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## MONEY LAUNDERING NBR traces Tk 40,000cr in assets abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue has found assets worth nearly Tk 40,000 crore in five countries which it believes were bought with money laundered from Bangladesh, said the Chief Adviser's Office yesterday.

The findings came from investigations conducted by the Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) of the NBR.

CIC Director General Ahsan Habib briefed Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on the findings yesterday at the state guesthouse Jamuna in presence of NBR Chairman Md Abdur Rahman Khan.

The CIC also uncovered 352 foreign passports obtained by Bangladeshis through cash-for-citizenship schemes in nine countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, North Macedonia, Malta, Saint Lucia and Turkey.

In one case, a passport was purchased for \$1.2 million, CIC chief Habib said.

The assets traced by the CIC were located in Dubai, London, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, New York, Virginia and Florida, with the largest concentrations in Singapore, Malaysia, Dubai and London, an NBR official said on condition of anonymity.

The official noted that the process of realising Tk 10,000 crore in taxes and penalties from the identified taxpayers has already begun. "We have requested field offices to take steps in this regard," he added.

The CIC teams visited the destinations between January and April after gathering preliminary information from domestic sources.

- Assets traced to seven cities, including Singapore, KL, Dubai, and London
- Bangladeshis obtained 352 foreign passports from nine countries
- CIC detects 346 properties linked to Bangladeshi individuals, firms
- NBR takes steps to collect Tk 10,000cr in taxes and penalties

"So far, we have traced 346 properties in the names of individuals and companies through money laundering from Bangladesh. This represents only a partial picture of our investigation," said Habib.

He also revealed that during Sheikh Hasina's tenure, money launderers had installed their own operatives inside Bangladesh Bank to manipulate its central database, erasing large volumes of data. "The good news is that CIC has now developed the expertise to recover the information," he said.

Calling the findings "just the tip of the iceberg", Habib said the CIC, with support from more than six international organisations, is working to seize and repatriate the assets while ensuring punishment for those involved.

"We still have a large volume of information, which will require more time to uncover fully," he said.

The revelations echo previous reports. The White Paper panel on the economy estimated that an average of \$16 billion was siphoned abroad annually during Sheikh Hasina's "corrupt autocracy". And in an interview with the Financial Times last October, Bangladesh Bank Governor

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Hundreds of impounded battery-run auto-rickshaws, among other vehicles, at a dumping site near the Mansurabad Police Lines in the port city. After a pause of several months, the Chittagong Metropolitan Police resumed its special drive against the illegal rickshaws about a week ago. While the operation is bringing some order to city roads, it has also raised questions about the livelihood of the rickshaw-pullers. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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## Retired officials' promotions plunged civil service into crisis

BAHARAM KHAN

One year into the interim government's tenure, the public administration ministry remains in disarray, with erratic promotions and controversial decisions deepening instability in the civil service.

Instead of initiating reforms to make bureaucracy efficient and impartial, the ministry opted for a flurry of retrospective promotions for retired officials—many of them mired in controversy. This led to mistrust and resentment among around 15 lakh public employees, according to current and former officials.

"Since the mass uprising, many incompetent and corrupt officials, alongside some deserving ones, have been granted retrospective promotions, angering a large section of bureaucrats," said an official from the 31st BCS batch, seeking anonymity for fear of reprisal.



Official records show that 764 retired officials of administration cadre were given retrospective promotions on February 9. Of them, 119 were promoted to secretary and over 500 to additional secretary.

In total, around 1,500 officers were elevated to the ranks of deputy secretary, joint secretary, and additional secretary—an unprecedented number of promotions in such a short period. Many of them face corruption allegations.

"The country's civil service remains unstable and fragile because the post-

uprising period saw appointments of some incompetent officials in the top tier," Firoz Miah, an expert on public administration, told The Daily Star.

"The officials are not the only ones at fault; those who selected them are equally responsible," said Firoz, also a former additional secretary.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Will not let Bangladesh be a haven for extremism  
Says Tarique



UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has said the party's goal is to ensure that Bangladesh never turns into a haven for extremism or fundamentalism.

He made the comments while speaking virtually at a views-exchange meeting with writers and poets yesterday. The event titled "The Role and Duties of Poets and Writers in the Transition to Democracy" was organised by the BNP.

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BNP reaching out to Hefazat, others  
Move seen as effort to undercut possible Jamaat-IAB clout in polls

RASHIDUL HASAN

With Islamist parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and Islami Andolok Bangladesh (IAB), moving to forge an "electoral consensus", the BNP is working to bring Hefazat-e-Islam and smaller Islamist groups closer to it ahead of the next parliamentary election.

BNP leaders say though they are engaged in discussions with different Islamist groups, the chances of a formal alliance remain slim.

The rise of Islamist forces since the August 5 uprising has prompted BNP policymakers to keep a close watch on shifting political dynamics. And as part of its strategy, the party has reached out to Hefazat's ameer and other influential clerics, while also extending attention to smaller Islamist outfits.

The party plans courtesy meetings between its leaders and religious figures nationwide, including prominent clerics, heads of major religious institutions, and spiritual leaders of Khanqah Sharifs.

Party sources said BNP's top policymakers and central leaders with regional clout will strive to secure support from madrasa teachers, students, and religious figures, while preventing them from aligning exclusively with rivals.

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A woman dries paddy on higher ground yesterday after moving her cattle and belongings to safety, as rising waters from the Padma have triggered floods in Char Majhardiya in Rajshahi's Paba upazila. Many families have already left their inundated homes and taken shelter elsewhere.

PHOTO: AZHAR UDDIN

## Amid Chalan Beel worries, Rabindra University gets EcneC's conditional nod

University says the wetland won't be harmed

REJAUL KARIM BYRON, PINAKI ROY and AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

The EcneC yesterday approved the construction of Rabindra University in Sirajganj, despite objections from several advisers over the plan to build it by filling up a wetland.

The approval, however, came with the condition that the authorities must first secure an environmental clearance certificate.

"Many advisers raised their voices against the establishment of the Rabindra University near Chalan Beel for environmental reasons. The project has been approved on condition, meaning the project fund will not be disbursed until the condition is met," said an adviser who attended the meeting in which the project proposal was approved.

The advisers discussed the issue for nearly an hour, with some warning that construction in Buripothajia of Sirajganj's Shahzadpur upazila would block the water discharge path of the Chalan Beel.

Planning Adviser Prof Dr Wahid Uddin Mahmud said, "The project has been



COURTESY: PROTHOM ALO

approved strictly in line with the proper legal and procedural process. I'll not go beyond the rules.

"There are concerns among environmentalists about the designated site.... It is now up to the Department of Environment to carry out a full evaluation."

