sees sporadic incidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid heavy deployment of law enforcers, a group of people, including BNP activists, have been in control of Dhanmondi-32 since Thursday evening, blocking those they suspected had come to pay tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his 50th death anniversary.

The people, many of whom gathered under the banner of Chhatra-Janata (students and public), stopped pedestrians and commuters and questioned them whenever they suspected anyone.

Throughout yesterday, they assaulted several people, while others were forced to leave the area immediately. Police picked up at least two individuals to ensure their safety and later released them, witnesses and police said.

The number of visitors at the site this year was much lower than last year's August 15, which came just 10 days after the July uprising, which ousted the former prime minister and Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina.

Around 9:45am yesterday, a woman went to lay flowers at the demolished house of Bangabandhu, but the police sent her back.

The woman, who introduced herself as an

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

JCD leader arrested over extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Moulvibazar

A local leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and his associate have been arrested by joint forces for allegedly extorting Tk 90,000 from a man in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj.

Jamil Chowdhury, member secretary of Madhabpur upazila unit of JCD, along with his associate, identified as Monayem Khan, a Chhatra Dal activist, were handed over to Madhabpur police early yesterday.

According to police, the two allegedly held up a man named Arup Chowdhury in Kalikapur village under Baghasura union and demanded Tk 1.5 lakh.

Acting on a tip-off, a joint forces team raided the area around midnight and caught the suspects with Tk 90,000 in cash, believed to be part of the extortion money.

Three other individuals – Panel Mia, Md Rokan, and Nirjon Mia – reportedly

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8



An artist paints pots ahead of the upcoming Manasa Puja, to be observed tomorrow. The pots are sold wholesale for Tk 80-100, depending on their size. The photo was taken at Himanandakathi village in Jhalakathi yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Show cause notice sent to former BNP MP

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Cumilla

Cumilla division unit of the BNP issued a show cause notice to former MP and member of the district south unit, Abdul Gafur Bhuiyan, yesterday.

The notice, signed by Md Selim Bhuiyan, organising secretary of Cumilla division unit of the BNP, said, “Recently, a statement you made regarding the Cumilla Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education and the deputy commissioner has gone viral on social media. Furthermore, on August 11 and 12, according to reports published in national media, several union-level conferences of BNP’s Nangolkot upazila unit were held in different educational institutions while keeping those institutions closed. In this regard, you are hereby instructed to submit your written explanation to the issuer of this notice within the next three working days.”

Rainfall causes Tk 133.43cr loss in Jashore fisheries

MOHSIN MILON, Benapole

Continuous rainfall this year has caused losses of Tk 133.43 crore in Jashore’s fisheries sector, according to the district fisheries office.

Officials said downpours inundated fish enclosures, ponds, and wetlands, resulting in unprecedented damage.

Fish farmers said the scale of losses has broken records over the past four decades, raising fears of a production shortfall in the district compared with demand. They urged the government to provide assistance to recover from the massive financial blow.

The district fisheries office reported that 6,219 fish farms across eight upazilas have been affected. Of them, 3,127 are in Sadar upazila, 340 in Abhaynagar, 360 in Jhikargachha, 540 in Monirampur, 260 in Keshabpur, 1,032 in Sharsha, and 560 in Chowgachha and Bagharpara.

A total of 5,408 farmers has been affected – 2,893 in Sadar, 315 in Abhaynagar, 360 in Jhikargachha, 510 in Monirampur, 190 in Keshabpur, 760 in Sharsha, 160 in Chowgachha, and 220 in Bagharpara. The total affected area amounts to 4,781 hectares.

Officials said the downpours washed away 5,341 tonnes of fish and 83 million fingerlings, causing losses of Tk 104.48 crore in fish and Tk 28.95 crore in fingerlings.

Firoz Khan, owner of Firoz Fish Hatchery, said such damage has not been seen in the district’s fisheries sector in the last four decades.

“This is the first time we have faced such

heavy rainfall. The extent of damage has gone beyond our expectations. If this continues for a few more years, farmers will stop fish farming altogether,” he said.

Jashore District Fish Farmers’ Association President Zahidur Goldar said, “On one hand, we are facing soaring feed prices, and on the other, extreme weather events – heavy rains

Muhammad Rafiqul Alam said this year’s Tk 133.43 crore loss is the highest in recent years.

“We have applied to higher authorities for incentives for farmers, but we are yet to receive any response. A decision to reduce the electricity rate [for hatchery] has, however, been made,” he said.

He added that in the 2023-24 fiscal year,



and severe droughts – are taking a heavy toll on farmers. At one time, the electricity rate for agriculture was 2.45 taka per unit, but now we have to pay 15 to 20 taka per unit.”

He stressed that government assistance is essential to help farmers recover from this year’s losses.

District Fisheries Officer Sarker

Jashore produced a total of 2.45 lakh tonnes of fish against a local demand of around 65,000 tonnes.

“As a result, the district had a surplus of more than 1.80 lakh tonnes, which was supplied to different parts of the country. But this year, that will no longer be possible,” he said.



NANDAIL UPAZILA IN M’SINGH

Poor drainage leaves health centre isolated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A sub-health centre in Mymensingh’s Nandail upazila has been struggling to operate for years due to chronic waterlogging.

There are several ponds surrounding the Moazzempur Union Sub-Health Centre, including a silted and abandoned one belonging to the facility, which remains filled with stagnant water. In the ongoing rains, the pond has overflowed, flooding the entrance and making access nearly impossible for both patients and staffers.

Covered with hyacinth and weeds, the pond has also become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other harmful insects, alleged locals.

Other nearby ponds, dug by individuals for fish farming, have blocked the natural drainage of rainwater from the centre’s premises. Established in 1992, the centre serves thousands of people in the area.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Abbas seeks justice over Khaleda’s ‘mistreatment’

BSS, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas has demanded justice for those responsible for the mistreatment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia during her imprisonment.

Speaking at a prayer ceremony on the occasion of her 81st birthday, Abbas criticised the conditions Khaleda Zia faced while in jail, including what he described as “inhumane treatment” and the denial of proper medical care.

The event was organised by the BNP at its Nayapaltan office in the city, attended by several BNP leaders, activists and supporters.

Abbas said the former prime minister’s health

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Throat-slit body of missing man recovered

A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Police recovered the throat-slit body of a man from the Meghna river in Bhairab yesterday afternoon, five days after he went missing from Bajitpur upazila in Kishoreganj.

Rakib Mia, 27, was from Koilag village in Bajitpur.

According to his brother Riaz Mia, Rakib had been missing after he left home on August 10 for Kukrai village. A GD was filed with Bajitpur Police Station on Thursday.

OC Rasheduzzaman of Bhairab River Police Station, said locals spotted the body floating in the Meghna near the Tukhanpur area. The body was sent to a hospital morgue for an autopsy.

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NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO: 1258 OF 2025

Nayna Rahman Jourder

—Petitioner

—VERSUS—

Gtech Infrastructure Ltd. and another

—Respondents

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that we on behalf of Nayna Rahman Jourder the of Gtech Infrastructure Ltd. as petitioner filed an application under section 81(2) and 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994 for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting in the Company Bench of the Hon’ble High Court Division of 22nd July, 2025; AND Upon hearing the learned Advocate for the petitioner, the Hon’ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Soheli has been pleased to admit the application and issue notices upon the Respondents. Any person interested in taking part in this matter may do so either personally or by appointing an Advocate. A copy of the application may be obtained from our office.

Mr. Md. Ismail Hossain Bar-at-Law, Advocate.

Supreme Court of Bangladesh

SCBA Building Room No 5038 (H.S.S.B), Cell: 01721-465738.

STATUTORY NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
Company Matter No. 1120 of 2025
An Application under Section-81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.

AND

IN THE MATTER OF:

Shaonti Haider and another

—Petitioners.

—VERSUS—

The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms

—Respondent.

Take Notice that an application under Section-81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon’ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioners for condonation of delay in holding the Annual General Meetings of Vigarunissa Alumni Association for the years 2016-2024 and relieving the Directors and officers of the Company from the liability of fine or penalty. Upon hearing of the application on 23/07/2025 Hon’ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Soheli has been pleased to admit the said application and directed publication of this notice and file affidavit-in-compliance on or before 27/08/2025. If any body is interested to oppose the said application he may appear before the Hon’ble High Court Division either in person or through an Advocate. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Md. Abdullah Al Shaikh

Barrister-at-Law

Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Room No. 704, Annex Extension Building

Supreme Court Bar Association. Mobile: 01711084455

STATUTORY NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH HIGH COURT DIVISION, DHAKA, (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1362 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under section 81(2) read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994, Mr. Shaiful Islam Khan

—Petitioner,

AND

VERSUS

The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) and another.

—Respondents.

Notice is hereby given in the effect that an application under section 81(2) read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994, was moved before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh by the petitioner for condoning the delay of holding the Annual General Meeting for the years 2022 and 2023 of the company namely “Shaptak (IT) Limited” The Hon’ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Soheli has admitted the said application on 31.07.2025 and Hon’ble Court directed the petitioner to publish notices within 03 (Three) weeks and to submit affidavit in compliance within 2nd September, 2025 from publishing the said notices. Any person interested in the said application may appear before the Hon’ble Court. A copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of charges.

Mohammad Jamil Khan,

Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Hall Room No. 02 (Main),

Supreme Court Bar Association Bhaban, Shahbagh, Dhaka-1000.

Mobile: +88-01911809525.

Dengue cases rise sharply outside Dhaka

FROM PAGE 3

Aedes albopictus – commonly known as the Asian tiger mosquito – is a small, dark insect with a white dorsal stripe and banded legs. It can transmit the dengue virus and breeds in both man-made and natural containers, such as water tanks, discarded tyres, tree holes, and bamboo stumps. Unlike Aedes aegypti, albopictus thrives in vegetated and forested areas as well as in urban settings.

According to DGHS, total dengue cases this year have reached 25,710, with 104 deaths so far. Barishal Division has recorded

the highest number of hospitalisations (8,997), followed by Chattogram (3,700) and Khulna (1,365).

The survey covered areas in Khulna, Chattogram, Barishal, Faridpur, and Barguna.

According to the report, among Aedes mosquitoes, albopictus accounted for 55.04% in Khulna, 76.4% in Chattogram city corporation areas, 8.2% in Barishal city corporation areas, 93.9% in Jashore municipality areas, 83.8% in Faridpur municipality areas, and 4.5% in Barguna municipality areas.

In Dhaka, pre-monsoon surveys over the last six years

found Aedes albopictus rates of 3.25% in 2025, 1.35% in 2024, 3.98% in 2023, 0.2% in 2022, 0.01% in 2021, and 1.81% in 2020.

EPIDEMIC VECTOR CONCERNS

An official from DGHS said albopictus prevalence is higher in rural areas. “We need to identify these hotspots and apply insecticide to kill both adult mosquitoes and larvae,” he said.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, warned that if albopictus has become a dengue vector in rural areas, containment will be more challenging, as different control strategies are needed.

He urged local administrations, led by deputy commissioners, to take proactive measures and provide targeted training.

A government entomologist, speaking anonymously, said high-incidence areas require at least a month-long intensive campaign to eliminate adult mosquitoes and breeding sites, with strong community participation.

He also recommended using Bti (Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis), a naturally occurring bacterium that kills

mosquito larvae, blackflies, and fungus gnats.

SHIFTING MOSQUITO DYNAMICS

Albopictus, once considered a “village mosquito,” is now being found in cities. In Barishal and Khulna, where Aedes aegypti once dominated, albopictus is now more common.

Its ability to breed in a wide range of natural and man-made containers – from tree holes to discarded plastics – makes control harder, said the government entomologist.

Towhid Uddin Ahmed, principal scientific officer (retired) at the Department of Entomology, IEDCR, said rural cases may also be linked to infected patients travelling from Dhaka. In Dinajpur last year, 49 out of 50 dengue patients he surveyed were infected in Dhaka.

He added that while immunity from last year’s dengue strain is reducing infections in Dhaka, many outside the capital remain vulnerable.

Towhid warned that controlling albopictus in rural areas with abundant trees and bushes will be difficult. “Given the current surge, authorities should prioritise adulticide spraying to kill adult mosquitoes,” he said.

Dhanmondi-32

FROM PAGE 3

Awami League activist, got into an altercation with the police. “Bangabandhu was killed on this day, and this is his house. I will lay flowers here. I am asking for your help,” she told officers.

The on-duty police officials said the site was closed for security reasons.

A rickshaw puller, Azizur Rahman, was assaulted while visiting Dhanmondi-32 to pay tribute.

“I am an ordinary person of the country, not linked to any political party. I came here to pay tribute,” he said, shouting, while he was surrounded by the people who had taken over the area.

One of them snatched the bouquet and tore it apart. The bouquet carried a sticker inscribed with “National Mourning Day, August 15”, along with details of the rickshaw puller. Some in the crowd also punched him before police arrived and took him away in a car.

In another incident, when a 43-year-old man, along with a woman, arrived at Dhanmondi 32 to visit the museum, the group shouted, “Beat them! Beat them!”

They exchanged heated words with the visitors and asked them to leave the place. The two visitors later went away on a rickshaw when many were calling them aides of Sheikh Hasina.

Rezaul Karim, who came from the Gausia area in Narayanganj, said he came to Dhanmondi to see the condition of Bangabandhu’s house. “Witnessing the situation, I thought it was better to stay silent,” he said while talking to this correspondent yards away.

Zisanul Haque, additional deputy commissioner of Dhanmondi Zone, said they are not allowing anyone inside the site on security grounds, as the building is vulnerable.

Kya Swee Nue Marma, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station, said the protesters handed over three individuals on Thursday night, who were later released on bond.

Yesterday, police rescued several people from the unrest caused by the group and later let them go, he said.

No one was beaten in front of police, he added.

On Thursday evening, members of BNP and Chhatra Dal occupied the area and chanted slogans against the Awami League and the banned Chhatra League.

On that night, BNP men assaulted a leader of Chhatra Shibir’s Dhaka College unit, creating a tense situation. Shibir leaders later intervened, and both sides reached an understanding, referring to the earlier incident as a “misunderstanding”.

INDIAN KASHMIR
Rescuers scour debris after 60 killed in flood

AFP, Kishtwar

Indian rescuers yesterday pulled bodies from mud and rubble after the latest deadly flood to crash through a Himalayan village killed at least 60 people and washed away dozens more.

Torrents of water and mud driven by intense rain tore through Chisoti village in Indian-administered Kashmir on Thursday, leaving dozens missing, including Hindu pilgrims who were visiting a shrine. It is the second major deadly flooding disaster in India this month.

Officials said a large makeshift kitchen in Chisoti, where more than 100 pilgrims were, was completely washed away by what Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reported was a sudden "cloudburst" rain storm.



Arun Shah, 35, had just completed his pilgrimage with his family when the flood struck. "It was horrifying", he told AFP, speaking by telephone from a hospital in Kishtwar district, where Chisoti is located.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization said last year that increasingly intense floods and droughts are a "distress signal" of what is to come as climate change makes the planet's water cycle ever more unpredictable.

Roads had already been damaged by days of heavy storms in Kishtwar district. The area lies more than 200 kilometres (125 miles) by road from the region's main city Srinagar.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the spate of disasters in his Independence Day speech in New Delhi on Friday.

"In the past few days, we have been facing natural disasters, landslides, cloudbursts, and many other calamities," he said. "Our sympathies are with the affected people. State governments and the central government are working together with full strength."

Situation in Myanmar 'getting worse day by day'

Villagers in Rakhine state scavenge for food as hunger bites

AFP, Mrauk U

People in western Myanmar have been driven to scavenging for bamboo shoots, as humanitarian workers warn a wartime blockade and aid cutbacks led by Washington have caused hunger cases to surge.

"Another day has gone, and I have to struggle again for another day," fruit vendor Kyaw Win Shein told AFP in the town of Mrauk U in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

"It is getting worse day by day," the 60-year-old, whose business is faltering as prices rise and incomes drop -- a grim equation driving others to scour the countryside for sustenance.

Rakhine state -- a riverine slice of coastal Myanmar bordering Bangladesh -- has witnessed intense suffering in Myanmar's civil war, triggered by a 2021 coup deposing the democratic government.

As the military fights an ethnic armed group, it has blockaded the territory -- throttling supplies to its estimated population of 2.5 million.

The impoverished state has long been a focus of international aid organisations, but worldwide cutbacks spearheaded by US President Donald Trump's "America First" freeze on humanitarian funding have forced them to retreat.

The World Food Programme (WFP) -- which received nearly half its 2024 donations from the United States -- warned last week that 57 percent of families in central Rakhine are now unable to meet basic food needs. The figure had risen from just 33 percent in December.

"A deadly combination of conflict,

blockades, and funding cuts is driving a dramatic rise in hunger and malnutrition," the WFP said.