9 YEARS WITHOUT A CAMPUS  
Rabindra University was approved in 2015 and began academic activities in 2018.

It initially operated from Shahzadpur Women's College before shifting to other temporary sites scattered across the upazila.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## Trump gives Putin 'peace letter' from wife Melania

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump handed Vladimir Putin a special item at their Alaska summit: a letter written by his wife, First Lady Melania Trump, pleading for the Russian leader to make peace in the name of children.

The first lady's office on Saturday reposted a Fox News article on X containing the short letter, a day after Trump and Putin failed to find a breakthrough at their high-stakes meeting.

Putin read the "peace letter" immediately after Trump handed it to him, while delegations from both sides looked on, according to Fox News.

"In today's world, some children are forced to carry a quiet laughter, untouched by the darkness around them," read the letter, which was signed by the first lady and did not mention Ukraine by name.

"Mr Putin, you can singlehandedly restore their melodic laughter," it added. "In protecting the innocence of these children, you will do more than serve Russia alone -- you serve humanity itself."

## BNP won't let Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1  
Media Cell at the Jatiya Press Club.

Tarique said his party's ideological position is also the same as that of the writers and poets when it comes to the independence, sovereignty and democracy of the country. "Like you, we are also committed to preventing the return of autocracy, which the people of Bangladesh drove out some days ago," he said.

Tarique said BNP's political ideology may differ from that of the writers and poets who joined the event, but that should not be seen as a problem. "What truly matters is our common and unwavering faith in the sovereignty of the country."

He called upon all to unite for democracy and fair elections to restore people's ownership of Bangladesh by establishing an accountable government and state system, which can only be established by protecting people's voting rights.

"If we want to establish the truth that the ownership of this country belongs only to its citizens then we must all unite to ensure democracy, freedom of speech and a free, fair and neutral election," Tarique said.

"If we can achieve this, then the rights our respected poets and writers have spoken about today -- freedom of writing, freedom of expression, the right to express differences of opinion and the right to criticism -- can truly be established," the BNP leader said.

The BNP leader also sought the cooperation of all, including writers and intellectuals, in building the Bangladesh its people have long desired.

He said writers and creative minds have inspired people for generations to realise their rights, raise their voices and wage movements through their works.

During mass movements, Tarique said the writers inspired people to speak out against despotic regimes by expressing their patriotism.

Addressing the programme, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed praised the role of writers and poets in different rights movements and in the struggles against autocratic regimes in 1990 and 2024.

He urged writers, poets and intellectuals to act as a pressure group to ensure freedom of expression in Bangladesh.

A number of writers and poets, under the banner of Jatiya Kabita Parishad, attended the programme and spoke about their freedom to write and express their opinions freely.

## European leaders

FROM PAGE 1  
sources, the US and Russian leaders discussed proposals for Russia to relinquish tiny pockets of occupied Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine ceding a swathe of fortified land in the east and freezing the front lines elsewhere.

At face value, some of Putin's demands would be hugely difficult for Ukraine to accept, setting the stage for potentially fraught talks about ending Europe's deadliest war in 80 years, which has dragged on for 3 1/2 years and killed or wounded more than 1 million people, reports Reuters.

In his statement after the Alaska summit, Putin signalled no movement in Russia's long-held demands, which also include a veto on Kyiv's desired membership in the Nato alliance.

He also warned Ukraine and its European allies not to "create any obstacles. That they will not attempt to disrupt the emerging progress through provocation or behind the scenes intrigue".

Meanwhile, Trump yesterday hailed "big progress" on Russia. "BIG PROGRESS ON RUSSIA. STAY TUNED!" Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, without elaborating.



Palestine Ambassador to Bangladesh Yousef SY Ramadan calls on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: CA PRESS WING

## BNP reaching out to Hefazat, others

FROM PAGE 1  
At present, Islami Andolon is spearheading efforts to form an electoral understanding with four other Islamist parties -- Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Nezame Islam Party, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam skipped a liaison committee meeting last Thursday. Two more groups -- Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, led by Habibullah Miazi, and Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote, led by Abdul Kader and Sakhawat Hossain -- are also in talks, according to insiders.

These parties, however, say disagreements over leadership of the potential bloc remain a key hurdle. Meanwhile, Jamiat and IAB have begun coordinating to nominate joint candidates across all constituencies, seeking to position themselves as a credible alternative to the BNP in the electoral race.

According to BNP insiders, the party leadership remain sceptical that Jamaat and Islami Oikya Jote can forge a sustainable alliance. However, they acknowledge that if Islamist parties manage to consolidate votes into a single bloc, they could pose a formidable challenge to the BNP in the upcoming polls.

The party's outreach to Islamist groups and Qawmi madrasa-based clerical networks is designed to manage that risk, they said. A senior BNP standing committee member has been given special responsibility

for overseeing these contacts, with another member, Salahuddin Ahmed, recently added to the team.

At the same time, the BNP is wary of international perceptions, knowing that the Awami League and its allies may exploit the rise of Islamist forces to portray Bangladesh negatively abroad. With memories of its controversial past alliance with Jamaat still fresh, BNP is treading cautiously, seeking to expand its base without being branded as aligned with Islamists.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star, "We always respect the religious sentiments of Muslims, who make up 90 percent of the population. In this context, we uphold Islamic values." He added, "Alongside democratic forces, we maintain communications with Islamic forces and Islamic scholars like our late President Ziaur Rahman did. But that does not necessarily mean we are moving to form an alliance with Islamist parties."

However, he kept open the possibility of forging an electoral alliance with the parties, including Islamist forces, who took part in the anti-fascist movement.

"It is not true that we are in talks with Islamist parties just to counter Jamaat or Islami Andolon. That is their election strategy. We are following our own," he said.

IAB spokesperson Gazi Ataur Rahman told the Daily Star that a new political reality has emerged since the July mass uprising, with people

expecting a fresh force to take power beyond those who have already ruled.

"People see the Islamist groups as that new political force and expect them to contest the next polls together. To meet this expectation, we are working to build an electoral alliance," he said.

Ataur said the BNP is considering their initiative as a threat.

"We see this as BNP's double standard. They say they are worried about the rise of right-wing forces, but at the same time, they are trying to bring Islamist groups under their umbrella."

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said their efforts to forge an "electoral consensus" would take final shape after the election roadmap is announced.

Political analysts say the country's political landscape has undergone a major shift following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government. Jamaat-e-Islami has been able to conduct political programmes openly for the first time in more than a decade and a half.

In the absence of the AL, the BNP is seen as the dominant force. However, many smaller parties fear their relevance could diminish if the BNP returns to power.

Analysts say this fear, along with differing views on political reforms, is driving Islamist parties to explore the possibility of an electoral alliance.

ministry has yet to make those public.

Terming the move an eyewash, several senior admin officials said top bureaucrats know very well which officials are corrupt.