In northern Rakhine areas such as Mrauk U -- where conflict complicates data collection -- WFP warned the situation is "much worse".

Residents said fertiliser is scarce, reducing crop yields and making produce unaffordable, driving people to desperate measures in a tightening spiral of misery.

"I am not the only one who has difficulties," said fruit vendor Kyaw Win Shein. "Everyone is the same."

The village of Ponnagyun is a short distance from the state capital Sittwe, at the mouth of a delta opening onto the Bay of Bengal. Rakhine cuisine is famed for its fresh, simply cooked seafood, and fish is still on sale in markets. But people have no cash to buy it.

"People are starving in my village," said one resident who runs a Ponnagyun payphone shop, but asked to remain anonymous for security reasons. "People find and eat bamboo shoots mostly," he said. "People can eat it, but it's not nutritious."

He said only two aid handouts reached their community in the past year. The conflict blockade is so effective that currency notes are not leaving the state to be replaced with new ones for circulation, and instead are left crumbling from wear and tear in the pockets of customers and vendors.

"The commodity prices are really high," said 64-year-old Mrauk U resident Hla Paw Tun. Rakhine has long been wracked by civil conflict -- the site of alleged military atrocities against the resident Rohingya minority around 2017, which some countries have deemed a genocide.

US capital sues Trump govt over cop takeover

AFP, Washington

The attorney general for the US capital Washington has sued Donald Trump's administration over what he called a "hostile takeover" of the city's police force, which the Republican president said was necessary to fight violent crime.

Earlier this week, Trump placed the capital's Metropolitan Police under federal government control while also sending the National Guard onto the city's streets. Then Attorney General Pam Bondi issued an order to install a hand-picked official as temporary police commissioner.

Federal law governing the capital "does not authorize this brazen usurpation of the District's authority over its own government," Attorney General Brian Schwab wrote in a filing lodged in federal court.

Schwab has asked for an immediate stay on Bondi's order.

The government's actions "go well beyond the bounds of the President's limited authority and instead seek a hostile takeover of MPD," Schwab said in a statement on social media.

"This is an affront to the dignity and autonomy of the 700,000 Americans who call DC home," Schwab added.

Ukraine targets Russian oil refinery, apartment block

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian drones hit a Russian oil refinery and an apartment block in an overnight attack just hours before US President Donald Trump hosts his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin for a high-stakes summit in Alaska.

Kyiv has targeted Russia's oil depots and refineries in long-range drone attacks in what it calls retaliatory strikes for Moscow's nightly barrages of Ukrainian cities and its energy grid.

The Ukrainian military said yesterday it hit a large oil refinery in the central Russian city of Syzran, some 800 kilometres (500 miles) behind the front line.

"The Syzran oil refinery in the Samara region of Russia, one of the largest in the Rosneft system, was hit," Ukraine's general staff said, referring to the network of facilities owned by Russian state-run energy giant Rosneft.

It said the facility produced aviation fuel and supplied the Russian army.

Unverified images on social media showed multiple fires and grey smoke billowing from the site at dawn yesterday.

A separate Ukrainian drone strike on an apartment block in the Russian border region of Kursk killed one person and wounded 10 others, local Russian officials said.

"Unfortunately, a 45-year-old woman died on the spot," Governor Alexander Khinshtein said in a video on Telegram, standing in front of a blown-out window.

Russian attacks also continued, with Ukrainian officials in the frontline Kharkiv and Donetsk regions reporting six civilians killed in strikes over the last 24 hours.

Ukraine has previously vowed to step-up its long-range strikes against Russia as Moscow launched record numbers of missiles and drones at Ukraine in June and July.

Russia's army said Ukraine fired 53 drones overnight, while Ukraine's air force said Moscow launched 97.



Veggie prices

FROM PAGE 12

why the government has been unable to control the kitchen markets.

During visits to kitchen markets in Shewrapara, Kazipara, Mirpur 11, Ibrahimpur, Sukrabad, Farmgate, and Karwan Bazar, this newspaper found most vegetables selling for Tk 80-100 per kg, with prices varying based on quality.

Omar Faruk, a vegetable seller at Sukrabad kitchen market, said traders are having to buy vegetables at higher prices from wholesale markets.

"But customers don't understand that, and they get angry when I tell them the prices," he said.

Earlier, he used to buy at least 10 kilos of each vegetable, but now he buys only five. "Even then, I can't sell them all."

He said he has stopped selling round eggplants altogether because of their skyrocketing price.

Wholesalers claimed that prices have surged over the past 15 days due to crop damage caused by excessive rains, which reduced supply in wholesale markets.

Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Sujon, general secretary of the Karwan Bazar Brihattar Paikari Kacha Bazar Arot Byabasayi Malik Samity, said, "The rain during the peak season damaged vegetables, lowering supply and driving up prices."

Locally produced onions are now selling for Tk 80-90 per kg, up from Tk 50-60 last month.

Although the ongoing monsoon is considered peak season for hilsa, prices of the popular fish remain high in the capital's markets.

Yesterday, hilsa weighing between 600 grammes and one kilogramme per piece was selling for Tk 1,400 to Tk 2,300 per kg.

Various naturally grown wetland fish, including spiny eels, flatheads, and shrimps, were priced at Tk 800 to Tk 1,200 per kg.

Farm-produced eggs are selling for Tk 135 to Tk 150 per dozen, up from Tk 135-140 a week ago.

Farm-grown Sonali chicken is selling for Tk 320 to Tk 350 per kg, while broiler chicken remains stable at Tk 160-170 per kg compared with last week.

Janmashtami today

FROM PAGE 12

members of the Hindu community on the occasion of Janmashtami.

The day of Janmashtami is a public holiday in Bangladesh.

Temples, religious organisations, and various institutions have drawn up elaborate programmes to mark the occasion.

National dailies will publish special articles, while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, and private TV and radio stations will air special programmes highlighting different aspects of the life and philosophy of Lord Sri Krishna.

Mahanagar Sarbajanin

Puja Committee has decided to observe the occasion centrally at Dhakeshwari National Temple.

The programmes include Geeta Joggo at 8:00am at Dhakeshwari temple. A Janmashtami procession will be brought out at 3:00pm from city's Palashi intersection.

The Geeta Joggo at the Dhakeshwari National Temple premises will be conducted by Shankar Math and Mission from Sitakunda, Chattogram.

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman will inaugurate the Janmashtami procession, which will also be attended

by Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan and Bangladesh Army 9th Infantry Division GOC Major General Md Moin Khan, among others.

Parading through the streets in front of Jagannath Hall, Shaheed Minar, Doyel Chattar, High Court intersection, Banga Bazar and Golapshah Majar, the procession will come to an end at Bahadur Shah Park.

On August 19, a discussion will be held on Janmashtami at the Dhakeshwari National Temple.

Primary and Mass Education Adviser

Professor Dr Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar will attend the function as the chief guest.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) took a four-day programme from August 14 at Swamibagh Asram in the capital to mark the festival.

The programme includes recitation from Srimad Bhagavad Geeta, performance of devotional songs, voga arati, distribution of mahaprashad, discussion, and a cultural function.

The festival will also be celebrated in temples across the country with different programmes.

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Amid the Sada Pathor outcry

FROM PAGE 12

Despite sporadic efforts by the local administration, the looting continued. Locals say the illegal activities intensify at night.

A local from Jum Par said, "Workers dig at night. By morning, piles of stones lie ready for trucks, and sand is taken from the river by boat."

After ravaging most areas near the tourist attractions of Jafong, the looters recently eyed the Zero Point area and started looting stones from there.

Locals say increased administrative vigilance following criticism over Sada Pathor limited the damage there.

Looting in Jafong extends beyond riverbanks to schools, temples, tea estates, and homes. This correspondent witnessed encroachment on Ballapunji Government Primary School, Balibari Temple, Jafong Tea Estate, and several local homesteads on Friday.

During the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown, the government cancelled all Sylhet quarry leases. Stone lifting surged after the High

Court overturned the order on January 13 this year. In response, the government suspended leases for 17 of the country's 51 quarries on April 27.

"No leases will be given for quarries that are under court injunctions or located within declared Ecologically Critical Areas (ECA)," the government said at that time.

However, the illegal activities didn't stop.

To see the situation on the ground, on June 14, Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan and Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan visited Jafong, but hundreds of locals blocked their motorcade, demanding that the suspension order be withdrawn. A Jubo Dal leader was suspended for leading the protests.

The Sylhet district administration also initiated a massive drive against stone crushers. It also strengthened oversight to stop stone transportation from different sites. During the drive, the administration disconnected power to over 155 stone crusher mills.

Transport owners

retaliated with repeated strikes, supported by leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, NCP, and Islami Andolon. After meetings between officials, transport owners, traders, and political leaders, the drives were halted last month.

"I see an all-party consensus when it comes to stone extraction," Rizwana said Monday. "For the past four years I was able to halt extraction in Jafong, but now, even as an adviser, I'm unable to do so."

Advocate Saheda Akther, divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), said, "Jafong is different from Sada Pathor as this is a designated Ecologically Critical Area. The administration's failure to protect Jafong not only violates environmental laws, but also amounts to contempt of court."

"Now, we are seeing the administration is recovering the looted stones. This shows they knew the looters but took no action. Unless those responsible are held accountable, the situation

will not improve," she said.

Muhammad Sher Mahub Murad, deputy commissioner of Sylhet, said the situation is under control. "We stopped looting at Zero Point and are restoring looted stones," he said.

"We have no estimation of looted stones, but we will be evaluating with the help of experts. Besides, a probe body is investigating the matter and will submit recommendations for necessary actions," he said.

Abdul Karim Kim, member secretary of Dhoriy Rokkhaiy Amra (DHORA) Sylhet chapter, said stone extraction never stopped even during the four-year ban period.

"When stone looting at Sada Pathor sparked nationwide criticisms, the looters continued extracting stone from the Zero Point of Jafong. This proves how inactive the administration was," he said.

He alleges that stones are still being extracted from the Sreepur and Rangpani areas in Jaintiapur upazila, where the administration has yet to take necessary action.

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Nearly 200 killed in Pakistan flash floods

FROM PAGE 12

a mud-soaked hill, AFP photos showed.

Funeral prayers began in a paddock nearby, with people grieving in front of several bodies covered by blankets.

"I heard a loud noise as if

the mountain was sliding. I rushed outside and saw the entire area shaking, like it was the end of the world," Azizullah, a resident of Buner district, where there have been dozens of deaths and injuries, told AFP.

"I thought it was doomsday," he said.

"The ground was trembling due to the force of the water, and it felt like death was staring me in the face," said Azizullah who, like many in the region,

uses only one name.

The meteorological department has issued a heavy rain alert for Pakistan's northwest, urging people to avoid "unnecessary exposure to vulnerable areas".

Probe past corrupt recruitment practices

CA’s KL visit should have prioritised migrant workers’ plight

The chief adviser's recent Kuala Lumpur visit, while offering some hope regarding the Rohingya crisis, fell short in addressing the plight of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia exploited by recruiting syndicates operating in both countries. Although the chief adviser told a Malaysian news agency that the two nations had agreed to establish a more transparent recruitment system, he failed to mention accountability for those responsible for past cases of exploitation. Instead, he mentioned discussion about proceeding to “clean up” the current recruitment system in a way that would not be a “trouble for the Malaysian government.”

This raises concerns about whether future recruitment can truly be transparent without holding accountable those who defrauded nearly five lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers. Between August 2022 and May 2024, around 480,000 Bangladeshis migrated to Malaysia through 101 agencies selected by the Malaysian authorities. Reports suggest these workers paid five to six times more than the Tk 78,990 agreed upon in a 2021 MoU between Bangladesh and Malaysia. Despite such excessive payments, many remain undocumented, unemployed, unpaid or underpaid, according to rights bodies.

The UN expressed concern last year noting the existence of criminal networks involved in recruitment fraud and alleging complicity or negligence at high levels of both the governments. Yet, Bangladesh's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) recently cleared the former expatriates' welfare minister, a former secretary, several former MPs, and the 101 agencies of charges related to human trafficking and money laundering. The CID submitted its final report to a Dhaka court on July 15, citing lack of evidence. Earlier on April 23, Malaysia requested Bangladesh to withdraw “unsubstantiated allegations” of corruption in the migration process. In March, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) had filed cases against 12 recruiting agency owners, including the former MPs cleared by the CID.

In this context, the chief adviser's remarks and the absence of any labour welfare-related agreements among the eight deals signed during the visit are disappointing. While we welcome the promise that Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia will receive the same social benefits as Malaysian workers, regularising undocumented workers and ensuring accountability for past abuse must also be prioritised. The Bangladesh government must press Malaysia to cooperate in the investigation of recruitment syndicates. Also, the ACC's findings should be made public. The interim government enjoys strong support from Bangladeshi migrant workers and has taken several steps to promote their dignity and rights. Hence, we expect a stronger stance from the government on the urgent need for justice for exploited workers. Sending workers abroad for remittance should not be our only priority; their protection, dignity, and justice must come first.

Food insecurity still haunts the poor

Govt must tame inflation, expand safety nets

We are deeply concerned that persistent inflation, rising unemployment, and inadequate government support continue to push people towards poverty, despite the economy showing some signs of recovery of late. Reportedly, every day, people from poor and low-income groups are seen lining up in front of TCB trucks early in the morning to buy basic items like rice, lentils, and cooking oil, which are sold at slightly cheaper prices than in regular markets. But many go home empty-handed because supplies run out quickly. To deal with the rising prices of food and other essentials, some have reportedly reduced their food quality, and even given up medical treatment and children's education.

Talking to individuals from poor, low, and middle-income groups, our reporters found that people from these socioeconomic backgrounds are struggling to meet their basic needs with their current income. For instance, rickshaw puller Masud Rana, with his monthly income of Tk 12,000, can now afford to have some cheap fish in his meals only twice a week, whereas just a year ago he could afford fish five days a week. Samiul Islam, a private sector employee in Dhaka who represents many in the middle-income bracket, finds himself borrowing at the end of each month despite cutting all non-essential expenses. Power loom worker Omar Faruk and garment employee Darul Huda reported rising living costs and an inability to save, even while working full-time. These accounts reflect the widespread impact of inflation and economic strain across various income groups in the country and a deepening crisis of poverty and food insecurity.

The Global Report on Food Crises 2025 ranks Bangladesh fourth globally in terms of people suffering from severe food insecurity. This long-standing challenge is now compounded by rising inflation, stagnant wages, and a still slow economy. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, in July, the overall inflation rose to 8.55 percent and food inflation climbed to 7.56 percent, while real wages continued to fall for the 42 consecutive months, meaning incomes are not keeping pace with the rising costs.

To address this crisis, the government must prioritise policies that curb inflation and stimulate job creation. Expanding social safety nets, investing in agriculture and small enterprises, and ensuring fair wage growth are essential steps. Without urgent action, food insecurity and poverty may get worse in the country.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Usain Bolt sets 100-metre dash world record

On this day in 2009, Jamaica's Usain Bolt, then 22 years old, already the fastest man in the world, shattered his own world record in the 100-metre dash, winning the event in 9.58 seconds.



How inflation control correlates with economic growth



Dr Sadiq Ahmed is vice chairman at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI). He can be reached at sadiqahmed1952@gmail.com.

SADIQ AHMED

Bangladesh is navigating through a turbulent macroeconomic landscape characterised by falling GDP growth and a stubborn high rate of inflation. The government has rightly targeted inflation control as one of its primary macroeconomic goals. Apart from its adverse consequences for investment climate and long-term growth, high inflation has huge social costs that hurts the low-income and poor sections of the population.

One of the major policy instruments used by the government to control inflation has been the interest rate policy. Following a long period of regulated interest rates, in a series of steps since December 2023, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has lifted the limit; presently, the interest rate is market determined. BB influences interest rates through its policy rate and monetary aggregates. The current monetary policy stance is to raise the interest rate to curb the growth of domestic credit with a view to lowering aggregate demand, thereby lowering inflation. The policy rate climbed from 6.5 percent in September 2023 to 8.5 percent in May 2024 and subsequently to 10 percent in December 2024. It has remained unchanged since then. The average lending rate climbed from a low of 7.8 percent in September 2023 to 11.5 percent in June 2024 to 12.2 percent in July 2025.

What has been the impact of this

In any open economy, inflation and GDP growth are the outcomes of a large number of domestic and economic factors. The policy variables to influence these outcomes are similarly multiple and interactive. Interest rate is simply one such variable. There are hosts of other factors and policies that will determine the rate of inflation and GDP growth.

interest rate increase on inflation? Demand for private credit has fallen. Growth of public credit has also softened due to cutbacks in

fiscal deficits and less use of bank borrowings to finance the deficits. Consequently, the inflation rate has shown some signs of respite. The upward move has been arrested and is now trending downwards, as inflation fell from a peak of around 11.7 percent in July 2024 to nearly 8.6 percent in July 2025. BB has announced its



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

intention to keep the policy rate unchanged until inflation drops to three to five percent.

The slide in private sector credit growth has been sharp, from 9.8 percent in FY2024 to six percent in FY2025. This is concerning because of its negative implication for economic growth. Indeed, the decline in GDP and private investment growth, demand for capital imports, and growth of private sector credit are all interrelated. Together, they suggest that the economy may have entered a recessionary phase, which does not augur well for employment and poverty reduction.

The main focus here is to enquire about the extent to which these declining indicators of economic activities are related to the effort to control inflation through the interest rate policy. Is there a trade-off between inflation control and GDP growth?

A fully satisfactory answer to these questions requires the use

demand side factors like the interest rate, tax rate and fiscal deficit, while on the supply side there are variables like the exchange rate, international inflation, domestic production and supply of imports. So, when the interest rate rises and demand for credit falls, this tends to reduce inflationary pressure. But a rise in fiscal deficit, depreciation of the exchange rate, rise in international oil and other commodity prices, fall in domestic production, and a decline in imports can all work to offset the effects of rising interest rates on inflation. Indeed, this has been the case with Bangladesh recently. The effects of demand compression through a rising interest rate on inflation have been substantially offset by the reduction in the growth of domestic production and imports. A coordinated policy effort to lower inflation to the desired level will have to combine the monetary policy with other determinants of inflation.

of private sector credit is partly an outcome of this weakening of the investment climate.

Policy attention must shift to address these concerns. Once the investment climate improves, it is very likely that private sector credit growth will recover even with the current interest rate policy. Credit demand depends on profitable investment opportunities. The investment climate is the most important determinant of this. Interest rate is an important cost variable. At 12 percent, the interest rate looks high, but this is partly due to high inflation. Adjusted for inflation, the real borrowing rate is around four percent, which is no higher than real interest rates in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam, and many other comparable middle-income countries.

As inflation eases, it should be possible to lower the BB's policy rate that will help lower the nominal borrowing rate for bank customers.

Don't let our children grow up amid garbage



Naziba Basher is a journalist at The Daily Star.

NAZIBA BASHER

Every morning in Dhaka, waste-carrying vans rumble past homes and shops, collecting what we discard. Behind those familiar vans, there are children in rubber boots too large for their feet, children with bandaged fingers, coughing through the stench. Children who have never seen the inside of a classroom.

Recently, *The Daily Star* published a report titled “Childhood buried in trash,” and the data was no less than shocking. The correspondent visited five Secondary Transfer Stations (STSs) across Dhaka, where household waste is temporarily dumped before being moved to landfills. In every site, there were underage workers, some not even teenagers, sorting rotten waste and breathing toxins with practically no safety gear.

The Dhaka South City Corporation has 66 STS units, while Dhaka North has 53. Nearly all are managed privately, not directly by the city corporations. This arrangement allows everyone, from officials to outsourcing firms, to wash their hands of responsibility.

Because after all, the children are not “officially” hired. And so, the real number of children working in such places is unknown as there is no official data. But they are there, we pass by them every day, but we rarely ask why.

Most of these children come from urban slums or rural districts. Robin, now 18, dropped out of school when he was a Class 5 student; he now works at two STS sites in Kalabagan and Dhanmondi. Shadhin, 13, came from Sherpur and earns Tk 6,000 a month, sending part of it home and using the rest to feed himself.

Some of these children are filling in for sick parents, while some are sole breadwinners. But none of them should be.

The 2022 National Child Labour Survey, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics with support from the International Labour Organization, found that 35.4 lakh children between the ages of 5 and 17 years are economically active. Of them, 17.8 lakh are trapped in child labour. Nearly 10.7 lakh children are

involved in hazardous work that is illegal for anyone under 18 years of age, according to Bangladeshi law. These aren't faceless numbers. These are the children who scrub the dishes at roadside restaurants, who work with dangerous tools at workshops, and who collect our garbage.

Families don't send their children to work because they want to. They

The Dhaka South City Corporation has 66 STS units, while Dhaka North has 53. Nearly all are managed privately, not directly by the city corporations. This arrangement allows everyone, from officials to outsourcing firms, to wash their hands of responsibility. Because after all, the children are not ‘officially’ hired.

do it because poverty is ruthless. They have to decide to rob their children of a childhood because school doesn't always put food on the table, because when rent is due and rice is running out, the cost of surviving today outweighs the promise of tomorrow.

We have allowed these children to become invisible. The laws exist only on paper.

Bangladesh passed a National Child

Labour Elimination Policy in 2010, followed by a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour in 2021, to eliminate hazardous child labour. But the country still has no standalone child labour act.

Several sections of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 ban hazardous child labour. Yet, children continue to be exposed to used needles, broken glass, industrial toxins, and medical waste while collecting garbage. These exposures lead to chronic respiratory issues, skin diseases, and dangerous infections like hepatitis B, tetanus or even HIV. For these kids, injury is routine, immunity is compromised, and the repercussions are lifelong. We can't call this neglect anymore. It is outright abandonment.

It is high time we stopped drafting policies and started enforcing the law because we need real legal consequences for employers, city contractors, and guardians who knowingly endanger children. While accountability must be ensured, the state must invest in meaningful social protection for low-income families: free school meals, conditional cash transfers, and vocational training for parents. A small subsidy can be the difference between a child going to school or sorting trash.

And finally, we, the people, must open our eyes. Behind clean streets might be a child we have trained ourselves not to see. The streets might be clean, but is our conscience clean enough?

DUCSU POLLS 2025

Democracy’s dress rehearsal?



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The timing of the Dhaka University Central Students’ Union (DUCSU) election ahead of the general polls poses an intriguing dilemma for a university that has been the cradle of our national conscience. On the one hand, a student union election in the country’s largest and oldest public university, which has both witnessed and participated in the majority of political changeovers here, can become a proxy battle between national parties. The volatile political situation at present can be affected by the outcome, as the DUCSU poll results can either energise or demoralise the parent parties of some of the participating student bodies just months before the national electoral campaigns are set to begin. A recent data survey that finds 48.5 percent of voters undecided before the national election—in which the BNP, host of Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chatradal (JCD), maintains a slim edge over Jamaat-e-Islami, undeclared patron of Islami Chhatra Shibir—makes the issue even more critical. Dubbed as the “second parliament,” the results of DUCSU polls have the potential to spread beyond the university gates and change the national electoral dynamics.

On the other hand, we can view the holding of DUCSU polls (followed by JUCSU and RUCSU polls in the same month) as a step towards rebuilding democracy from the foundation. The dictatorial democracy that sprouted over the last few decades made Bangladeshi politics a top-down affair. National parties have become accustomed to using student politics as a platform for recruiting followers instead of nurturing independent leadership. Seen thus far, a DUCSU election before the parliamentary polls is a symbolic as well as practical opportunity to demonstrate the

country’s democratic revival. The third dimension of the dilemma touches upon an ensuing debate over “overt” and “covert” politics. During the July uprising, there was a general consensus to decouple campus politics from their national hosts. However, after the interim government was formed, many student bodies started wearing their party badges—some more prominently than the others. Thus, the possibility of a shift in the political landscape appeared bleak. The administration’s contradictory statements on the party affiliation of student politics did not help the situation either. DU’s female students responded to this mixed signal by storming out of their dorms in the middle of the night on July 17, mirroring

The DUCSU polls 2025, which is supposed to be a fresh start for student politics in a post-uprising Bangladesh, has already entered an uncanny site threatened by the conflicted, compromised, and choreographed politics of the past. We are growing more unsure about who holds the true power.

their rebellious action from last year while demanding a complete ban on hall-level politics. The vice-chancellor responded by promising a “controlled” regulatory policy at the hall level. The proctor went further to declare halls as party politics-free zones. JCD, the largest student body at the moment, and some of the left-leaning organisations



SOURCE: SOUVIK ARKO/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The DUCSU polls play a pivotal role in shaping our national political landscape.

interpreted these declarations as attempts at depoliticisation. The issue surfaced when JCD announced committees for all the residential halls at DU. When general students protested the results, JCD suspected foul play. It felt that the general students had been instigated by the “underground party” who was strategically camouflaged within the fallen regime. The ostracised right-wing outfit redirected its energies into welfare campaigns such as offering mentoring and coaching to incoming students, distributing textbooks, and arranging affordable meals and drinkable water as well as medical services. This quiet, service-orientated activism in the residential halls has given it influence where overt politics is notorious for bullying and ragging of students, particularly in the common rooms. So their covert peers have outwitted the overt bodies, who perceive the electoral field as anything but level. The fact that JCD

has yet to submit its panel nomination has cast doubt on the holding of the election on September 9. The ideological clash between the overt and the covert became a generational face-off over the question of 1971. The university’s syndicate in its June meeting amended the DUCSU constitution to symbolically align past and recent struggles by including “July 2024 and other democratic movements” alongside its previously stated objective of upholding the Liberation War of 1971. However, once Shibir presented some convicted Pakistani collaborators of 1971 as “victims of Hasina’s judicial wrongdoings,” it reopened old wounds. While the new generation of Shibir activists has consistently tried to present itself as a modern organisation, their canonisation of the collaborators proved diabolical. Tension has already emerged as the left-leaning parties took a strong stance to protect the ideals of 1971.

Thus, DUCSU polls 2025, which is supposed to be a fresh start for student politics in a post-uprising Bangladesh, has already entered an uncanny site threatened by the conflicted, compromised, and choreographed politics of the past. We are growing more unsure about who holds the true power. Underneath the surface, there is also the allegation of the student group belonging to the fallen Awami League mobilising. The inclusion of four new posts in DUCSU—covering research, career development, health and environment, and human rights—is a welcome change. Those participating in the election should focus on these new areas to diversify students’ career prospects and interests. To take advantage of the nation’s demographic dividend, there is no other option but to upskill and reskill our young generation. DUCSU can initiate that capacity-building movement just like the way it led other sociopolitical movements—from the Language Movement in 1952, to the Liberation War in 1971, to the anti-autocratic movement in 1990, to the July uprising in 2024. The DUCSU polls are more than a student event. They play a pivotal role in shaping our national political landscape. The Election Commission will do well to address the issue of accommodating female voters. Relocating women’s polling stations to an overcrowded TSC can materially reduce turnout and benefit certain candidates. If mobilised effectively, the female vote could decide close contests, particularly in central posts. One hopes that the DUCSU polls next month will deliver a clean, competitive, and inclusive election, thus potentially uplifting the national mood ahead of the general election. Failure to do so will reinforce cynicism and add weight to those arguing that democratic revival is still more a performance than practice. By treating the DUCSU election as a test for the nation’s democratic credibility, we can send out the message that here is a democracy that is genuinely representative, autonomous, and free of intimidation. That democracy in Bangladesh is being rebuilt not just from the top down, but also from the ground up.

‘Now the teachers adore me’

A mother’s grief exposes a broken education system



Wasim Bin Habib
is planning editor at The Daily Star

WASIM BIN HABIB

“Do you know what my little bird told me after coming home from school? She said, ‘Ammu, get me into coaching. If you don’t, the miss won’t be nice to me.’ Then, after seven days of enrolling her in the coaching centre, she said, ‘Now the teachers adore me.’” Umme Tamima Akhter, the mother of a Milestone School and College student who tragically died in last month’s plane crash on the school premises, is seen saying this in a video that has been circulating on social media. Speaking at a human chain near the school in Uttara’s Diabari on August 12, she said her daughter, Mariam Umme



FILE PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Coaching centres started as supplementary support, but now they have morphed into a shadow economy of education.

Coaching classes run by schoolteachers themselves are not new in Bangladesh. It’s a parallel system where students, especially at secondary and higher secondary levels, are taught in groups, either in classrooms or in nearby coaching centres, before or after school hours, by the very same teachers who teach them at school. However, the dependence on coaching centres has reached alarming levels over the past few decades.

Afia, had been waiting for her coaching classes to begin in the very building where the fighter jet crashed. Accusing the school authorities, she asked, “Why did they say there was no coaching? Coaching is a major part of the school.” Her words conveyed more than grief; they laid bare a disturbing

truth about our education system, exposing a vicious culture that has eroded the very essence of learning. Coaching classes run by schoolteachers themselves are not new in Bangladesh. It’s a parallel system where students, especially at secondary and higher secondary levels, are taught in groups, either in classrooms or in nearby coaching centres, before or after school hours, by the very same teachers who teach them at school. However, the dependence on coaching centres has reached alarming levels over the past few decades. Today, it is hard to find a school—government or private, reputed or average, in Dhaka or other major cities in Bangladesh—where this practice isn’t rampant. And now, what started as supplementary support has morphed into a shadow economy of education, one that thrives on fear, coercion, and inequality. It serves as an additional financial burden for many guardians across the country. In many cases, parents feel compelled to send their children to coaching classes and spend hefty fees, not merely due to a lack of quality education at

school, but also out of fear. They allege that many teachers intentionally hold back in class, creating conditions where students who skip coaching inevitably fall behind. Some worry their children will be penalised with lower marks or subjected to subtle forms of harassment. Then there is another group introduced a policy to curb the “coaching business” by preventing teachers from tutoring students from their own institutions. The rules, drafted after a High Court order, allowed a teacher, with permission from the head of the institution, to tutor up to 10 students from other schools. They could also conduct remedial classes for weaker students, but only at the request of parents, and those sessions had to be arranged by the school administration. The policy spelt out implementation steps, set subject-wise monthly remuneration, and even included penalties such as cancellation of the monthly pay order (MPO) for violators. In February 2019, the High Court upheld the policy, noting that the coaching system had harmful effects on the minds of both students and parents. But in reality, the rules are hardly executed. The policy was not followed anywhere in Dhaka or beyond, while the education ministry and its Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education remained largely silent. Officials routinely cited a shortage of manpower for taking any action, given the sheer number of educational institutions across the country, in contrast to the size of their workforce. And so, coaching centres continue to reign supreme. In a country where qualified teachers are scarce, the salaries of educators remain dismally low, textbooks change frequently, and the entire system revolves around high-stakes exams, attempting to curb the coaching menace through fragmented policies and guidelines is a futile endeavour. This is a deep-rooted, decades-old crisis that demands more than cosmetic fixes. It calls for a comprehensive overhaul of the education system, from fair and transparent teacher recruitment with improved remuneration to reducing exam pressure and making classroom learning genuinely engaging. Only by addressing these structural flaws can we break the cycle. In an age of artificial intelligence, where knowledge and skills evolve rapidly, we simply cannot afford to let our children’s futures be held hostage by an outdated and exploitative system.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Out of style
6 Overly eager
11 Cast member
12 Stage comment
13 Stephen King novel
15 Skirt edge
16 Take to court
17 Harden
18 Bank subtraction
20 Allude (to)
23 Some sculptures
27 Region
28 Theater box
29 Market direction
31 Go through a whole season’s episodes
32 Recap
34 Cry loudly
37 Rented truck
38 Steaming
41 Stephen King novel
44 Silver bar
45 Knight’s weapon
46 Romantic dozen
47 Fencing swords

- DOWN**
1 Hiking route
2 Ibuprofen target
3 Goblet part
4 Lawn material
5 Whiteboard need
6 Accumulate
7 Fire remnant
8 Prejudice
9 Goofing off
10 Skilled
14 Massage
18 College VIPs
19 Dutch bloom
20 Lab animal
21 Blunder
22 Lawyer’s charge
24 Singer Henley
25 Nest item
26 Spot
30 Soft quilts
31 Sizeable sum
33 Goat sound
34 Commotion
35 Cry of distress
36 Implores
38 Sharpen
39 In the past
40 Golf pegs
42 Buck’s mate
43 Ray-gun sound

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46						47			

8-1

WEDNESDAY’S ANSWERS

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	K	E	E	N			A	C	E	S

CORRIGENDUM

In the crossword puzzle no. 8-1 published in yesterday’s paper, the set of clues provided were incorrect. We regret this error. Here is the puzzle with the correct set of clues.

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO
dsopinion@gmail.com.

The behind-the-scenes wizards of showbiz



DESIGN: DOWEL BISWAS

While *Golam Mamun* avoids profligate or eye-catching costumes, Eimon Khandoker's designs perfectly match the series' gritty mood. His carefully considered, character-focused approach lends the narrative a strong sense of realism, quietly heightening its tension and authenticity. He surely deserves the nomination.

SHOWBIZ DESK

In the glittering world of showbiz, the spotlight often falls on the faces we see on screen, while those working tirelessly behind the scenes remain in the shadows. Blender's Choice The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards shines that long-overdue light on these unsung heroes, honouring their skill, passion, and relentless dedication. This celebration is not just about recognition—it's about applauding the creativity and hard work that elevate every project for the audience they serve.