"If the public administration ministry was sincere in taking a strong stance against corruption, it would have amended the outdated Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, and punished the officials widely known to be corrupt. Such a measure would have sent a strong message," said one of the officials.

Officials and experts noted that no steps have yet been taken to tighten laws and regulations that were relaxed over the last 15 years, widening scopes for public employees to indulge in corruption.

For example, as per the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1985, an employee sentenced by a court -- even for a day -- faced termination. However, the rules were amended in 2018 to allow officials, sentenced up to a year, to retain their jobs.

Over the last year, there was no move to strengthen these regulations; instead, individuals with questionable track records continue to be favoured in recruitment and promotion.

Also, the ministry has not initiated any internal reforms. Though it oversees nearly a dozen institutions, there has been no step to evaluate their roles.

Seeking anonymity, a secretary said the public administration ministry is apparently running without a guardian, as no adviser has been appointed to the ministry.

"Disheartened by the prevailing situation, many promising junior officers are now seeking foreign postings or opportunities for higher studies abroad," added the official.

When asked for comments on the ministry's performance, Senior Secretary Mokhles Ur Rahman declined to speak on the matter.

## NBR traces Tk 40,000cr

FROM PAGE 1

Ahsan H Mansur accused tycoons linked to the toppled Hasina regime of working with members of the country's powerful military intelligence agency to siphon \$17 million out of the banking sector during her rule.

In response to the CIC findings, Prof Yunus said all relevant agencies, including the CIC, Anti-Corruption Commission, and police's CID, must coordinate their efforts to identify those involved in money laundering and bring them to book, according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

"An example must be set so that in the future, no one can plunder the country's resources and accumulate property abroad," he said.

## Rabindra University gets Ecneec's conditional nod

FROM PAGE 1

Students face repeated disruptions as classes and administrative activities continue in rented buildings.

"Since the academic activities had already been launched, we felt it necessary to build permanent infrastructure," Wahid Uddin said at a press briefing.

The land ministry converted the designated area from pasture to non-agricultural use in 2018. Administrative approval was also granted that year, but construction has not started since.

### ECNEC APPROVAL

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) approved the Tk 519.15 crore project on 100 acres of Tagore's estate in Shahzadpur after several revisions of the Development Project Proposal (DPP) and subsequent approvals from the University Grants Commission and the education ministry.

According to the DPP, the university will have 11 faculties and 40 departments, accommodating 7,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The campus will have three five-storey dormitories costing Tk 93.89 crore, and four major non-residential buildings -- a five-storey academic building, a five-storey administrative building, a three-storey central library, and a two-storey Teacher-Student Centre and cafeteria -- costing around Tk 211 crore.

Tk 15 crore has been allocated for furniture, and two smaller establishments for Tk 2 crore.

The plan also includes open spaces, sports grounds, lakes, and designated areas for agriculture, livestock, and fisheries.

At least 33 percent of the land will be kept for tree plantation and greenery, as per forest department guidelines.

### ENVIRONMENTAL WORRIES

Environmentalists argue the site lies at the confluence of the Boral and Gohara rivers, which connect to Chalan Beel -- one of the largest wetlands in the country.

"If the university is built at the said site, it will hamper the water discharging. And if the water of the Chalan Beel is stagnant, it will cause waterlogging in the area and leave heavy impacts .... Besides, filling up a wetland is prohibited as per the existing environmental law of the country," said Fida A Khan, executive director of the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services.

SM Mizanur Rahman, member secretary of Chalan Beel Rokkha

## RAID IN SOUTHEAST Iran forces kill seven militants

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian security forces yesterday killed seven members of a jihadist group in the southeastern province of Sistan Baluchestan, state media reported.

Deputy provincial governor Ali Velayatipour said the gunmen, all members of the Ansar al-Furqan group, were killed in the early hours of yesterday, according to official news agency IRNA.

The militants "intended to attack sensitive centres and military and law enforcement bases", Velayatipour said.

Iran has designated Ansar al-Furqan a "terrorist" organisation. Last year, the group claimed a suicide attack that killed a police officer, also in Sistan-Baluchestan.

The province which borders Pakistan and Afghanistan is one of Iran's poorest, and a frequent scene of clashes between security forces and Baluch minority rebels.

It is home to a large ethnic Baluch population, most of whom are Sunni Muslims, in contrast to Iran's Shia majority.

On Saturday, gunmen killed a police officer in a shootout in the province, with the Sunni militant group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) claiming responsibility.

The group, based across the border in Pakistan, has claimed multiple attacks in recent years, including an assault on a courthouse last month that left at least six people dead.

## Retired officials' promotions

FROM PAGE 1

Following the Awami League government's fall on August 5 last year, administrative operations nearly ground to a halt, with disorder and indiscipline taking hold at the Secretariat, the heart of Bangladesh's civil administration.

Even after the interim administration took charge, many officials remained absent from their posts while others were inactive. Some, describing themselves as "deprived", thronged the Secretariat almost daily with a range of demands, disrupting routine administrative orders.

In an attempt to revive the faltering administrative structure, the government began giving retrospective appointments and promotions in phases, allegedly driven by political considerations. This was followed by frequent reshuffles and designation of officials as OSDs (Officers on Special Duty), further fuelling instability.

Officials alleged that political favouritism in promotion and postings has remained a defining feature even after the August 5 changeover. The ministry's administrative failures have further eroded trust in its leadership.

Citing a questionable promotion, a top official from the Cabinet Division said an officer with a record of involvement in corruption was promoted twice -- from deputy secretary to joint secretary and then to additional secretary -- since December last year.

While the officer in question was serving as the director of Cyclone Preparedness Programme in 2021, a ministry probe found irregularities and forgery in recruitment under his watch, leading to cancellation of the appointments, said the official on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the admin cadre -- widely perceived as enjoying disproportionate advantages in

ministry has yet to make those public.

Terming the move an eyewash, several senior admin officials said top bureaucrats know very well which officials are corrupt.

"If the public administration ministry was sincere in taking a strong stance against corruption, it would have amended the outdated Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, and punished the officials widely known to be corrupt. Such a measure would have sent a strong message," said one of the officials.

Officials and experts noted that no steps have yet been taken to tighten laws and regulations that were relaxed over the last 15 years, widening scopes for public employees to indulge in corruption.

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Also, the ministry has not initiated any internal reforms. Though it oversees nearly a dozen institutions, there has been no step to evaluate their roles.

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"Disheartened by the prevailing situation, many promising junior officers are now seeking foreign postings or opportunities for higher studies abroad," added the official.

When asked for comments on the ministry's performance, Senior Secretary Mokhles Ur Rahman declined to speak on the matter.

In his statement after the Alaska summit, Putin signalled no movement in Russia's long-held demands, which also include a veto on Kyiv's desired membership in the Nato alliance.