Threads of imagination: The magic of Costume Designers

This year, Edila Fari Turin is nominated for *Kaalpurush*. Although this project may not showcase period attire or extravagant styling, her costume design skilfully enhances the series' tone and mood. With a restrained yet deliberate approach, the costumes ground the story in authenticity while adding a refined visual layer to its sci-fi murder mystery.

While *Golam Mamun* avoids profligate or eye-catching costumes, Eimon Khandoker's designs perfectly match the series' gritty mood. His carefully considered, character-focused approach lends the narrative a strong sense of realism, quietly heightening its tension and authenticity. He surely deserves the nomination.

Sathi Akter, nominated this year for *Sinpaat*, stays true to the story's Rajshahi roots with simple, authentic costumes. Her careful, character-driven designs make each scene feel genuine, while subtly heightening the series' tension and emotion.

Swapna Rani Bain, nominated for *Adhunik Bangla Hotel*, brings the story's world to life with costumes that feel natural yet distinctive. Her designs capture the essence of each character, adding authenticity and a quiet charm that enrich the series' atmosphere and emotional pull.

Zannat Mouri earned a nomination for *Tikit*. She uses costumes that blend seamlessly with the film's mood. Her attentive, character-led approach adds authenticity, helping the story feel grounded while subtly enhancing its emotional impact.

Framing emotion: The cinematographer's touch

Bidrohi Dipon, nominated for *Rumi*, brings the visual treat through his cinematography. His visual framing and lighting choices bring the characters and setting to life, enhancing both the emotional depth and the narrative flow of the film.

Ishtiaque Hossain, nominated for *Forget Me Not*, brings a melancholic tone to the film's cinematography. His careful framing and lighting capture the story's aching emotions

beautifully, making each scene feel intimate, vivid, and deeply connected to the characters' journey.

Kamrul Islam Shubho, nominated for *Golam Mamun*, delivers cinematography that intensifies the series' persistent and tense air. His precise framing and lighting choices heighten the drama, making every scene feel dynamic, immersive, and true to the plot's suspenseful tone.

Mohammad Touqir Islam, nominated for *Sinpaat*, brings a sharp and immersive eye to the series' cinematography. His thoughtful framing and lighting capture the tension and emotions of each scene, making the story feel vivid, realistic, and deeply engaging.

Tanvir Ahsan, nominated for *Rongila Kitab*, uses framing and lighting to highlight the emotions and personalities of the characters, making each scene visually engaging and true to the film's atmosphere.

Art Director: The architects of atmosphere
Amit Rudra, nominated for *Sinpaat* as art director, creates spaces that feel authentic and lived-in. His thoughtful set designs enhance the story's mood, grounding the narrative of Rajshahi very well.

Md Rinku, nominated for *Rumi*, skilfully shapes the film's environments with authentic and immersive art direction. His set designs enrich the story's atmosphere, adding emotional depth and making the world of the film feel vivid and believable.

Naeemah Zaman, nominated for *Kacher Manush Dure Thuiya*, creates art direction that feels close to the heart. Her thoughtfully crafted sets capture the essence of the setting and characters, making the film's world believable and emotionally engaging.

For *Kaalpurush*, the art direction by Shihab Nurun Nabi creates a perfect match with the series' vein. The thoughtfully designed sets add depth and authenticity, fully drawing viewers into the story's world.

The art direction by Theophilus Scott in *Adhunik Bangla Hotel*, brings the story's world to life with detailed and immersive sets. The designs reflect the characters and setting authentically, enhancing the atmosphere and making the narrative more engaging.

The connoisseurs of makeup

For *Rumi*, the makeup work enhances each character's personality and the story's tone. Atia Rahman's makeup is subtle yet effective, reflecting the authenticity and emotional depth of the film's visuals.

For *Ararat*, the makeup work highlights each character's traits and supports the story's mood. Khairul Islam's designs are detailed and realistic, adding authenticity and helping to convey the sentiments on screen.

In *Tikit*, the makeup plays a vital role in bringing out the characters' personalities with precision. Khokon Mollah's work, natural and

effective, enhances the story's realism and visual impact.

For *Adhunik Bangla Hotel*, the makeup work emphasises the characters' traits and complements the story's atmosphere. Mahbub Rahman Manik masterfully adds authenticity and enhances the visual storytelling.

For *Kaalpurush*, the makeup work enhances the characters' features and complements the series' tone. Rubama Fairuzz's careful and detailed approach adds depth, enriching the overall visual experience.

Ink and imagination: How screenplay writers shape every story

Jahan Sultana and Shihab Shaheen joined hands for the screenplay of *Kacher Manush Dure Thuiya*. The story of a boy and a girl next door creates the ultimate soft love story that people loved beyond imagination.

Kazi Asad both directed and wrote the screenplay for *Adhunik Bangla Hotel*. This three-episode thriller masterfully weaves a horror plot with multiple layers of human emotions.

Shihab Shaheen and Mezbah Uddin Sumon collaborated on *Golam Mamun*, a thriller that went beyond the usual crime narrative, making it one of last year's most popular projects.

An entire team's effort brought forth the amazing story of *Sinpaat*. Behind the scenes are Mohammad Touqir Islam, Omar Masum, Minul Islam Milon, Amit Rudra, and Khalid Saifullah Saif.

Vicky Zahed, in addition to directing, prefers sharing his own perspective, which he did for *Rumi*, resulting in a strong and impactful screenplay.

Editors in action

Jobayar Abir Peal's editing for *Ararat* refines the narrative, maintaining a smooth flow while progressing the story. His precise cuts and timing keep the viewers fully engaged.

Leon Rozario's editing for *Kacher Manush Dure Thuiya* skilfully shapes the story's rhythm, balancing emotional beats with narrative flow. His precise timing and seamless transitions keep the audience engaged throughout the film.

Ashikur Rahman Sujon and Leon Rozario's editing for *Rongila Kitab* expertly crafts the film's pace and structure. Their all-in-one cuts and timing boost both the storytelling and emotional impact, keeping viewers fully immersed in the narrative.

Sanglap Bhoumik's editing for *Sinpaat* sharpens the series' tension and pace. His timing helps maintain suspense while highlighting key emotional moments, keeping viewers engaged throughout.

Syed Mehboob Hussain and Saleh Sobhan Auneem's editing for *Kaalpurush* carefully shapes the series' rhythm, blending suspense and emotion. They were successful in keeping viewers fully immersed in the sci-fi murder mystery.

The invisible pulse: Sound that builds atmosphere

Adeep Singh Manki's sound design for *Sinpaat* heightens the series' ambience. His careful layering of effects and ambient sounds immerses viewers, enhancing both the mood and emotional impact of each scene.

Anindit Roy and Adeep Singh Manki's sound design for *Rumi* creates a rich and immersive environment. Their detailed use of effects and audio layering draws viewers unfathomably into the story.

Rajesh Saha and Shakerujjaman Pappu's sound design for *Adhunik Bangla Hotel* builds an immersive ambience, using layered effects and audio cues to enhance the story's emotions and draw viewers into the thriller's world.

Ripon Nath's sound design for *Kacher Manush Dure Thuiya* creates a soothing ambience, using layered effects and audio textures to intensify emotions and immerse viewers in the world of the story's characters.

Sayba Talukdar's sound design for *Tikit* builds a compelling ambience, carefully blending effects and audio layers to enhance the story's emotions and draw viewers into its world.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Self Reliance



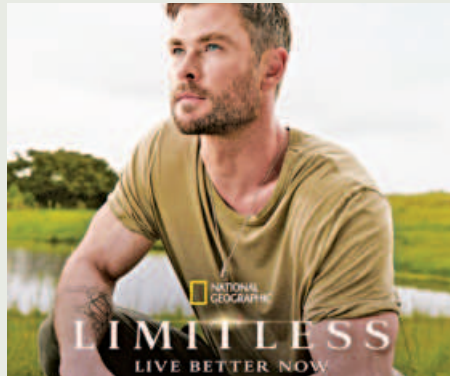
Amazon Prime
The Pickup



Hulu
FX's Alien: Earth



Disney plus
Limitless: Live Better Now



Hoichoi
Adv Achinta Aich



WHAT'S PLAYING

'Golden' by HUNTR/X

Golden is what happens when pop fantasy refuses to stay on screen. Conceived for the animated film *KPop: Demon Hunters*, this shimmering cut from virtual trio HUNTR/X has broken through its fictional origins to become one of the year's most dominant singles. Ejae, Audrey Nuna, and Rei Ami glide across the track with a precision that feels engineered for both stadium speakers and couture runways.

The numbers are dizzying: over 100 million weekly streams, three weeks at No 1 on the Billboard Global 200 and Global Excl US, a historic UK No 1 (the first K-pop track in 13 years to do so), and a No 2 peak on the Billboard Hot 100.

It's a song that rides the trend with high drama; impossibly polished and destined to be etched as a pop culture turning point. Its music video pulled in tens of millions of views, the hyper-stylised visuals as much a statement piece as the track itself.

TV TALKIES

Urban stress turns deadly in K-drama 'Trigger'



Trigger wastes no time pulling viewers into a world where ordinary frustration collides with extraordinary danger. Kim Nam-gil delivers a grounded, quietly commanding performance as Lee Do, a cop whose calm under pressure contrasts with the chaos unraveling around him.

The show's first episode balances gripping investigative intrigue with unsettling character studies — especially in Woo Ji-hyun's portrayal of Yoo Jung-tae, whose slow boil toward violence feels disturbingly real.

The depiction of Seoul's bustling streets and daily grind adds authenticity,

making the social commentary on stress and isolation hit harder. While the gun-smuggling mystery is compelling, the heart of the story lies in exploring what happens when simmering anger meets easy access to deadly weapons.

The pacing leaves room for tension to build, and even seemingly minor subplots, like Do's confrontation with a sex offender, add to the layered portrayal of his skills and values.

Trigger doesn't just promise action — it asks difficult, timely questions about human breaking points, making it both thrilling and thought-provoking.



TULARAMPUR BAZAR

The SI said the family did not lodge any formal complaint.

A single palm tree yields two dinghies and takes four craftsmen

According to BISIC's Narail district office, over 100 families in Char-Shalikhra are involved in donga-making. "If they need assistance, we will provide them technical as well as all types of support to keep the craft alive," said its Deputy Manager Solaiman Hossain.

In the past seven months, 12 tourists have drowned in Cox's Bazar while bathing in the sea, while 78 others were rescued.

BIWTA Executive Engineer Nepal Chandra Debnath said emergency efforts have begun, including dumping geo bags to protect the ghats. He said the force of the current is preventing the geo bags from settling in the correct positions.

PRAYER TIMING

AUGUST 16

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-25	12-45	4-45	6-38	8-00
JAMAAT 5-00	1-15	5-00	6-41	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

CREATIVE NONFICTION

Space between the scrolls



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

And just like that, I’ve moved from dead children to fashion accessories. The feed has trained me well, to skip between realities without processing any of them fully.

TABASSUM ISLAM SUSMI
Children pulled from rubble in Gaza, dust-white faces against red bricks—
Mia’s fuchsia silk dress flowing against Amalji’s electric blue, #blessed #livingmybestlife—
Then another of Mia’s. The gelato display at some historic gelato shop. She’s added a poll to it: “Help me choose!” Results: 67% pistachio, 33% Stracciatella, so far—
BREAKING: Training jet crash in a school in Dhaka, seven confirmed dead including pilot—
I pause. Dhaka. The word stops my breath. I call Maa even before I realise I’m moving.
Two rings.
Three now.
Then she picks up. No, nowhere near us.
It is far from our usual routes and

addresses. Diabari. Not Dhanmondi where Maa lives. Not Mohammadpur where my brother is training. Not Basundhara where Nana’s hospital is.
“Thank god,” I breathe, then immediately feel sick. What am I thanking Him for exactly? For the pilot losing control over someone else’s neighbourhood instead of mine? For the catastrophe choosing strangers over family?
I can see them so clearly it hurts. Toddlers and teenagers in those crisp blue-and-white uniforms, sitting in rows, copying down equations, reciting poems. Did they look up first? Did they think it was just a low-flying plane before the world exploded into metal and fire and screaming? Were they reaching for each other when hell came down? I scroll frantically, desperately, begging the algorithm to show me anything else, to let me escape what my mind keeps building. And honestly, I don’t even have to try too much.
Irina, my Dutch friend working in Prague, posted a photo of her new matcha latte art skills. Foam swirled into perfect leaves. “The barista life chose me,” she writes—
Then more of Irina. Her selfie with a bright red bandana tied around her head.
I actually pause at that bandana. Serious Y2K vibes, very Lorelai Gilmore coded. I should get one. Will Shein have one? But then everyone will know it’s fast fashion. Maybe Etsy instead? But that’s expensive, and for what? A piece of fabric?
And just like that, I’ve moved from dead children to fashion accessories. The feed has trained me well, to skip between realities without processing any of them fully.
Another scroll—a heated debate

thread: “It was clearly mechanical failure” “No, pilot error, look at the data” “The government has failed at...” “No, it’s the previous government who...”
The internet is already feeding on blame. My mind joins in without permission. Blame is so much simpler than grief. So much cleaner than imagining small charred bodies in blue uniforms. So much easier than holding space for senseless loss. I, too, let it happen. I choose the comfortable anger of someone else’s failure over the unbearable weight of children dying for nothing. But the anger fades way faster than I expect. The feed has other plans. It always does.
Roman Bhai has just posted a photo of his new-born. “Can’t believe she’s finally here.” The baby’s face is covered with a heart sticker, while he and her wife, Tithi Bhabi, both are kissing her tiny forehead.
I should send something for the baby. What should I send? Something from Belfast? But Manchester has everything Belfast has. Different accents, but the same Boots, same Tesco, same TK Maxx, same packages of capitalism shipped to identical high streets. Maybe something local then? Something distinctly Northern Irish? But what’s a new-born going to do with local crafts anyway? Should I get something for Bhabi instead? Some new mum care package? But that feels more in the baby-shower territory. And honestly, she’s probably drowning in gifts already. She’s always posting about her lovely neighbours dropping off homemade curries, her work colleagues surprising her with spa vouchers, her university friends planning elaborate celebration dinners. Who would guess she only moved there two years ago? Meanwhile, I’m still having polite departmental coffee conversations and wondering if I’ll ever belong anywhere completely.
Sara’s dissertation defence stories come next. First her desk, set up with color-coded sticky notes and a perfectly positioned coffee mug. Then her victory selfie after nailing the defense. Then the celebration—her whole family squeezed around a dining table for the selfie, three generations laughing with mouths full, her dad’s arm around her, her elder brother reaching across the table for more food.
I zoom in. Zami Bhai, Sara’s elder brother, looks older now, with his face fuller and neatly trimmed beard. For most of my teenage years, I thought he was the most handsome man to ever walk the earth. In the photo, his hand is extended toward the bowl of tehari at the centre. Sara’s amma used to pack this exact tehari in a dented metal container for school tiffin. I’d gobble my noodles up in five minutes flat while Sara would eat slowly, methodically, then quietly slide her remaining half toward me. She was always like that—more caring, more patient. Should I call her to congratulate properly? Or would a text suffice? Maybe I should post a story celebrating her achievement, let everyone know my brilliant friend is now Doctor Sara. But that feels performative, turning her moment into my content. I wonder if this is the digital friendship paralysis: too many options for connection, yet none feels quite right.
The algorithm serves me Mia’s fourth story now: a bathroom mirror selfie with a face mask. Her fancy skin care regimen is very much visible on the bathroom counter.
This does not look like a hostel or an Airbnb, or is she staying in a hotel this time? That must cost a fortune in this economy!
Back to Dhaka: three more children have died in between my scrolls.
A friend has posted a fundraiser link for Gaza, with thermometer showing they’ve only reached 31% of their goal—
I screenshot the fundraiser link with the automatic reflex of someone who cares, knowing well that this image will join that digital graveyard of good intentions I never follow through. The guilt settles heavy in my stomach, mixing uncomfortably with the tehari craving.
Mia again: sunset from hotel balcony, feet propped up, toes painted coral. “Dinner at this little place the concierge recommended!”
The children in Gaza don’t have concierges. Some don’t have feet anymore. I try to blink it away. Focus on the coral polish. The perfect pedicure. The luxury of choice.
Roman bhai hearts my ‘congratulations’ comment.
“You’ll look so good in the gingham one!” Irina replies to my bandana enquiry and attaches the website link she bought it from.
Parents are still looking for their kids in the rubbles, 44 hospitalised, investigation ongoing.
I set the phone down. For three seconds, I try to hold it all—the screams, the children, Mia’s fuchsia dress, and the Y2K bandana. But the weight splits my attention like a fault line. And I pick my phone up again. The feed refreshes, serves me tragedies and trivialities shuffled like cards, dealt in new combinations. Death, coffee, birth, crash, champagne, rubble, laughter, screaming.
I scroll. Of course, I scroll. What else was ever going to happen? What else was I ever going to do?

Tabassum Islam Susmi occasionally writes for Star Books and Literature.

FICTION

A gilded cage

HAROONUZZAMAN
The automated blinds of the penthouse in Gulshan, an upscale area, rise with a soft hum, revealing a picture-perfect Dhaka morning. The skyline is a wash of hazy gold, the city already pulsing beneath a rising sun. From the eighteenth floor, everything seems calm. Controlled. Distant.
Aisha stands at the window, her silk robe cinched neatly at the waist, coffee cooling in her hand. The air smells faintly of bergamot and eucalyptus, diffused from an automated dispenser timed to activate every hour. Perfection surrounds her—climate-controlled rooms, voice-activated kitchen systems, curated modern art hung on muted walls. It’s all flawless.
And yet, she can’t breathe.
For 15 years she’s lived in this polished cage with Rizwan—a man more myth than husband. Their marriage, a union of convenience and status, had been celebrated with televised grandeur. But love? Real, messy, unpredictable love? That never came.
Rizwan is a ghost with a calendar. CEO of a major conglomerate, executive member of an elite club, and perpetual chief guest at every art opening or charity gala, he rarely makes it home before midnight. When he does, his body collapses into bed beside hers, perfumed with cigar smoke and exhaustion. He mumbles a few words, sometimes touches her shoulder absently, then disappears into sleep.
And Aisha? She lies awake, staring at the ceiling, her heart restless, body untouched for months, thoughts spinning like broken fan blades.
One humid afternoon, stuck in Gulshan Avenue’s relentless traffic, Aisha’s eyes drift from the wheel to the pavement. That’s

when she sees him; he’s tall, lean, his skin sun-kissed, and posture unhurried. He doesn’t shout or wave like the others—drivers, vendors, beggars. He just stands, still and watchful, a duffel bag slung over one shoulder. Something in his eyes—quiet, wounded—hooks her. Before she can think, she jerks the SUV toward the curb. She is a seasoned jeweler; she never fails to recognise real gold!
Honks erupt behind her.
She rolls down the window. “You... looking for work?”
He steps forward slowly, cautious but composed. “Yes, apu. Ride, or...other things. I can help.”
Her heart pounds. She nods. “Get in.”
*
For Fahim, it’s luck—divine or cruel, he can’t say. The day has been long and the light now falls in heavy orange streaks. His morning had been generous—a Baridhara woman with cash and kindness to spare. But as evening sets in, his legs ache, hunger gnaws, and the room he rents in Tongi, which he shares with two other struggling men, feels more like a box with bars than a home.
His roommates think he runs a business—something ambiguous but respectable. They don’t ask questions. He sends 25,000 taka home to Rangpur every month, and that’s all his parents need to believe he’s doing well. He never tells them the truth: they don’t know he sells intimacy in a city built on loneliness.
5000 taka per session. On a good month, he can manage 15 clients at the most, if his health holds. Some clients tip, linger, look at him with something like yearning. That always leaves him shaken. Gratitude mixes with guilt.
Then comes Sara, a girl turned voluptuous woman: she had been his school and college friend in Rangpur.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

It begins with spilled coffee—a small accident in a cramped Banani café. Her laughter is light, her eyes curious. She doesn’t seem to see him as a service, but as someone—someone who might matter. That terrified him more than any client ever could.
“I think you’re smarter than you let on,” she had said one evening, tucking her hair behind her ear as they sat near the Banani-Gulshan lake.
He tried to laugh it off, but her belief in him was relentless. Dangerous.
From then on, they started meeting regularly. No money is exchanged. She makes plans, spins dreams like silk. They talk about opening a small catering service together, escaping the noise of the city.
Then comes the proposal.
A court marriage. Just the two of them.
She buys new clothes for both. Tells her mother she is in love.
But he doesn’t show up.
At first, she waits. Then she calls, messages relentlessly. Silence in return.
Weeks later, she confides in a friend—a successful businesswoman. One who, in an earlier, lonelier conversation, had admitted to using discreet services to fill the void in her own sterile marriage.
The friend goes pale when Sara mentions Fahim’s name. The silence that follows has said everything.
“No,” Sara whispers, stepping back. “No, it can’t be.”
Her friend hesitates, and then quietly hands over a phone number.
When Sara calls, a woman from the Tongi Community Hospital answers. Her voice is

heavy, hesitant.
“You’re calling about Fahim?” she asks. “He’s...in the hospital. Advanced AIDS. Stage four. He’s not expected to—” Her voice cracks. “Sorry.”
Sara stares at her phone long after the call ends. Around her, the world continues—horns blare, birds wheel overhead, a child cries. But inside, something dies.
All the dreams she had built around him—every plan, every whispered promise—collapse like paper in rain.
Back in Gulshan, Aisha drives her SUV, stops a while where Fahim would stand, but a chill goes down her spine—where could he be? Something wrong?
Amid the passing hullabaloo, a cruel silence wrecks her bone almost. On the electronic overhead screen at the Gulshan 2 circle, she sees him—eyes dark with stories he could never tell. Is it the “real he” she is desperately looking for, or somebody like him promoting “Black Panther”?
Later that night, she lies in her dim bedroom, the city lights winking beyond glass. Rizwan hasn’t called. She doesn’t expect him to.
She thinks of Fahim. Or perhaps Sara whom she never met, or countless people who drift through this glittering city with hollow hearts and perfect smiles.
And she wonders, not for the first time, what it truly means to be loveless and alone in a gilded cage.
Haroonzaman is a translator, novelist, poet, researcher, and essayist. Besides teaching English in Libya and Qatar for about 12 years, he has had 20 years of teaching experience in English Language and Literature at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

‘Kings now known beyond Bangladesh’

Bashundhara Kings’ captain Topu Barman led from the back as the Bangladesh Premier League champions stunned Syrian giants Al-Karamah SC in Doha, sealing a fifth straight AFC Challenge League group-stage berth. The win came despite a late coaching crisis, with Brazilian coach Fabio Farias jumping ship on the eve of training. Speaking to The Daily Star’s Anisur Rahman, Topu recalled the improbable journey, the calm leadership of local coaches, Mahbub Hossain Roxy and Golam Jilani, and the mindset that made it possible. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How did Kings manage to reach the AFC Challenge League group stage despite short preparation and tough odds?
Topu Barman (TB): We started in difficult circumstances, but players gave more than a hundred percent in training. We were focused, dedicated, and hungry for victory because we knew how important the match was. Everyone played with heart, aware that Karamah were runners-up in both AFC Challenge League and AFC Cup, and that their Syrian players were of high quality.

DS: When did you learn that Brazilian coach Farias would not join in Qatar, and how did you adapt?
TB: We arrived in Qatar at midday and learned just one hour before our evening training that he hadn’t come. That night it was confirmed he had joined an Iraqi club, but it didn’t affect us mentally or tactically since we hadn’t trained under him.

We continued under Roxy and Jilani sir, who had conducted our 12-day camp in Dhaka, advising us to stay calm, focus on our roles, and take responsibility. The win was special as it made Kings known beyond Bangladesh.

DS: How did the team maintain pace despite fitness concerns from only 14 days’ training?
TB: It came down to mental toughness and commitment. Initially, we doubted whether we could beat a Syrian club, but once we had one-two training sessions in Qatar, our confidence soared. Taking an early lead helped us stay focused and strong throughout.

DS: What instructions did Roxy and Jilani give?
TB: We responded according to the demands of Roxy and Jilani sir. They were clear about how to build up play, handle pressure, and take individual responsibility. As coaches we’ve known since childhood, they earned our trust, and both local and foreign players fully supported their approach and implemented their philosophy.

DS: How did the team show such a strong combination despite foreign players training only two days?
TB: Dorielton Gomes had played with us before, Raphael Augusto’s style suited our possession football, and Emmanuel Sunday proved his quality on and off the ball. All four foreign players knew our style from playing in Bangladesh, and we knew theirs. That mutual familiarity made quick chemistry possible.

DS: How confident are you about progressing from the group stage this time, after failing to secure a single point in the last edition?
TB: We were in a negative state ahead of the preliminary round but we’ll have several national and domestic matches before the group stage in October. Our fitness and game temperament will be much better, and with the same effort, I’m confident we can advance.

DS: How do you rate Kings for the upcoming domestic season?
TB: I think we have a better, balanced and more matured squad than last season, capable of winning all five trophies.



CAN BARCA DOMINATE AGAIN?

Young, relentless, and bold -- that’s how Barcelona showcased themselves in the Spanish domestic league last season, securing an impressive LaLiga and Copa del Rey double. Hansi Flick’s side will begin their title defence today with a trip to the Estadi Mallorca Son Moix to face Mallorca on the opening weekend of the new campaign. Barcelona were the most prolific attacking team across Europe’s top five leagues last season, scoring a total of 102 goals -- around 53 percent of which came from their front trio: young sensation Lamine Yamal, Robert Lewandowski, and Raphinha. For their opener, however, Barca will have to make do without Lewandowski, who is still recovering from a hamstring injury sustained during pre-season. However, the challenge for Barcelona could be steeper this term, with arch-rivals Real Madrid adding even more firepower to their ranks under new coach Xabi Alonso as they aim to dethrone the Catalans.

PHOTO: BARCELONA

All eyes on foreign players as transfer window closes

SPORTS REPORTER

Five-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings have emerged as the strongest side on paper, assembling a squad packed with 17 current and former national players alongside four proven foreign campaigners, as the two-and-a-half-month-long transfer window closed on Thursday night.

Although six-time champions Abahani had been expected to form a stronger squad than last season, it was Kings who stunned the football fraternity by signing four established foreign players -- Brazilians Dorielton Gomes and Raphael Augusto, and Nigerians Emmanuel Sunday and Emmanuel Tony. Additionally, they secured two key local players, Mohammad Ridoy and Shahriar Emon, from rivals Abahani.

Kings also surprised many by recruiting Sunderland U-21 player Cuba Mitchell, further strengthening their 35-member squad, which already made an impact by defeating Syrian side Al Karamah SC in the preliminary round of the AFC Challenge League. “I believe we’ve formed a stronger squad than last season, and we’ve already proved our potential in the AFC Challenge League,” said Kings captain Topu Barman. “We aim to compete for all five titles this season and make history by winning them all.”

Attention had also been on defending champions Mohammedan, especially after

We’ve signed better local players than last season, though we couldn’t retain all our foreign players because of financial issues.

Mohammedan manager
Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib

their historic maiden professional league title last season. However, the Black and Whites appear to have lost some strength after parting ways with three key foreign players -- Souleymane Diabate, Emmanuel Sunday, and Emmanuel Tony -- due to financial constraints.

Despite the setbacks, Mohammedan remain optimistic about competing on all fronts. “We’ve signed better local players than last season, though we couldn’t retain all our foreign players because of financial issues,” said Mohammedan manager Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib. “Still, we’ve built a fighting team like last year when we started as underdogs. On paper, Kings have assembled the best squad.”

Last season’s runners-up

Abahani retained most of their local players, except Ridoy and Emon, but added national team stars Sheikh Morsalin and Al Amin, along with the return of proven Malian forward Souleymane Diabate.

“We could have felt better had we managed to form a stronger squad,” said Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu. “It would have helped if we’d signed the foreign players we initially contacted. Now, we’ll wait and see how the new foreign recruits perform.”

Rupu added that Abahani believe in performance on the pitch rather than squad strength on paper and will compete for the four titles available this season.

Besides Kings, Mohammedan, and Abahani, the remaining seven clubs -- Fortis FC, Rahmatganj MFS, Brothers Union, Bangladesh Police FC, Young Men’s Fakirerpool Club, newly promoted Arambagh KS, and PWD Club -- have also completed their player registrations.

Mohammedan’s Nakib pointed out that teams like Fortis, Police, and Rahmatganj could pose challenges this season, stating, “There’s little difference among local players across clubs; foreign signings will ultimately decide the matches.”

Apart from three foreign players eligible to start against a maximum of five registrations, the new rule allowing five players from SAARC countries to be fielded as ‘local players’ could also potentially make an impact on how teams perform in the long run.

Cabrera’s camp in a bind over release of players

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings have once again refused to release players for the ongoing national team preparation camp ahead of the September friendly matches against Nepal, citing their own pre-season preparations.

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera conducted his first training session with only 12 players at the Bashundhara Kings practice ground on Friday after the club declined to release the following players: Topu Barman, Taj Uddin, Tariq Kazi, Saad Uddin, Sohel Rana, Sohel Rana Jr, Mohammad Ridoy, Faisal Ahmed Fahim, Rakib Hossain, and Shahriar Emon.

Defenders Issa Faisal of Police FC and Alomgir Molla of Abahani are expected to join the camp tonight. Players from Abahani, Mohammedan, and Brothers Union have already reported.

“In a bid to reduce the risk of injuries and ensure long-term wellbeing of players following their prolonged absence from competitive football, we have already begun our pre-season preparations. Therefore, it is not possible for us to release the players, and we are sincerely sorry,” read a letter from Kings, signed by the club’s general secretary, Biddyt Kumar Bhowmik, and addressed to the BFF general secretary.

Kings previously withheld players in 2019 ahead of the South Asian Games in Nepal, in 2020 ahead of two friendlies against Nepal in Dhaka, and in 2021 ahead of the World Cup Qualifiers in Qatar. However, on those occasions, they eventually released the players either later or in accordance with FIFA regulations. In 2023, the BFF excluded players from both Kings and Abahani when forming the squad for the Asian Games in China.

Interestingly, Kings president Imrul Hasan also serves as BFF’s senior vice-president and vice-chairman of the national teams committee, which is responsible for holding the current camp and arranging the friendly matches against Nepal on 6 and 9 September in Kathmandu.

Meanwhile, seven current members of the senior national team, who participated in the Asian Cup Qualifiers against Singapore in June, are now part of the U-23 national team. This has further complicated Cabrera’s efforts to assemble a full-strength strong squad. National team manager Amer Khan told reporters that Kings are expected to release their players ahead of the official FIFA window next month.



Booster Robotics T1 humanoid robots take part in a 5-on-5 group match on a football pitch during the inaugural World Humanoid Robot Games at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing yesterday. China kicked off a three-day-long sports showcase for humanoid robots, looking to highlight progress in artificial intelligence and robotics, with 280 teams from 16 countries competing in sports such as football, track and field, and table tennis. PHOTO: REUTERS

Off-season woes of FORGOTTEN FIRST-CLASS CRICKETERS

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

In November last year, pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana returned to competitive cricket after a two-year hiatus due to injury through first-class competition National Cricket League (NCL). The pacer made his mark immediately as he claimed 19 wickets in two matches and received player-of-the-match awards in both games for Khulna Division.

He then featured for the same division in the inaugural NCL T20 competition, represented Dhaka Capitals in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), and Agrani Bank Cricket Club in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) respectively.

However, after the season ended, Rana, one of the 100 male cricketers who are under Bangladesh Cricket Board’s (BCB) first-class contract, was not included in any BCB teams and had to individually prepare for the upcoming domestic season, which will start with NCL T20 on September 14.

“After the last season, I took one month off to recover. In the following three months, I personally worked with BCB physio Yakub bhai [Chowdhury Dalim] in Dhaka as I was not part of any BCB teams such as the HP Unit or Bangladesh Tigers,” the 28-year-old pacer told The Daily Star recently.

Another first-class contracted cricketer, who lives outside Dhaka and has not been part

- 28 cricketers are listed in the HP core squad for the 2025-26 season.
- 33-34 players are in the Bangladesh Tigers camp for red-ball and white-ball cricket.
- Around 63 players from the first-class contract are neither part of the HP nor the Bangladesh Tigers programme.
- 21 male cricketers are currently in the national players’ contract in five different categories, earning between Tk 2-10 lakh.
- 100 male cricketers are in the first-class cricketers’ salary contract for 2025 in three different categories. 18 players are in category A (Tk 35,000 per month), 15 are in category B (Tk 30,000), and 67 players are in category C (Tk 25,000).



of any BCB pipeline teams for years, detailed the challenges players face while trying to train in divisional areas during the off-season.

“We don’t get any practice facilities from the BCB. Usually, we practice in nearby clubs during off-season, we bear the cost ourselves. We also have to take permission from many places to use the wickets. If we ask for it 10

days, we get permission for only a day,” the cricketer, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

“Recently they have permitted first-class players to use indoor facilities and the wickets. Some of us went for practice in the last few days and we were allowed to use the indoor facilities. But I don’t know whether it

will continue.

“We worked hard throughout the year and also performed well whenever we got the opportunity. But only some selected players get the facilities by rotation. Once I asked a selector and he told me that as they have invested a lot on a player, they could not drop him only after a year. Their thinking is that if they pick one player, whether he plays well or poorly, he will remain in the team,” he added.

In recent times, some senior cricketers have been flying to countries like the USA, the UK and Australia after the domestic season in Bangladesh and one of the main reasons for it is over there, they get better practice facilities and match practice.