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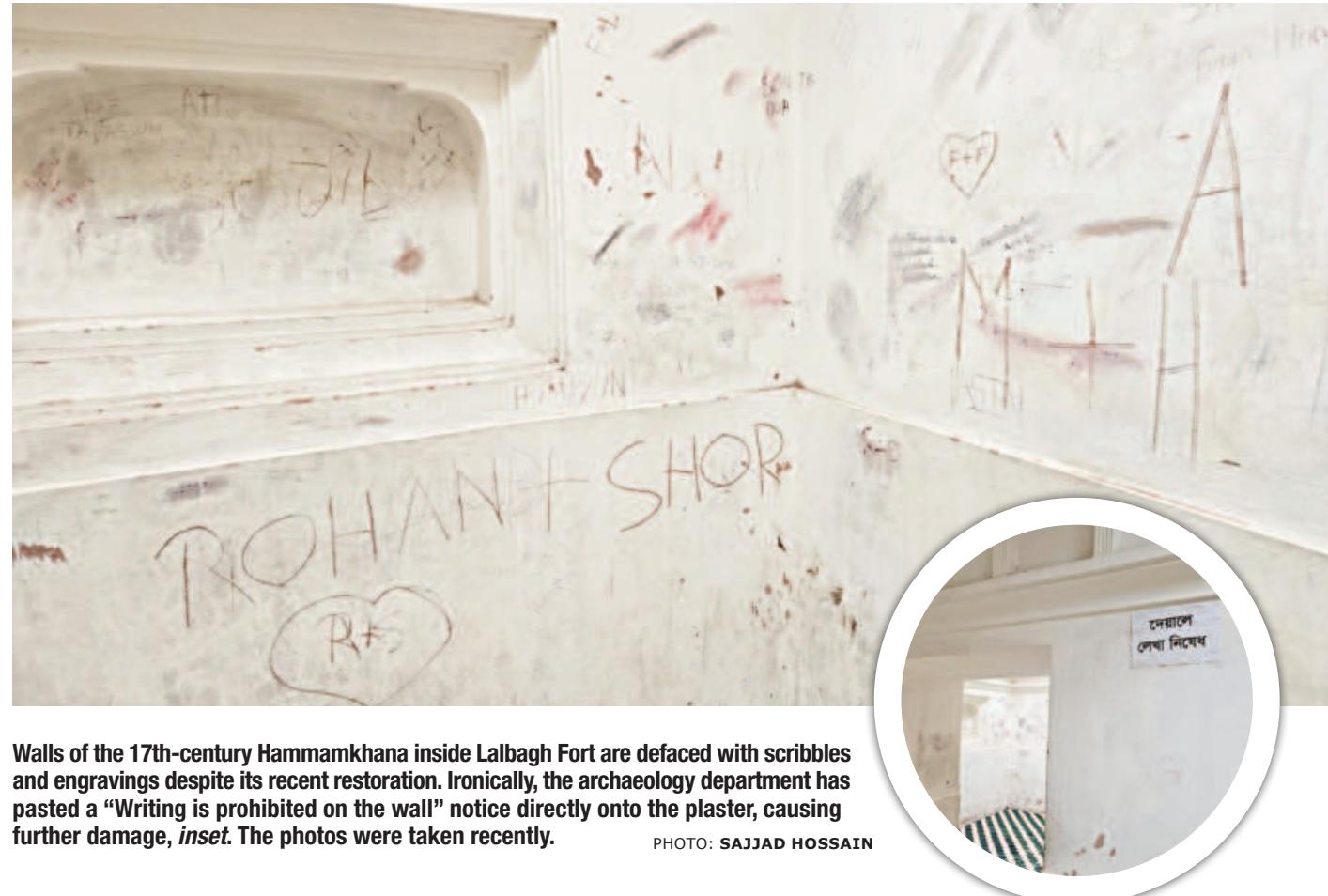
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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূর্বালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়



Walls of the 17th-century Hammamkhana inside Lalbagh Fort are defaced with scribbles and engravings despite its recent restoration. Ironically, the archaeology department has pasted a "Writing is prohibited on the wall" notice directly onto the plaster, causing further damage, inset. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

## LALBAGH FORT Hammamkhana now a canvas for visitors

Mughal-era bathhouse damaged by scribbles and carvings

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

When you step inside the gates of Lalbagh Fort, the first thing that catches your eye is a burnt-orange, terracotta-coloured square building.

As you walk closer and enter Hammamkhana, scribbles, writings and engravings sprawl across its walls. Some marks have been scratched deep with sharp objects, others etched heavily into the plaster.

No one stops visitors from doing the same. A pen in hand is enough to leave a name or mark and walk away without consequence.

But this is not just any wall. Hammamkhana, a 17th-century Mughal bathhouse, is a key part of Lalbagh Fort -- one of Dhaka's most prized heritage landmarks. Once restored to its former glory, it is now being defaced again, not by time, but by visitors' pens, blades and careless hands.

The Hammamkhana reopened on March 22, 2023, after restoration work

that began in October 2020, funded by the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Just over two years later, much of that effort has been undone.

Under Section 19 of Bangladesh's Antiquities Act (1968, amended 1976), it is a criminal offence to destroy, damage, alter, injure, deface, mutilate, scribble, write or

pasting a "writing is prohibited" notice directly onto the Hammamkhana wall -- an act that itself damages heritage.

Sabina Alam, director general of the Department of Archaeology, said she was unaware of the current condition of the Hammamkhana. "I have to know and then say. I am not aware. I will look into the



engrave on heritage structures. Violators can face up to one year in prison, a fine, or

matter," she told this newspaper on July 31. Site officials claim they try to stop vandals, but say some visitors threaten or verbally abuse staff.

Interestingly, the archaeology department has broken its own rules by

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## HEALTH SECTOR REFORM

## 33 proposals set for implementation

SHORT TERM  
(6 months)

Law reforms

Setting up national ambulance network

Introducing essential diagnostic list, fixing test price

MID TERM  
(1-2 years)

Forming health commission

Ensuring essential drugs at free or subsidised prices

More allocation for health-related research

LONG TERM  
(above 2 years)

Introducing unique health ID

24-hour pharmacies at govt hospitals

Making referral system mandatory

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Health Ministry has selected 33 recommendations from the Health Sector Reform Commission as it seeks to begin implementing the much-needed reform process in the country's health system.

Of the 33 recommendations, the Health Services Division will implement 23, while the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division will carry out the remaining ones, both in association with their respective

agencies.

The ministry will require assistance from the public administration, home and finance ministries in implementing several of the recommendations.

The Health Services Division has already categorised the 23 recommendations into short- (6 months), mid- (1-2 years) and long-term (above 2 years) actions.

After circulating the recommendations to all its agencies, the division on August 13

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## ROHINGYA CRISIS

Dhaka wants a permanent solution

Says Khalilur

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh wants an urgent and permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis -- something that the government wants to highlight in the upcoming high-level conference on Rohingya in New York on September 30.

Dr Khalilur Rahman, national security adviser and high representative of the Chief Adviser on Rohingya Affairs, said this to media after a briefing to the diplomats based in Dhaka at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

About 50 envoys from the foreign missions including those of the US, Canada, UK, Australia, Russia, China were present.

The briefing was about the stakeholder conference on Rohingya to be held in Cox's Bazar on August 24-26. Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will

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## DUCSU POLLS

## Student groups struggle to finalise panels

Nomination window closes today

MAHATHIR MOHAMMED

As Dhaka University prepares to hold the Ducus election after a six-year hiatus, student organisations are still struggling to finalise their panels even as the deadline for collecting nominations draws to a close.

Today is the last date for collecting nomination papers, according to the Ducus Election Commission.

However, most student groups remain locked in discussions over their panel members for contesting the 28 posts of the Dhaka University Central Students' Union.

Leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the pro-BNP student organisation, said they are planning to appeal for an extension of the deadline, as confusion lingers within the organisation, with no clear direction in place for its DU unit.

Many senior leaders from as far back as the 2008-09 session still want to contest, taking advantage of the amended Ducus constitution that removed the age limit for candidates.

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একাউন্ট ছাড়াই নিন  
ডাচ-বাংলা রাজ্যক  
মাল্টি কারেন্সি  
প্রিমেইড কার্ড



প্রয়োজনে দেশে ও বিদেশে

প্রিমেইড কার্ড দিয়ে ATM থেকে ক্যাশ উত্তোলন সহ  
POS টার্মিনাল ও ই-কমার্স পেমেন্ট করা যায় নিশ্চিন্ত!

প্রয়োজনে, ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংকের যে কোর্ট শাখা, উপশাখা ও

ফাস্ট ট্র্যাকে যোগাযোগ করুন অথবা ডাচ-বাংলা কর্মসূচী

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নিম্ন-রাত ২৪ ঘণ্টা যে কোর্ট শাখা

ডাচ-বাংলা রাজ্যক  
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সহযোগী



## Israeli military strikes Houthi 'energy site' in Yemen

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's military said yesterday it struck an "energy infrastructure site" in Yemen used by the Houthi rebels, the latest action against the Iran-backed group which has launched attacks at Israel throughout the Gaza war.

A military statement said Israeli forces "struck... deep inside Yemen, targeting an energy infrastructure site that served the Houthi terrorist regime" in the area of Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa, without naming the site.

The Houthi's Al-Masirah TV, citing civil defence source, reported "an aggression targeting the Haziz power plant" south of Sanaa. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Since October 2023 start of Israel-Hamas war in Gaza Strip, the Houthi's have repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Israel, claiming to act in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Most Houthi attacks have been intercepted, but have prompted Israeli air strikes on rebel targets in Yemen. The military said its latest "strikes" were conducted in response to repeated attacks" by the Houthi's.

On Thursday Israel said it intercepted a missile fired from Yemen, with the Houthi's later claiming responsibility for it.

Beyond attacks on Israel, Houthi's have also targeted alleged Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden off Yemen. The Iran-backed group broadened its campaign to target ships tied to the US and UK after the two countries began military strikes.



Volunteers carry food and medical supplies for flood victims in the Buner district of Pakistan's mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province yesterday. Pakistani rescuers dug through debris and massive boulders in search of survivors after flash floods killed at least 344 people, with more than 150 still missing.

PHOTO: AFP

## RELOCATION OF RESIDENTS FROM GAZA CITY Hamas rejects Israel's plan

AGENCIES

Palestinian group Hamas said yesterday that Israel's plan to relocate residents from Gaza City constitutes a "new wave of genocide and displacement" for hundreds of thousands of residents in the area.

The group said the planned deployment of tents and other shelter equipment by Israel into southern Gaza was a "blatant deception".

The Israeli military has said it is preparing to provide tents and other equipment that started yesterday ahead of its plan to relocate residents from combat zones to the south of the enclave "to ensure their safety".

Hamas said in a statement that the deployment of tents under the guise of

humanitarian purposes is a blatant deception intended to "cover up a brutal crime that the occupation forces prepare to execute", reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces bombed al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City yesterday, killing at least seven people.

According to Gaza medical sources, at least 21 people were killed in Israeli attacks across the coastal enclave since the early hours of yesterday morning. Seven of them were killed in an Israeli airstrike on al-Ahli Hospital.

At least 13 Palestinians seeking aid were killed by Israeli forces near the Morag axis and at aid distribution centres. The total number of aid seekers killed since May 27, when Israel introduced a new aid distribution mechanism

through the US-based GHF, has reached at least 1,924, with more than 14,288 injured, according to Gaza's health ministry.

11 more people have died of Israel-induced starvation in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll to 251, it said. The victims include 108 children.

In the occupied West Bank, the Wafa news agency reported that Israeli forces have arrested three Palestinians in a raid on the city of Bethlehem.

A group of UN staff members has launched a new campaign in support of Palestinians facing atrocities in Gaza, with the former UN assistant secretary-general for human rights, Andrew Gilmour, as their chair, Al Jazeera reports.

## Trump defends global war involvement

Cites India-Pakistan tensions as example

NDTV ONLINE

US President Donald Trump has again brought up the recent India-Pakistan conflict, reiterating his claim that the US helped in averting a nuclear escalation between the two Asian neighbours.

India maintains that the May conflict ended through a ceasefire sought by Pakistan after suffering heavy damage. Pakistan had credited Trump, echoing him as it has been doing to gain the US attention.

Trump said his main goal is to "save lives", trying to justify his involvement in conflicts worldwide, even if those didn't impact the US on a significant scale, in an interview with Fox News, after his unsuccessful summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

His response came to a question by Fox News's Sean Hannity, who sought to know if he wanted to save the world.

"Number one, to save lives in all



cases, because wars are wars. When you see what would have happened with Cambodia as an example. Now, I'm not involved, but I was involved in negotiating a trade deal. And I said, you guys are going to be fighting Thailand, Cambodia, so many different," the President replied.

Bringing up India-Pakistan tensions, he went on to claim that he averted what could have led to a nuclear escalation.

"Take a look at India and Pakistan. They were shooting down airplanes already. And that would have been

maybe nuclear. I would have said it was going to go nuclear. And I was able to get it done," he said.

"Number one is lives. And number two is everything else. Wars are very bad," he added.

India and Pakistan had engaged in a brief four day conflict following the Pahalgam terror attack in April 22. In the massacre, 26 innocent civilians were shot dead in cold blood by Pakistan-linked terrorists while vacationing in the scenic Baisaran valley in Pahalgam.