“Over there, we get three to four matches weekly. We play against different clubs... “We get to play with the duke ball. It’s good for preparation as in Tests and in first-class cricket in Bangladesh, we use duke balls too,” said a senior cricketer.

According to a BCB official, around of 33-34 cricketers trained in separate Bangladesh Tigers camps so far this year. Meanwhile, a total of 28 cricketers recently completed a two-month training camp as part of the High Performance Unit in Chattogram.

This leaves around 63 first-class contracted cricketers of the BCB who played in the domestic season but were not part of these teams or the national side. Hence, these

cricketers had to come up with individual plans and had to toil hard to find practice facilities during off-season.

Currently, 100 first-class cricketers in three different categories – A, B, and C – get TK 35,000, TK 30,000 and TK 25,000 per month respectively as salary from the BCB. Their salary was increased by TK 5,000 recently although they are yet to be paid the new sum.

“As we are getting paid by the BCB, they should take few more measures to monitor our work. Those of us who aren’t part of any BCB teams, can’t work on our fitness to the level of those who are. If the BCB can hold two camps for us during the off season, I think it will do us good,” Rana said.

“It will be good for us if indoor and outdoor facilities are improved in every division. They can also prepare separate wickets for us for year-long preparation,” he added.

When contacted, BCB’s tournament committee chairman Akram Khan accepted their limitations but also asked the players to act responsibly during off-season.

“At one time, we hardly had any playing fields, but we were developing gradually. Now, we have facilities available. It’s their responsibility to work on their fitness and practice individually. If they want to depend totally on the cricket board and not do training and fitness work, they might lose their place in the team,” Akram said.

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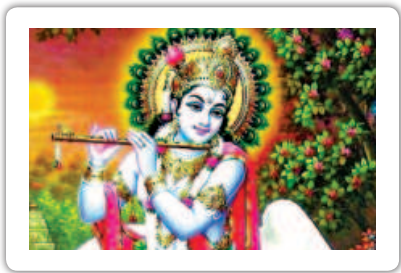
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Janmashtami today

BSS, Dhaka

Janmashtami, one of the major religious festivals of the Hindu community commemorating the birth of Lord Sri Krishna, will be celebrated across the country today with due religious fervour and gaiety.

According to Hindu mythology, Sri Krishna was born on the eighth day of the dark fortnight in the Bangla month of Bhadra. It is believed that he incarnates in every age to protect the virtuous from the wicked and to establish truth, justice, and beauty in society.

The festival is usually observed on the eighth day (Ashtami) of the Krishna Paksha in the month of Shraban or Bhadra.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus greeted the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2



Stones previously looted from Sylhet's Jafflong are being returned after they were recovered by the district administration and police. The illegal extraction, which was already there, surged after August 5 last year. The photo was taken in the Zero Point area yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Amid the Sada Pathor outcry, Jaflong reels too

Stone, sand looting wrecks havoc on another tourist spot in Sylhet

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Amid an outcry over the ruin of Sada Pathor in Sylhet's Bholaganj, another popular tourist spot in the district has similarly been ravaged by a syndicate of plunderers.

Jaflong in Sylhet's Gowainghat, an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) since 2015, was meant to be off-limits to quarrying. Instead, relentless illegal mining for stones and sand extraction, driven by politically-backed syndicates, coupled with systemic enforcement failures, has left the area in disarray.

Locals and experts say the assault on Jaflong, once a pristine area with the Khasi hills in the backdrop, has worsened since the fall of the Awami League government.

Locals say the resources of the area have been plundered for decades with heavy machinery, including dredgers and 'boma' rigs. The situation improved a bit after the government imposed a complete ban on stone lifting in 2020. However, illegal extraction continued without heavy machinery till the AL regime collapsed on August 5 last year.

The next week, according to locals, was catastrophic for Jaflong due to massive looting. The district administration estimated that stones worth at least Tk 300 crore were looted during that week.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Veggie prices soar in Dhaka kitchen markets

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD ABBAS

Abdul Malek went to Sukrabad kitchen market to buy vegetables, only to be shocked to find that a kilogramme of both okra and pointed gourd was selling for Tk 100.

Frustrated, he dropped both items from his shopping list.

"I bought each kilogramme of okra and pointed gourd for Tk 40-50 just two weeks ago," he told the shopkeepers angrily before leaving.

Sumaiya Begum, a small clothing shop owner, said she could afford only low-quality vegetables because of the recent price hikes.



"We are eating degraded vegetables. My children complain that I am not feeding them fresh ones, but I have nothing to say to them," she told this newspaper at the Shewrapara kitchen market.

The prices of low-grade vegetables have also risen, leaving her struggling to put food on the table.

"We are living on papaya and potatoes, which are still reasonably priced. I don't know what I will do next," she said.

Like them, many low- and middle-income residents expressed frustration over the rising prices, questioning

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



'Mujib not Father of the Nation'

Says Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While acknowledging his role in the struggle for independence, National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam said yesterday that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is not the Father of the Nation, accusing him of laying the foundation for "one-party BAKSAL dictatorship" and turning Bangladesh into a "tributary state of India".

In a Facebook post titled, "Bangladesh Belongs to the People," he wrote, "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is not the Father of the Nation. We acknowledge his role, sacrifices in gaining independence, but we also remember the national tragedy that unfolded under his rule. Through his leadership, Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

OCCUPIED WEST BANK

Halt new settlement construction plan

UN chief calls on Israel; 21 Palestinians, including seven aid seekers, killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza

AGENCIES

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on Israeli authorities to immediately halt the advancement of plans of settlement construction in the EI area of the occupied West Bank, said the UN chief's spokesperson.

"Our position is clear – the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the regime associated with them, have been established and are being maintained in violation of international law," said Stephane Dujarric in a note to correspondents on Thursday evening.

"Settlements further entrench the occupation, fuel tensions, and systematically erode the viability of a Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution," the note said.

Construction in the EI area would sever the northern and southern West Bank, severely undermining the prospects for the realization of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State, the note added.

The EI area, a stretch of land east of Jerusalem between the city and the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, is regarded as especially contentious because construction there would effectively cut off East Jerusalem from the northern West Bank.

Plans for building in the area have been frozen for years, largely due to international opposition, reports Anadolu Agency.

In the Gaza Strip, at least 21 Palestinians, including seven aid seekers, were killed in Israeli strikes, according to medical sources speaking

to Al Jazeera.

Four more hunger-related deaths were confirmed in the past 24 hours, raising the total number of Palestinians who have starved to death during Israel's offensive in Gaza to 239, including 106 children.

Meanwhile, a severe heatwave is compounding the suffering of Palestinians in

» Four more hunger-related deaths confirmed in Gaza

» Heatwave in enclave turning makeshift 'homes into ovens'

» 20 Palestinians arrested during West Bank raids

Gaza, where communities have endured nearly two years of relentless Israeli bombardment, forced displacement, and widespread hunger.

The makeshift shelters housing displaced Palestinians have no electricity, no air conditioning, no fans and no escape from the heat.

"These shelters trap the hot air, turning homes into ovens. Inside, families struggle to breathe, stay hydrated and survive," a resident said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Nearly 200 killed in Pakistan flash floods

AFP, Bajaur

Landslides and flash floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains across northern Pakistan have killed at least 199 people in the past 24 hours, national and local officials said yesterday.

Of those killed, 180 were recorded in the mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where one resident likened the disaster to "doomsday".

Another nine people were killed in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, along with five in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region, the National Disaster Management Authority said.

Most were killed in flash floods and collapsing houses, with the dead including 19 women and 17 children. At least 28 others were injured.

Another five people, including two pilots, were killed when a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government helicopter crashed due to bad weather during a relief mission, the province's chief minister, Ali Amin Gandapur, said in a statement.

The provincial government has declared the severely affected mountainous districts of Buner, Bajaur, Mansehra and Battagram disaster-hit areas.

In Bajaur, a tribal district abutting Afghanistan, a crowd gathered around an excavator digging through

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Geneva makes public transport free to combat pollution spike

REUTERS, Geneva



Public transport will be temporarily free of charge in Geneva, in a first for Switzerland, as part of a series of measures aimed at tackling a spike in pollution in the city.

Geneva, in the western French-speaking part of Switzerland, is experiencing a severe peak of ozone pollution – a harmful gas that can cause problems breathing and can trigger headaches and asthma attacks, according to the World Health Organization.

The city's anti-smog system showed that ozone concentrations had exceeded an environmental health safety threshold of 180 micrograms per cubic metre over 24 hours, according to a statement by the Canton of Geneva.

On Tuesday, temperatures hit 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit) with the government issuing heat warnings for western and southern parts of Switzerland.

High temperatures and low cloud cover mean ozone pollutants accumulate and take longer to be dispersed, the Environment Office for the Canton of Geneva told Reuters.



A Palestinian couple mourn the death of their son, Kanan Bakr, who was killed in an early morning Israeli strike on a tent in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Plastic pollution treaty stalled

Geneva talks end as oil-producing nations oppose ambitious deal

REUTERS, Geneva

Delegates discussing the world's first legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution failed to reach consensus, diplomats said yesterday, voicing disappointment and even rage that the 10-day talks produced no deal.

Delegates had been seeking a breakthrough in the deadlocked United Nations' talks in Geneva, but states pushing for an ambitious treaty said that the latest text released overnight failed to meet their expectations.

The chair of the negotiations Ecuador's Luis Vayas Valdivieso adjourned the session with a pledge to resume talks at an undetermined later date, drawing weak applause from exhausted delegates who had worked into the early hours.

French Ecology Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher told the meeting's closing session that she was "enraged because despite genuine efforts by many, and real progress in discussions, no tangible results have been obtained."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



PHOTO: COURTESY

From Dhaka to Kunming FOR A CURE

Bangladeshis turning to China’s Yunnan for affordable, high-quality medical care; visa delays and language gaps remain key hurdles

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR, back from Kunming (China)

When 23-year-old Jannatul Nayeem boarded a flight from Dhaka to Kunming, he carried more than a suitcase. Packed alongside his clothes was the weight of a stubborn spinal disc problem -- and months of frustration over elusive diagnoses and dead ends.

In Bangladesh, he had knocked on many doors. Doctors examined

Hospital officials presented case studies of Bangladeshi patients treated for critical illnesses and intellectual disabilities.

Shen Ling, vice president of Tongren Hospital, said, “For international patients, we have established an efficient, rigorous diagnosis and treatment process, supported by a mature multidisciplinary team to ensure safety and quality. These strengths have created a solid foundation for

patients have been coming to Kunming for a range of treatments, including cancer care, spinal injury rehabilitation, cardiology procedures, and life-changing surgeries.

GROWING DEMAND FOR OVERSEAS TREATMENT
Due to mismanagement, manpower shortages, poor healthcare services, staff negligence, and weak monitoring in Bangladesh, many patients are compelled to seek treatment abroad.

“This year, healthcare cooperation has emerged as a standout achievement in China-Bangladesh relations,” he said.

The first batch of Bangladeshi patients travelled to China for treatment in March. Since then, about 600 individuals have gone for medical care.

“The figure is not very large, but it represents a significant beginning. It is predicted that by the end of this year, we may see 4,000 to 5,000

level

hospitals, with a total of 370,000 hospital beds.

“We have selected hospitals that offer top-tier treatment and cutting-edge techniques to provide international healthcare services for Bangladeshi citizens,” he said.

Treatment costs in Kunming are lower than in Thailand and only about 10 percent higher than in premium hospitals in Delhi.

For example, a blood sugar test in Bangladesh costs at least Tk 200, while in Kunming it is less than Tk 100. Cardiac treatment in Dhaka typically costs Tk 3–4 lakh, whereas in China it costs around \$1,000. Patients are required to deposit 10,000 RMB at the start of treatment, with any unused balance refunded.

Rashedul Hassan, a dentist and country director of the Turkish Healthcare Travel Council, said consultation fees at government

Attendants, medical tourism operators, and Bangladeshi residents in Kunming pointed to the lengthy visa process, high airfare, and limited flights between Bangladesh and Kunming as key barriers.

Omar Faruk Rashedin said language barriers are a major obstacle. Interpreters are scarce and costly -- 500 yuan (around Tk 9,000) for a full day, and 200–300 yuan for subsequent sessions. There are also limited food options catering to Bangladeshi preferences.

In response, Wang Jiankun said that hospitals have begun inviting Bangladeshi students to provide language support.

On food facilities, authorities at the First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University and Tongren Hospital said Muslim restaurants are available on-site.

Attendants also said the exclusive use of Chinese in medical reports and billing creates confusion. Financial transactions are another hurdle, as credit cards and insurance are often rejected.

Sagor Hossain from Chattogram, who brought his mother -- a cancer patient -- for treatment, highlighted the urgent need for English-language documentation, as Bangladeshi doctors cannot read Chinese.

Lu Jiang, vice president of Fuwai Yunnan Hospital, said they can provide English-language discharge summaries and admission papers.

Wang Jiankun said they have coordinated with some banks to improve the payment system. Guo Weiwei, vice president of the First People's Hospital of Yunnan Province, said they accept Visa credit cards.

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen said the embassy has introduced special facilitation measures for medical treatment visits, including green channel services and a streamlined process.

Patients with an invitation certificate from a Chinese hospital can now get a visa within a single working day.

Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Azad Majmuder said the interim government is exploring alternative destinations for advanced medical treatment at reasonable costs and within a short timeframe.

Efforts are underway to launch direct flights between Kunming and Chattogram, as well as more flights on the Dhaka-Kunming route.

“We hope that by the end of this year, the Chattogram-Kunming flight will be operational, making travel easier for patients and businesspeople,” he said in Kunming on August 8.



him, prescribed medicines, and sent him for tests, but none could give him clarity on his condition or a way out. His hopes of seeking treatment in India collapsed when his visa application was rejected.

That’s when he turned his sights to China -- drawn by its reputation for advanced medical facilities and highly skilled professionals.

Accompanied by his brother, Omar Faruk Rashedin, Nayeem arrived in Kunming, the capital of China’s Yunnan province, and was admitted to Kunming Tongren Hospital. Initial tests paved the way for a critical operation that, according to his brother, has already improved his condition.

“Now he is doing well,” Rashedin told a group of Bangladeshi journalists on August 8 at the hospital.

He said the total cost -- about 60,000 yuan -- was comparable to treatment expenses in upscale private hospitals in Bangladesh, but the quality of care was on another level.

“The healthcare service here is outstanding,” he said. “Even the doctor personally cleaned the bed and did the dressing. Nurses checked on the patient around ten times during the night. There’s no shortage of sincerity from the doctors and nurses.”

During their visit, organised at the invitation of the Chinese government, the journalists observed how Tongren Hospital is equipped with international-standard diagnostic and laboratory tools -- technology that ensures accurate diagnoses and effective treatment.

receiving patients from abroad, including Bangladesh.”

On August 7, the delegation visited the First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, a government-run facility known for its expertise in treating a wide range of illnesses. Clean, organised, and well-maintained, it provides an environment designed to support both patient recovery and staff efficiency.

The following day, the group toured Kunming Eye Hospital, where they observed state-of-the-art ophthalmic technologies, including laser surgery, advanced diagnostic imaging, and comprehensive eye care.

Hospital authorities said they are working to make the process easier for Bangladeshi patients by simplifying admission, improving communication, and offering dedicated international patient services.

Zhang Min, CEO of Kunming Eye Hospital, said Bangladeshi patients would find treatment there both affordable and accessible. “We receive hundreds of patients every year from countries like India and Russia, and we welcome Bangladeshi patients as well.”

Before initiating treatment, expert teams thoroughly explain the patient’s condition, proposed treatment plan, and expected prognosis. Throughout the process, patients’ rights to make informed decisions and choose their preferred treatment methods are fully respected.

Authorities said Bangladeshi

India remains the top destination, followed by Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia, for high-end medical care.

According to Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur, Bangladeshis spend over \$5 billion annually on medical treatment abroad, with India and Thailand being the primary destinations. He shared this at a programme in Dhaka last December.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of China-Bangladesh diplomatic relations, as well as the designated year of China-Bangladesh people-to-people exchanges.

Bangladeshi patients travelling to China for treatment,” he added.

YUNNAN’S STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE
Attendants of patients, medical tourism operators, and Bangladeshi residents in Kunming said Yunnan could be a promising option for Bangladeshi patients, given its proximity -- just a two-hour flight from Dhaka.

Wang Jiankun, deputy director of the Health Commission of Yunnan Province, said the province has 29,678 medical and health institutions, including 1,319 hospitals, 122 tertiary-level hospitals, and 472 secondary-

hospitals in China range from Tk 200 to 300.

Both MM Masumuzzaman, CEO of Seok Healthcare, and Rashedul confirmed that hospital costs in Kunming are lower than in Thailand.