In response, Indian forces had carried out Operation Sindo on May 7, targeting nine terror camps deep within Pakistan and occupied Kashmir.

This continued till May 10, when Pakistan approached the Indian side and requested a ceasefire. However, Trump claimed that the hostilities ended due to his involvement that came with a tariff threat - a claim that India has denied multiple times.



This handout photograph, taken and released yesterday by Turkish news agency DHA, shows a firefighting plane spraying water over a scorched area following a wildfire in the Gelibolu district of Çanakkale, northwestern Turkey.

PHOTO: AFP

## CRIME EMERGENCY

## 3 Republican-led states to deploy National Guard troops to US capital

REUTERS

The Republican governors of three states are deploying hundreds of National Guard troops to Washington, DC, at the request of the administration of President Donald Trump, who has portrayed the city as awash in crime.

The announcements on Saturday of troops from hundreds of miles away in West Virginia, South Carolina and Ohio came a day after DC officials and the Trump administration negotiated a deal to keep Mayor Muriel Bowser's appointed police chief, Pamela Smith, in charge of the police department after DC Attorney General Brian Schwalb filed a lawsuit to block the federal takeover of the department.

Trump, a Republican, said this week he was deploying hundreds of DC National Guard troops to Washington and temporarily taking over the Democratic-led city's police department to curb what he depicted as a crime and homelessness emergency.

## Iraq uncovers suspected IS burial site near Mosul

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi authorities have begun excavating the site of a mass grave believed to contain thousands of victims of the Islamic State (IS) group near Mosul city, the project's director told AFP yesterday.

The first phase, which was launched on August 10, includes surface level excavation at the Khasfa site, director Ahmed al-Assadi said.

An AFP correspondent visiting the site in northern Iraq yesterday said the team unearthed human skulls buried in the sand. Khasfa is located near Mosul, where IS had established the capital of their self-declared "caliphate" before being defeated in Iraq in late 2017.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Finance Division, Ministry of Finance  
Skills for Industry Competitiveness and Innovation Program (SICIP)  
Probashi Kallyan Bhaban (15th Floor)



71-72, Eskaton Garden, Ramna, Dhaka-1000

[www.sicip.gov.bd](http://www.sicip.gov.bd)

## Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Bangladesh Industry Research, Development & Innovation (BIRDI) Grants

No. FD/SICIP/BIRDI/149/2024/1871

Date: 14 August 2025

1. The Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, is implementing the Skills for Industry Competitiveness and Innovation Program (SICIP) with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The program aims to develop a skilled workforce through advanced technical and competency-based training across the country. SICIP seeks to establish a robust quality assurance mechanism, enabling effective collaboration between training institutions and industries to foster human resource development in priority industry sectors.

2. Under output-2 of Scheme 1 (Advanced Technical Skills, Managerial Capability, and R&D-Driven Innovation Capacity Development for Priority and Emerging Industries) of SICIP Bangladesh Industry Research Development & Innovation (BIRDI) Grants has been introduced to support industry-oriented research, development, and innovation.

3. The BIRDI Grants are designed to:

- Promote applied, industry-driven R&D for innovative solutions to create value added products, improved industrial processes and environmentally friendly technologies.
- Establish industry and academia partnerships for collaborative innovation and advanced skill development.
- Facilitate technology transfer and inclusion of global best practices in industrial production.
- Support to enhance industry capacity for innovation to increase productivity and global market competitiveness.
- Increase participation of industries in RDI activities and to accelerate integration of green technology and climate resilient practices for sustainable development.

4. Eligibility Criteria: Applicants must fall under one or more of the following categories:

- An academic entity or training institutions based in Bangladesh.
- A student team within any academic entity based in Bangladesh and comprehensively supervised by an academic faculty.
- An industry entity based in Bangladesh.
- An individual endorsed by industry and preferably by a registered educational/ research/ training institutions based within Bangladesh.

Applicants fall under any of the following category shall not be eligible to apply:

- Unregistered business entity or academic institution
- A defense related or aligned institution or industry (including supplies)
- Not compliant with laws of Bangladesh, including required licenses, permits

5. SICIP now invites eligible applicants to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) using the standard EOI template available on the official BIRDI website: <https://birdi.sicip.gov.bd>. Only online submissions via the BIRDI website will be considered for evaluation. (Detailed BIRDI Guidelines may be viewed from <https://sicip.gov.bd/resources/birdi/>)

6. EOIs will be shortlisted based on the following key factors:

- Clear definition of the industry problem and the proposed R&D-based solution (visual aids optional).
- Description of academic and industry partners, including background and history of collaboration.
- Demonstrated value to industry in terms of efficiency, competitiveness, and economic impact.
- Commitment to ethical practices and sustainable development principles.
- Concrete plans to generate higher-skilled employment within the target sector.
- Anticipated long-term impact on research, academic curricula, and academia-industry collaboration.

7. The deadline for submission of EOIs is 4:00 PM (Bangladesh time), 10 September 2025. It is important to note that there will be a workshop on EOI submission. The details of the workshop will be available upon registering in the BIRDI portal. EOI submission will be activated after the workshop. SICIP will not be responsible for any costs associated with the workshop participation, preparation or submission of EOIs. SICIP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason.

For further information, please contact:

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GD-1808

## An unnecessary, excessive reaction

Case of a rickshaw puller assaulted and arrested on August 15 raises concerns

We are shocked by the harsh treatment meted out to Azizur, a rickshaw puller, simply for deciding to pay tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15. Not only was he beaten by a mob, he was also arrested by the police and then sent to jail by a Dhaka court in an attempted murder case linked to the July uprising.

The absurdity of the whole situation is beyond belief. Instead of arresting those who assaulted a civilian, the police chose to arrest the victim. Worse, this poor rickshaw puller has been accused of involvement in the attempted murder of Ariful Islam, who was shot in the back on August 4, 2024 during the mass uprising. The idea that Azizur could be connected to this shooting is preposterous. It just shows how the July cases are being made controversial by randomly accusing individuals on flimsy or no grounds. How can justice for those killed during the uprising be ensured if such flawed cases continue to be filed, or people continue to be randomly implicated? Hundreds of murder cases have already been brought against people whose likelihood of involvement in such crimes is very slim.

For Azizur, it is tragic that he was punished first by a mob and then by the police for merely showing respect. When confronted by the mob, he reportedly said that he was just an ordinary citizen, not affiliated with any political party. As we know, the interim government banned all political activities by members of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations. The DMP commissioner later announced that members would face legal action if they attempted offences on August 15. But if placing flowers in memory of Bangabandhu is considered an "offence," it clearly cannot justify an attempted murder charge. The arbitrariness of this excessive reaction is glaring.

It is also surprising that, despite security being deployed on Dhammardi Road 32, the police allowed crowds to enter the area and did nothing when the mob attacked Azizur. During the former AL regime, police often remained inert while party goons violently "disciplined" those they considered opponents. We must never again allow the police to be politicised like this or to abandon their role as protectors of citizens' rights.

We are, however, relieved that Azizur has been granted bail later, but this does not erase the physical and mental trauma he suffered. For this, police members and the magistrate who allowed this baseless case to be filed and sent him to jail should be held accountable. The case itself, with no factual basis, should also be withdrawn. The government must ensure that members of its legal apparatus do not abuse power or take actions that violate citizens' fundamental rights.

## Break the grip of ambulance syndicates

Death of infant in Shariatpur shows how disruptive they have become

We are shocked to learn of the death of a newborn baby in Shariatpur following what appears to be a deliberate obstruction by a syndicate controlling the operation of ambulances. In a country where there is no dedicated lane for ambulances, reports of patients dying in traffic jams are not uncommon, but when a patient dies in an ambulance even before the start of a journey, it is no longer an accident. It is criminal negligence and exploitation deserving of harsh punishment under the law.

According to media reports, the incident happened last Thursday when the newborn, suffering from breathing complications after birth, was being taken to Dhaka following doctors' advice. The family had hired a Dhaka-bound ambulance, but before it could leave Shariatpur town, a group of men linked to the syndicate stopped the vehicle, snatched its keys, and demanded that the patient be transferred to a "local" ambulance charging higher fare. For about an hour or so, the desperate parents pleaded in vain. Ultimately, the baby died inside the ambulance.

This horrific chain of events is anything but isolated, even though their outcome is not always as tragic. Reportedly, Shariatpur's ambulance services have long been held hostage by a group led by the civil surgeon's chauffeur. The superintendent of Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, while talking to this daily, claimed that the ambulance fare for a trip to Dhaka is fixed at Tk 4,000, and anyone charging higher would face disciplinary measures. But syndicate-controlled ambulances routinely charge Tk 6,000-8,000, citing extra "toll fees," despite exemptions granted at highways and even on Padma Bridge. According to a patient, if families try to hire ambulances from other districts at lower costs, they face harassment, delay, and even forced cancellations.

Unfortunately, ambulance syndicates are not unique to Shariatpur. They are common across the country, especially around large government hospitals. These groups include hospital staff, local political actors, and businessmen who either own ambulances or control their operations. Patients are often forced into their chosen vehicles, while "non-local" ambulances are either threatened, or blocked, or extorted. Thus, a vital emergency service has been turned into an illegal enterprise preying on people at their most vulnerable. The influence of these syndicates has been further evident in the aftermath of Thursday's tragedy, as ambulance services at Shariatpur Sadar Hospital have sharply dwindled amid heightened scrutiny, leaving patients at further risk.

We urge the authorities to take stern measures against those responsible for the Shariatpur tragedy. At the same time, the government must break the grip of ambulance syndicates nationwide. There should be a clear national policy for ambulance services with strict fare regulations and effective monitoring to protect patients' rights. No one must die or suffer under such circumstances.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Women win the right to vote in US

On this day in 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified after Tennessee, by just one vote, became the 36th state to approve it, capping the 72 year fight to win women the right to vote in the United States.

# EDITORIAL

## Bangladesh's economic performance has been unique post-uprising

Salehuddin Ahmed  
is adviser of Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Science and Technology.

Anisuzzaman Chowdhury  
is special assistant to the chief adviser at the Ministry of Finance.

**SALEHUDDIN AHMED and ANISUZZAMAN CHOWDHURY**

Last year, after the violent change in power through the mass uprising, when the interim government assumed the responsibility of salvaging the economy from the brink of total collapse, the task to bring it back on track seemed almost impossible. As the true state of the economy emerged from reports of various commissions, people came to know the real depth of destruction that the economy suffered during the previous regime. The unchecked spiral of inflation, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, persistent large trade deficits, gross financial irregularities leading to a near collapse of the banking system, and deeply corrupted governance that destroyed almost all institutions, among others, were identified as the main challenges for the interim government. To stop the freefall of the economy and bring it back on course, we had to take some bold

collection, such as by phasing out special tax privileges and separating tax policy from tax administration. To tame inflation, the policy rate has been increased to 10 percent, which can help stabilise the exchange rate.

Looking back after a year, we are pleased to share Bangladesh's unique macroeconomic success and the story of how we have been able to turn the

the violent fall of the previous regime. Between 1991 and 1993, Russia's inflation exceeded 800 percent, and it took nearly 10 years for the country to recover. Meanwhile, male life expectancy fell six years between 1991 and 1994 in the country. The former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe experienced a similar decline in life expectancy during this same period.

interim government have stopped the bleeding of the Bangladesh economy, which is showing signs of rebound. Due to incentives and confidence improvements, the expatriates are sending out record levels of remittances through proper channels, leading to a significant improvement in the foreign exchange reserves. Confidence in the financial system has also been regained



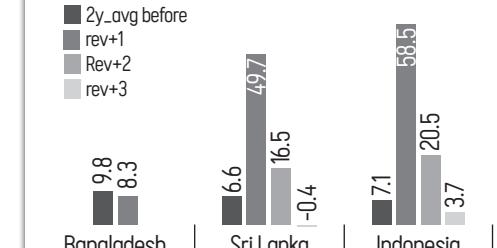
FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

through improved governance. The local currency has become stable even after adopting a market-based exchange rate regime.

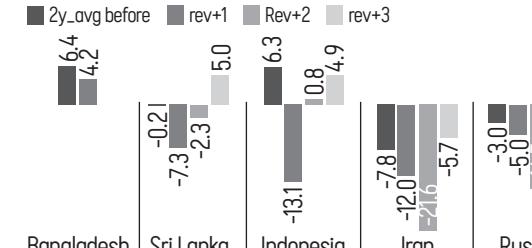
However, challenges still remain, especially in the financial sector. It will require a careful mix of salvage operations and difficult decisions to reduce risks in the financial sector to acceptable levels. Special care will be needed to avoid expenditures against unnecessary projects and to improve the project implementation rate. Innovative measures are being taken in the power sector to reduce subsidies. We are also continuing necessary support to critical areas such as food security and social safety.

What seemed impossible a year ago is now under control and we hope to further improve the state of the economy in the coming months. While the inflation is now showing a downward trend, we will continue our policies to bring it down below seven percent. Based on strong fundamentals and macroeconomic stability, supported by well-coordinated fiscal, monetary, exchange rate, and capital market policies, we expect further improvements. In other words, we expect growth to pick up, inflation to decline further, as well as buoyancy of the stock market.

### Inflation before/after revolution (%)



### GDP Growth before and after revolution (%)



SOURCE: COURTESY

steps. Monetary and fiscal policies were tightened, stricter austerity measures were put in place, corrective measures were taken to restore discipline in the financial sector, and maximum efforts were employed to fight against corruption.