Lu Jiang, assistant to the president of Fuwai Yunnan Hospital, said medical services in China are comparable to those in Thailand.

“But the cost, as we understand it, may be one-fourth of the price in Thailand, and lower than in Malaysia,” he said.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES
Despite the promising prospects, several challenges remain.



JACKFRUIT

Bangladesh's Forgotten Superfruit

SAJEDUL HOQ

Every summer in Bangladesh, thousands of tonnes of ripe jackfruit rot under trees—unpicked, unsold, and ultimately discarded. Despite being our national fruit and a recognised superfood, jackfruit remains a vastly underutilised resource in our food system. This is not just food waste; it is a lost opportunity for nutrition, enterprise, and national pride.

Jackfruit lives up to its “superfruit” label with remarkable nutritional credentials: rich in fibre, vitamin C, potassium, and antioxidants. Green jackfruit is now used globally as a plant-based meat substitute, while the ripe fruit is a sweet, energising treat. In many Bangladeshi homes, particularly in rural areas, jackfruit buds are mashed or mixed with salt and chilli powder to create a simple yet flavourful snack—one that evokes nostalgia and childhood memories for many. Every part of the fruit is usable—seeds can be milled into flour, the rinds used as livestock feed, and the fibrous pulp processed into natural sugar. Even jackfruit leaves are sometimes used for packaging or decorative food presentation.

Yet in Bangladesh, nearly 45 per cent of our jackfruit harvest—about 500,000 tonnes—goes to waste annually due to poor storage and processing infrastructure, according to a 2023 report. This is a staggering figure in a country facing rising food insecurity and economic stress.

Why aren't we seeing the value?
Part of the problem stems from a deeply ingrained mindset. Many Bangladeshis instinctively regard foreign products as superior, while undervaluing what is grown at home. This attitude—shaped by our colonial legacy and reinforced by the forces of globalisation—has gradually shifted food preferences away from traditional produce like jackfruit.

Scholars note that formerly colonised societies often internalise a sense of inferiority towards their own traditions and resources. In Bangladesh, this is clearly reflected in our treatment of food heritage: fruits such as apples or grapes are celebrated as symbols of aspiration, while jackfruit is too often dismissed as outdated, messy, or inconvenient.

Urbanisation has only deepened this disconnect. For many younger Bangladeshis, jackfruit is messy, difficult to eat, or simply outdated. They often gravitate towards packaged imports—perceived as more modern—despite their lower nutritional value. This perception gap has created a market disconnect that disadvantages rural farmers and domestic producers.

From neglect to innovation
Jackfruit's versatility makes it a prime candidate for food innovation. Young jackfruit can be canned, vacuum-sealed, or frozen for global export as a plant-based



meat substitute or vegetable ingredient. Seeds can be roasted into snacks or ground into gluten-free flour for baking. The ripe pulp can be turned into spreads, dehydrated into chewy fruit strips or crunchy fruit chips. Moreover, the fibrous parts of the fruit that are typically discarded can be used to extract natural fruit sugar, which can serve as an industrial input in confectionery or beverage production. Even small-scale food processors can experiment with products—such as jackfruit pulp fruit leather, dehydrated chips, jackfruit-flavoured ice cream, or spiced seed snacks—that align more closely with local taste and culinary traditions.

In rural Bangladesh, jackfruit trees are plentiful but often overlooked for anything beyond personal consumption.

Unlocking commercial value requires investment—not just in trees, but in the ecosystem around them.

To achieve this, we must support the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) working in food processing. Policy support and investment are crucial. Farmers and small processors need training in post-harvest handling, access to modern drying and storage technologies, and tax incentives to innovate.

Countries such as Thailand offer valuable lessons. Its One Tambon One Product (OTOP) programme supports local entrepreneurs in rural areas, helping transform fruits like durian, mangosteen, and jackfruit into international exports. In 2022, Thailand's fruit exports reached USD 5.88 billion, with processed jackfruit gaining a growing share. Malaysia has tapped into the Chinese market with premium durian and jackfruit exports, creating distinct branding for local varieties. Vietnam, meanwhile, has heavily invested in fresh jackfruit exports—becoming one of the top suppliers to East Asian markets. All three nations provide models of how coordinated marketing, rural entrepreneurship, and infrastructure investment can elevate a humble fruit into a high-value product.

We can do the same
Bangladesh does not lack potential. What we lack is a clear strategy to elevate jackfruit from a seasonal delicacy to a year-round economic asset.

The government can lead the way by:

- Providing training on post-harvest storage and processing, especially in district-level towns and rural areas.
- Subsidising rural infrastructure such



as cold storage, drying units, and food-safe packaging systems.

- Offering tax incentives and soft loans for MSMEs investing in jackfruit-based products, particularly start-ups working on healthy food innovations.
- Promoting jackfruit through national campaigns as a nutritious and heritage-rich product.
- Creating public-private partnerships to pilot jackfruit processing hubs in high-yield areas.

Jackfruit is not just a fruit—it is resilience, nutrition, and enterprise on a branch. Let us give our national fruit the future it deserves.

Sajedul Hoq is a development practitioner and founder of Fusion Terminal, a food processing venture in Bangladesh.

BEYOND THE SNAKE CHARMS

The changing lives of the Bedes



Oval-shaped makeshift tents of the Bede community.

PHOTO: PHILIP GAIN

Qurbani Eid holds special significance for Bedes. The festival's importance stems from their self-identification as Muslims, although anthropological research reveals that their beliefs and practices are far from exclusively Islamic.

In conversation with Ranjana Biswas, author and researcher on the Bede community, about their history, struggles, and present realities.

The Daily Star (TDS): What do historical and literary sources reveal about the true origins of the Bede community?
Ranjana Biswas (RB): Researchers examining the Bedes' anthropological identity have often relied on colonial-era sources, particularly British accounts, which have fostered a misleading narrative. These records claim the Bedes arrived in Bengal in 1632 CE with Ballal Raj, allegedly from Burma, and misidentify his accompanying Magh soldiers as Bedes. Other accounts even suggest Arabian origins. However, early religious and literary sources tell a different story. The *Brihat Dharma Purana* refers to the Bedes as *bish bauddho*, while the *Champaya Jataka* describes them as snake charmers extracting venom—an image later adopted in literature and film. This points to the Bedes being indigenous to Bengal, with traditions at

least a thousand years old.

TDS: What defines the Bede community's identity and traditions?

RB: The Bedes are divided into several subgroups, yet no official census has ever been conducted. The Institute of Mother Language recognises their language, Thar, which had around 40,000 speakers according to the 1991 census. While some community associations claim the population could be as high as 1.5 million, the actual figure is unlikely to exceed 400,000.

The Bede population is more concentrated in certain districts, with Savar being a notable example. Once the only place in Bangladesh to host a regular snake market, Savar has four villages with a high concentration of Bedes, making the community highly visible there. However, this market came to an end after the Wildlife

Management and Nature Conservation Division introduced new laws in 2012 banning the public sale of snakes. I personally witnessed the market operating from around 1997–98 until its closure in 2012. Beyond Savar, large Bede communities are also found in Lauhajang, Sunamganj, Natore, and the Agunmukha-Barishal region—areas where the Bedes remain most prominent in Bangladesh.

Historically nature-worshippers, the Bedes began absorbing Islamic influences during the Mughal era, but their faith remains fundamentally syncretic. They continue to worship deities such as Manasa, Kali, and Jatadhari. Shiva—rituals closely linked to their professional practices and cultural traditions.

Qurbani Eid holds special significance for Bedes. Unlike Eid-ul-Fitr, it is the occasion when Bedes from across

Bangladesh gather in designated locations, such as Savar. The festival's importance stems from their self-identification as Muslims, although anthropological research reveals that their beliefs and practices are far from exclusively Islamic.

TDS: How would you describe the current state of the Bede community? Are they experiencing major changes?
RB: The Bede community has undergone notable occupational shifts. Once defined by specific traditional professions, many have now taken up work similar to that of mainstream Bengalis.

For instance, many of the vendors selling bangles or earrings near Dhaka University are actually Bedes, particularly from the Sandar subgroup, which is primarily engaged in trade. Traditionally, the community's professional identity has been divided into three major groups: Mal Manta, Sandar Manta, and Bandure Manta, each with further subgroups. Among the Mal Manta are the Sapure (snake charmers), whose work involves catching snakes, extracting venom, and

performing snake shows. The Sandar group trades in bangles, toys, artificial jewellery, locks, and keys, while some also deal in ashes for gold shops.

The Mal Manta also specialise in preparing herbal medicines for ailments such as toothaches or dental worms, practising cupping therapy (*singa*), and performing “*komorer bish chhara*” (removing waist poison).

A small, more orthodox group within the community still lives on boats and continues ancestral professions, preserving their traditional lifestyle. Most others, however, have moved into new livelihoods. For example, Taiyab Ali Manta runs a tea stall in Savar, while his wife, Turuturi Begum, occasionally continues their traditional practice of *kawala*—travelling to villages to sell charms and herbal remedies. Their son has taken a completely different route, working as a tour guide for foreigners, earning enough to buy land and settle permanently.

TDS: What challenges do the Bede face in education and accessing government support?

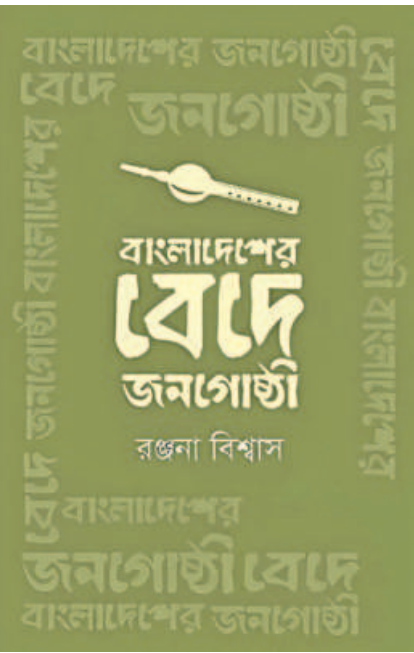
RB: The Bede community remains far behind in education, with only a small number attending formal schools. As a nomadic, marginalised group historically excluded from institutions, access to education was nearly impossible for generations. Even today, while some settled families send their children to school, social stigma persists—many are still treated as “untouchable,” leading to frequent dropouts and very few completing exams or progressing in their studies.

During the previous government's tenure, a special project was launched for the Harijon and Bede communities, providing housing on land across the Bongshi River and offering training to revive traditional crafts. However, the lack of voter ID cards—a requirement for any government assistance—proved a major barrier. Settled families were generally able to obtain them, but nomadic groups struggled.

The interview was taken by Priyam Paul.



Ranjana Biswas



Why are our major rivers no longer within humanity’s safe limits?

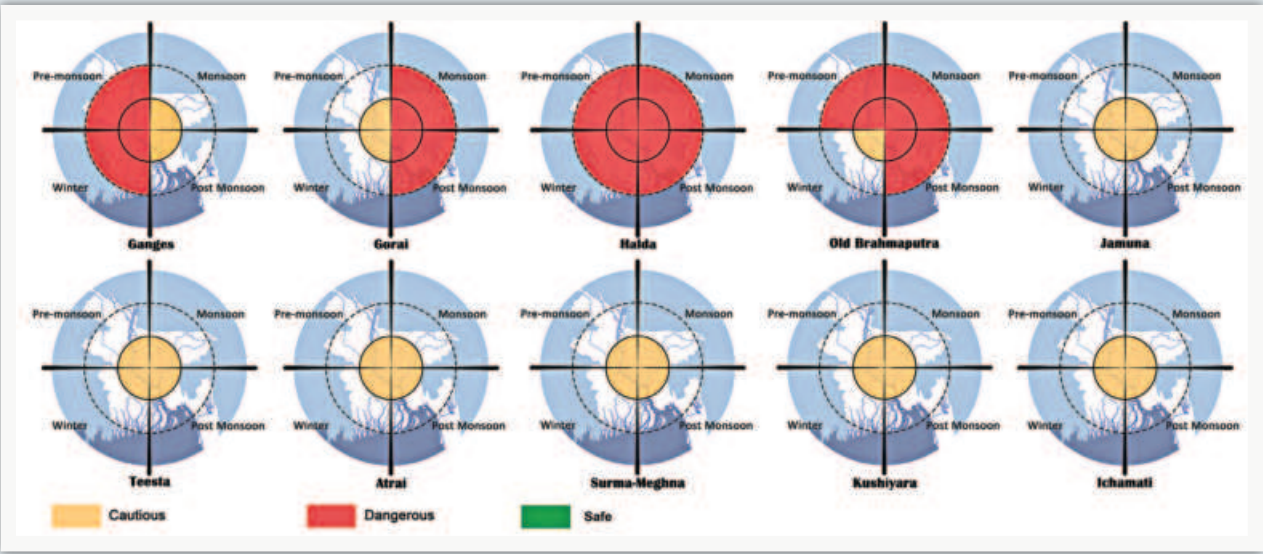
DR MD SARWAR HOSSAIN, ALAMGIR KABIR, MD MAHMUDUL HASAN, SHEIKH ROKONUZZAMAN AND HASAN MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH

Globally, Bangladesh is known as the land of rivers and flooding. However, the transboundary nature of rivers in Bangladesh imposes a risk to water security, which is exacerbated by global climate change and anthropogenic activities such as urbanisation, booming agriculture, economic development, and population growth. Four out of ten rivers in the Bangladesh delta – the Ganges (dry season), Gorai, Halda, and Old Brahmaputra – have surpassed the safe operating space, while the remaining six are classified as being in a cautious state due to hydrological alterations and minimum river flow requirements. This finding comes from our new study to define a safe operating space for major rivers in the Bangladesh delta, jointly led by the University of Glasgow and Bangladesh University of Professionals, in

Four out of ten rivers in the Bangladesh delta – the Ganges (dry season), Gorai, Halda, and Old Brahmaputra – have surpassed the safe operating space, while the remaining six are classified as being in a cautious state due to hydrological alterations and minimum river flow requirements.

collaboration with Gazipur Agricultural University and Riverine People, and recently published in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*. The concept of a safe operating space, first introduced in 2009 by Rockström and colleagues, assesses the overall health of the Earth by defining boundaries for critical systems – including climate, water, and biodiversity – beyond which conditions become dangerous for humanity. In 2023, Richardson and her team updated this framework, reporting that six of the nine planetary boundaries have already been crossed, among them freshwater, which is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the face of climate change.

The findings of our study also show that all seasonal river flows display a decreasing trend in the last three decades, except in the winter season, and that the majority of river flows have been altered (high to severe) in the Bangladesh delta. Our analysis highlights the challenges in maintaining a safe operating space for the Ganges River, despite the signing of the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty in 1996, which is set to expire in 2026. Can one of the world’s most climate-vulnerable deltas build resilience to climate change without securing a safe operating space for its rivers? This is a question that demands urgent attention, for the rivers of Bangladesh have shaped its economy, environment, and culture since the dawn of civilisation, sustaining agriculture, fisheries, mangroves, wetlands, and much more in the Bangladesh delta. The several hydrological alterations and the dangerous state of rivers are mainly due to anthropogenic



The red shading represents a dangerous state (beyond the safe operating space) of river flow. The yellow and green shading represent the cautious and safe states of river flow, respectively. However, according to our findings, none of the river flows are within the safe operating space. Four major rivers, including the Ganges (dry season) and Old Brahmaputra, have already exceeded the safe operating space. These figures have been conceptualised as a metaphor based on synthesised information from the analysis in this study. Kabir et al., 2025

drivers such as reservoir construction, booming agriculture, economic development, conflicts in political regimes, and dam building. The impacts of these transgressed safe operating spaces and hydrological alterations in Bangladeshi rivers are already evidenced and well documented in scientific literature. Fish species, including the most popular and national fish, hilsa,

Ganges. All these consequences are particularly alarming as the Ganges treaty between India and Bangladesh is set to expire in 2026. Can Bangladesh champion transboundary water conflict resolution? Though the dangerous state of major rivers can directly hit hard the 170 million population in Bangladesh, there are also transboundary



A drastic fall in the Jamuna River's water flow during the dry season. The Jamuna is given a cautious status, considering hydrological alteration and minimum river flow requirements. Md. Monzurul Haque/Shutterstock

have, for example, become extinct in the upper reaches of the Ganges River basin. Many aquatic ecosystems and fish habitats, such as those in the Halda River, have been severely affected by low river water flow. Although the increasing salinisation in coastal Bangladesh is known to be driven by sea level rise in response to global climate change, river flows are highly critical in maintaining the saline and freshwater balance due to the geophysical characteristics of Bangladesh. The reduction of river flow has already resulted in elevated salinity, which has adversely affected the world’s largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, agricultural production, and social-ecological systems in the coastal and other regions of the Bangladesh delta. Due to excessive upstream water extraction, substantial increases in salinity levels in the Gorai River have adversely affected fisheries, agricultural yields, and the population of freshwater dolphins in the

consequences of the river water crisis. The recent water conflict between India and Pakistan, and China’s plans for a new dam on the Brahmaputra, highlight that South Asia is one of the hotspots of water conflicts, which can be triggered by climate change and human-made interventions in transboundary rivers. The destruction of the world’s largest mangrove forest due to low river water flow, and increasing salinisation (indirectly accelerated by low river flow), could negatively disrupt the regional climate system in Bangladesh, including India and Nepal. Ultimately, transboundary water insecurity and conflicts could jeopardise South Asia’s goals of poverty eradication and ensuring no one is left behind. Therefore, a holistic social-ecological systems approach is required to ensure water security and enhance resilience to climate change in South Asian countries. However, the solution to this problem is not a simple task, as

it requires transboundary and international support and cooperation to ensure fair and equitable treaties, ecological restoration, and technological solutions to maintain the river flow within the safe operating space in the Bangladesh delta. This is particularly challenging due to transboundary rivers that drain many countries such as China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Often these countries’ political regimes are not in a state for transboundary negotiation to resolve the conflict of sharing water, which requires meeting the basic human needs of nearly 700 million people. Success stories such as the Mekong River Commission (e.g. mutual benefit, sharing accurate and appropriate technical information) and the Indus Waters Treaty (e.g. multi-tiered dispute resolution process) could be adopted for bilateral and multilateral treaties with India, including Nepal for the Ganges, and China and Bhutan for the Jamuna River, respectively. There are some critical perspectives to examine before negotiating the share of transboundary rivers. For example, while the 1996 Ganges Treaty was a diplomatic breakthrough given the geopolitics of water, our analysis reveals a complex reality. Although the Padma River’s flow remained relatively stable from 2000 to 2018, it was substantially lower than pre-1976 levels, before the Farakka Dam’s construction in India. The impacts of the Farakka Dam are clearly evident both in India and Bangladesh. Furthermore, according to *The Hindustan Times* and *The Economic Times*, nearly 1,000 dams built across the Ganges River basin in India have significantly altered, restricted, and diverted river water flow. Therefore, the diversion of river water flow through dams in a river basin also needs to be accounted for when negotiating water share from a holistic systems perspective. Our political leaders must urgently prioritise water sharing and climate change as a stable political agenda, ensuring these targets remain consistent despite changes in national or transboundary political regimes. We need trained people who understand and are equipped with interdisciplinary knowledge and skills

in water and climate change, regardless of their political identity. Crucially, transboundary water disputes must be resolved inclusively and collaboratively with all countries, ensuring no nation is excluded. Bangladesh should bring the excluded transboundary rivers back into the discussion. Our classrooms need to be turned into places for critical thinking and active learning engagement to train future leaders on water, climate, and sustainability. Bangladesh needs stocktaking studies of the transboundary rivers as well. Though the Joint River Commission officially listed 54 transboundary rivers between Bangladesh and India, the number is far higher. According to a 2021 study by Riverine People, a civil society organisation, there are at least 126 transboundary rivers between Bangladesh and India. Bangladesh’s foreign ministry proposed 16 more transboundary rivers to be included in the official list in 2016, but its Indian counterpart has not yet responded. In addition to negotiation, treaties, and political will for resolving transboundary water disputes, ecological restoration—such as reducing deforestation, managing changes in land use, and restoring wetlands and canals—may enhance resilience to flooding and water security in the Bangladesh delta. The water storage capacity must be improved by regenerating canals and adopting nature-based solutions such as ponds, and spaces for storing water to manage heavy rainfall and sudden upstream river flows. Cutting edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence can help prevent severe damage to livelihoods due to flash floods. Remote sensing provides real-time, basin-wide monitoring of river flow, sediment, and ecological changes, offering data driven, transparent, and unbiased information for transboundary negotiations. Integrating satellite observations with hydrological models supports equitable water sharing and early warning for climate resilience. Importantly, the future water treaties for sharing transboundary water must be based on historical river flow, independent of existing infrastructure, and projections of climate change. Adopting tax-based water sharing can be a novel approach for sharing water among the countries sharing the river basin. Countries using more water would pay more tax, and the revenue would be redistributed among the other countries that share rivers in the treaty. Dr Md Sarwar Hossain, Associate Professor and Programme Director of MSc in Environmental Risk Management, School of Social & Environmental Sustainability, University of Glasgow. Alamgir Kabir, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Science, Bangladesh University of Professionals Md Mahmudul Hasan, Department of Environmental Science, Bangladesh University of Professionals Sheikh Rokonzaman, Riverine People Hasan Muhammad Abdullah, Associate Professor, Department of Agroforestry and Environment, Gazipur Agricultural University.



Hardinge Bridge over the Padma River. The Padma is severely impacted, with its water flow falling below the minimum ecological and operational requirements for sustainable functioning. Insight-Photography/Shutterstock

INSIDE THE FOOD BASKETS of Bangladesh

From rice paddies to mango orchards, a look at how the country’s food baskets are defining its agricultural map

SUKANTA HALDER AND SOHEL PARVEZ

From the sun-baked paddy fields of the northwest to the mango orchards of Rajshahi and the vegetable fields of Rangpur, the country’s agricultural heartlands are evolving. Once dominated by rice, these “food baskets” are now producing a growing mix of grains, fruits and vegetables – defining the country’s rural economy and the plates of millions.

Is there any part of Bangladesh untouched by agriculture? Perhaps not, unless one counts the concrete expanses of cities like Dhaka. Even that is debatable. In the capital, as in other towns, rooftop gardens brim with fruit

a 50-year-old farmer of Meherpur district.

“In my childhood, only one crop was grown in a vast area. Now we can safely cultivate three crops a year,” he said. The district’s higher land also helps, with less waterlogging and earlier planting.

Bangladesh has about 45.93 lakh acres of triple-cropped land out of 3.93 crore acres of gross cropped area, the total sown once or more in a year. Some regions now specialise in particular crops, shaped by climate, soil and infrastructure.

RICE

Five northern districts – Mymensingh, Sunamganj, Naogaon, Dinajpur and Bogura – produce nearly a fifth of the national rice harvest across Aus, Aman and Boro seasons, said Mohammad Khalequzzaman, director general of the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI).

Mymensingh district is the largest Boro producer, contributing 5 percent of total output, followed by Sunamganj, Naogaon, Netrokona, Bogura, Jashore and Dinajpur. Sunamganj accounts for 4.5 percent of total Boro rice, the main dry-season crop, which yielded an estimated 2.10 crore tonnes in the fiscal year 2023-24.

“Historically strong in Aman rice, Dinajpur is now expanding into Boro. The northwest bordering district alone contributes 5 percent of total rainfed Aman rice,” said Khalequzzaman.

“These areas have become major rice producers due to favourable soil, stable weather patterns and relatively low risk of natural disasters like droughts and

In parts of Dinajpur, maize has replaced paddy in response to rising demand from poultry and aquaculture feed industries.

“Maize production is also concentrated in Manikganj, Rajshahi, Jamalpur and Natore. Twelve areas, including Chuadanga district and the Rangpur division, account for around 80 percent of total maize output,” said Muhammad Rezaul Kabir, senior scientific officer at the Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute.

WHEAT

Wheat is mainly grown in Thakurgaon, Chapainawabganj, Natore, Rajshahi, Pabna, Faridpur, Naogaon, Panchagarh, Meherpur, Kushtia, Rajbari, Bhola, Kurigram and Dinajpur.

These districts produce about 90 percent of the crop.

“These areas benefit from cooler, drier winters, fertile loamy soil, reliable irrigation and a long tradition of cereal farming,” Kabir said.

FRUITS

Fruit production is shifting north and to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, said Md Mosiur Rahman, principal scientific

homestead cultivation in parts of Natore and the Hill Tracts, he added.

Higher profitability and access to hybrid seeds, many from India, have spurred mango cultivation in Naogaon, said BRRI DG Khalequzzaman.

Newer fruits are also gaining ground. Dragon fruit is now among the top six in national output. Guava, once a minor crop, is widely grown and helps reduce reliance on imported apples.

According to official data, the top five fruits by volume are banana, jackfruit, mango, guava and papaya. Bananas remain the leader, though seasonality is a challenge.

“Most fruits are produced between April and August, which limits year-round supply,” Rahman said. “The processing industry needs crops like bananas, lemons, guavas and certain mango or jackfruit varieties that can be grown all year.”

NORTH: THE NATION’S FOOD BASKET

Md Akhtar Hossain Khan, chief seed technologist at the Ministry of Agriculture, calls the north the nation’s food basket.

“Vegetables, fruits and high-value crops dominate there, alongside substantial rice and wheat cultivation,”

PHOTO:
AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

part of the diet, and production has surged over three decades due to hybrid varieties and better seeds.”

In the late 1990s, hubs such as Cumilla, the outskirts of Dhaka, Bogura, Gaibandha and Jashore supplied about half the national vegetable market. Production has since spread to Rangpur, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, Barishal, Sylhet, Bhola, Chattogram and Manikganj.

“These 13 districts now produce about 75 percent of vegetables,” Anam said.

Some crops have found new strongholds. “Godagari in Rajshahi has seen a boom in tomatoes. Onion cultivation has expanded to Pabna and Manikganj. Papaya and taro have moved from household gardens to commercial plots. Watermelon, once confined to Kaptai, is now grown from Panchagarh to coastal Patuakhali and even Sylhet,” he added.

Flat beans, once a Pabna speciality, are now grown in Sylhet. Crop rotation, he noted, is becoming essential to protect soil health.

‘DON’T SEE AGRI OFFICIALS’

Yet the abundance of production brings its own concerns. Farmers like Royel and Islam acknowledge that increased cultivation has raised incomes and improved living standards, but prices are volatile.

“When we get better prices, our hard work pays off,” Royel said. “But when prices fall, we lose interest. There is no guarantee we will get a fair price.”

AT A GLANCE

- Meherpur sees intense farming activities throughout a year
- Mymensingh, Sunamganj, Naogaon, Dinajpur and Bogura produce 20% of total rice
- 14 districts, including Thakurgaon, Rajshahi, Pabna, and Dinajpur, produce 90% of total wheat
- Northern districts and Chittagong hill tracts emerge for mangoes, bananas, jackfruit, guava, papaya
- North accounts for 75% of potato output; Rangpur leads production
- Comilla, Dhaka’s outskirts, Manikganj, Bogura, Jashore, Rangpur, Narsingdi and Munshiganj are major vegetable hubs

trees, tomato vines and brinjal plants.

Across the countryside, cultivation is not a pastime but a way of life. Certain districts have become major suppliers for the rest of the country, producing rice, maize, wheat, potatoes and vegetables in volumes large enough to feed cities, including Dhaka, home to nearly 2 crore people.

Today, anyone visiting the western and northwestern districts can see the changes in cropping patterns. Large paddy fields still dominate, but they now share space with vegetables, fruit orchards, and maize. This shift is part of a gradual diversification. Fields that once grew a single crop for most of the year now produce two or three.

Cropping intensity, or the number of crops grown on the same land in a year, has risen from 171 percent in the early 1980s to about 200 percent today.

In Meherpur, a district on the western border, the figure is 278 percent, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). In neighbouring Chuadanga, it is 265 percent.

“Once we had two crops a year. Now we grow three. Some farmers grow two rice crops and maize, while some grow rice and vegetables,” said Wasim Royel, a farmer from industrial township Darshana of Chuadanga.

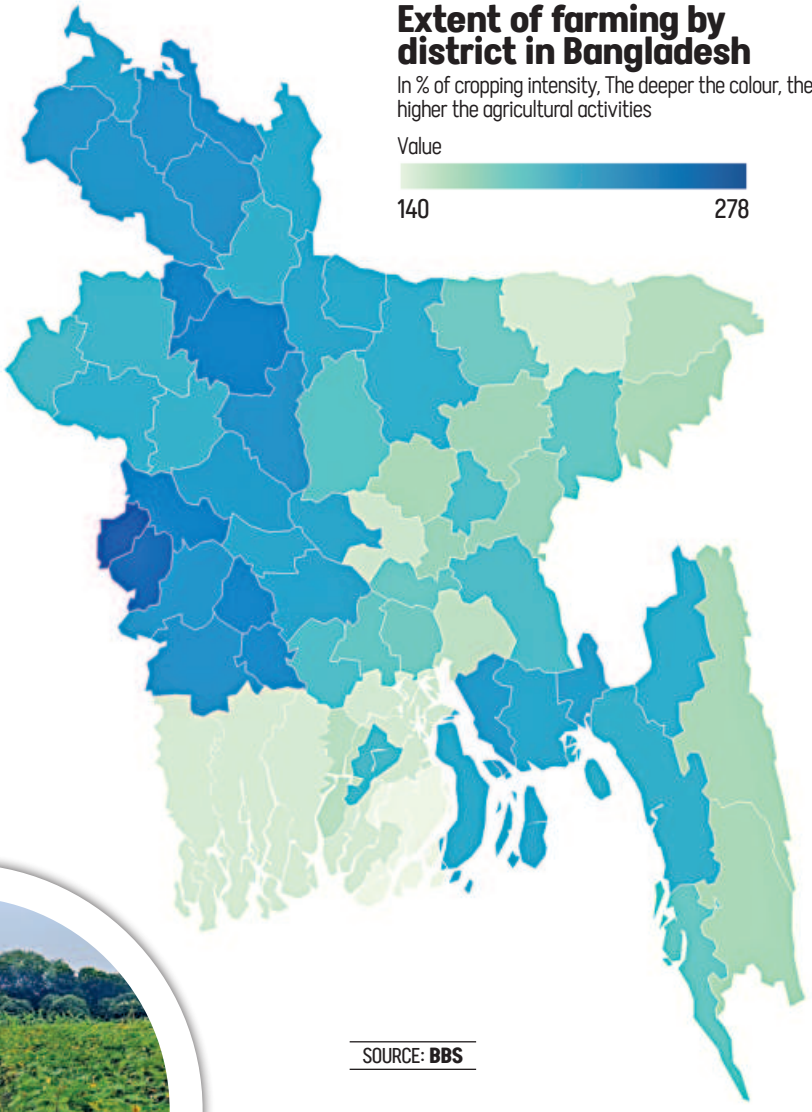
The major change took place in the last 15 years. “Availability of hybrid seeds has been the major driver for increasing cultivation. Now, no one keeps their land fallow.”

According to Royel, rice can be harvested in 90 days on average now, leaving time for maize, which takes 130 days, and vegetables. “In Meherpur, you will see that vegetables are grown throughout the year.”

Irrigation has been another key factor.

“The breakthrough in farming in our area came after the introduction of irrigation and affordable shallow tube well pumps,” said Samadul Islam,

“The breakthrough in farming in our area has come after the introduction of irrigation and the availability of shallow tube well pumps at affordable prices. Initially, water pumps were expensive. Later, these pumps became cheaper,” said Samadul Islam, a 50-year-old farmer in Meherpur district.



floods,” said the BRRI DG.

MAIZE

Maize, barely grown a generation ago, is now Bangladesh’s second-largest grain, with about 46 lakh tonnes produced annually. Chuadanga accounts for over a tenth of the total. Dinajpur leads in volume, and Rangpur division produces more than half the national harvest.

“Farmers are increasingly opting for crops with better returns, signalling a shift in these historically rice-dominant regions,” said Khalequzzaman.

officer at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute’s fruit division.

“Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj excel in mangoes, lychees, guavas, bananas and papayas. The Hill Tracts, once dominated by jhum, are seeing systematic orchards of jackfruit, bananas, pineapples and even mangoes,” he said.

In Rajshahi and Naogaon, groundwater levels and soil suit fruit production, especially mangoes. In the hills, higher ground reduces root-level waterlogging. Land once marginal is now being used commercially, with large-scale orchards replacing

he said.

Rangpur district is the largest potato producer, followed by Dinajpur, Bogura and Joypurhat. Together, the northern districts grow three-fourth of the country’s 1.15 crore tonnes of potatoes each year.

Barishal leads in pulses, while Noakhali is emerging in soybean. “We are seeing a shift from homestead farming to commercial-scale production,” Khan said.

Mahbub Anam, managing director of Lal Teer Seeds Ltd, said rice is the backbone of the food basket, followed by potatoes.

He said, “Vegetables form a crucial

A lot depends on the mercy of the weather, too.

Heavy rains this season damaged Royel’s fields and Islam’s banana orchard. Both say they rarely see agricultural extension officers.

“We don’t see them in our fields,” Royel said. “Farmers would be encouraged if they visited and advised us on new technology.”

Islam raised another issue. “Pesticides are weak. We have to spray twice a day on crops like brinjal. We are being cheated.”

“The government should know that if we cannot produce food, national food security is at risk,” he said.