Major steps under the bold reform and recovery programmes included a detailed asset quality review, structural reform guidelines for ensuring discipline in the financial sector, initiating a process of recovery of the assets stolen from the financial system, and ensuring sufficient liquidity in the banking system. To strengthen fiscal governance, the government employed best efforts to enhance revenue

tide and overcome the seemingly impossible task. Recent figures and macroeconomic indicators available now tell the story.

Almost every country in the world that underwent a violent change of regime experienced output declines and a rise in inflation immediately afterwards. This has been true, for example, in the case of Sri Lanka recently, also in Indonesia when the Soeharto regime fell, in Iran during the early 1980s, and in Russia during the early 1990s. In Indonesia, poverty rate jumped from around 15 percent to around 33 percent in one year. In Sri Lanka, around 26 percent of people lived in poverty in 2023, a year after

But this did not happen in Bangladesh, where rather inflation fell and GDP growth remained in the positive territory.

This remarkable macroeconomic resilience, supported by our government's policies, is being reflected in growing investor confidence. For example, Dhaka Stock Exchange's (DSEX) rally in July, surging by 12.5 percent, ranked third among major global market performers, behind only Vietnam's VN30 (+13.93 percent) and Thailand's SET (+12.54 percent). The index soared 605 points to close at 5,443, the highest level in nine and a half months.

The right policies taken by the

## Is humanity disintegrating, or is violence simply more visible?



**Karim Waheed**  
is digital content strategy lead at The Daily Star.

KARIM WAHEED

This video keeps replaying in my head: a school field in Taraganj, Rangpur; two men hauled onto a van; a crowd forms; phone flashlights stab the night; cheers rise as kicks and punches fall. Police blow a whistle, then melt away. Someone yells, "Push down, push down," as the van is toppled onto the bodies. Two lives snuffed out amidst frenzy. Public execution dressed up as "mob justice." This clip ricocheted across social media in Bangladesh like a dare: look, then keep scrolling.

So, is humanity disintegrating? Are we becoming more desensitised to such violence? Or has it always been this way, only now the atrocity appears on our feed during breakfast? The uncomfortable answer is both simple and messy: the baseline of human violence has fallen over centuries, yet we are living through noisy spikes and watching them in high definition. Homicide data, collected over the decades, shows staggering declines from medieval times to today; it is hard to fathom how violent the past actually was. But "decline" does not mean "extinction," and progress is jagged, not linear.

In 2021, an estimated 458,000 people were killed in homicides worldwide. Africa bore the highest number of victims; the US had the

highest rate. And war? The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) reports a record 61 active state-based conflicts, and 11 of these reached the level of war, with nearly 160,000 people killed in organised violence. Last year was the fourth most violent since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Ukraine remained the deadliest, with about 76,000 battle-related deaths, while Israel's offensive in Gaza and its war against Hezbollah in Lebanon accounted for roughly 26,000 deaths.

If the macro picture is mixed,

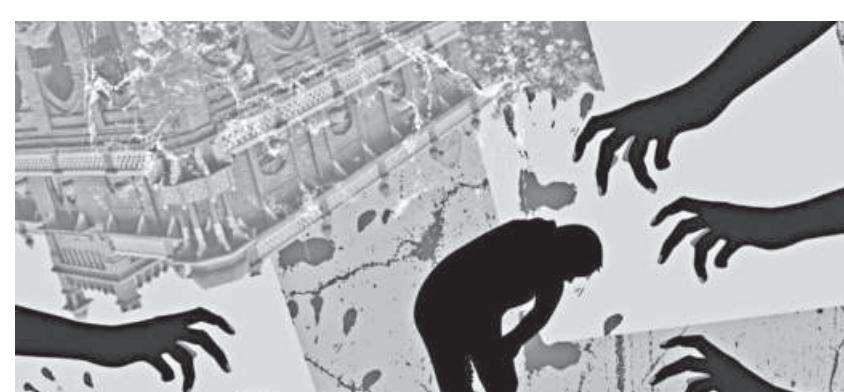
the micro experience is intimate and relentless. We witness violence now, over and over, through a screen we cannot easily put down. Psychologists have long warned that repeated exposure to violent media can desensitise viewers; results vary on whether it makes people more aggressive, but the numbing pattern is real. Pew's 2025 survey finds teens increasingly believe social media

magnifying glass. Bangladesh's recent spike in mob violence is not just "ancient cruelty" resurfacing; it is digitally choreographed. The Taraganj video shows the crowd filming as they strike, performing for an imagined audience beyond the field. Social media does not just document the violence; it scripts it.

So no, perhaps humanity is not uniformly disintegrating. Rights, courts, and social norms have, over the long run, reduced the everyday lethality. But that framework crumbles where institutions are weak and where bystanders outsource conscience to the crowd. The modern twist is visibility. Lynchings once required a town square; now the town square fits in your palm. When the feed becomes the forum and the verdict arrives before the facts, "justice" is whatever the loudest chant decides. Meanwhile, the rest of us become voyeurs -- horrified, slightly numbed, and permanently online.

What to do with that despair? Hold two truths at once: violence has fallen over centuries, but right now, it is brutally bad where it counts. Data does not cancel grief; it cautions us against fatalism. Treat social media platforms as engineered environments, not inevitabilities to endure. Slow virality, throttle rumours, punish incitement, protect due process. And maybe, just maybe, stop sharing the gore.

Most of all, choose the opposite of the crowd. Shouting "enough" is unfashionable and sometimes dangerous, but it is the only way the long arc continues bending our way. History suggests we can be better. That video begs us to prove it. Offline, in the hard place, when it counts.



harms people their age. This comes from the generation born inside the algorithm.

There is also the trick our brains play on us. The availability heuristic makes us overestimate the prevalence of whatever we have just seen vividly and repeatedly -- a lynching video, for example. Studies show that changes in media diets can shift public fear: when people consume less crime-saturated media, their perceptions of crime fall. Which is not to say the fear is fake; it is to say the feed is not a mirror, it is a

the daily star.net  
bangla.thedailystar.net/

# The prison system is in urgent need of reform

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KAZI AYMAN AWSAF and  
KHAJIDJATUL KUBRA

*"The degree of civilisation in a society can be  
judged by entering its prisons."*

If this is true, then what does our prison system say about Bangladesh? Thousands are punished without conviction and stripped of their dignity in our prisons, compelling the question: who will reform the prison system?

Bangladesh's prisons continue to operate under the Prison Act of 1894, the Prisoners Act of 1900 and the Bengal Jail Code. These legal instruments, inherited from the British colonial regime, were designed for control and punishment, often dehumanising and serving no rehabilitative purpose. They are grossly inconsistent with the constitutional guarantees and human rights standards enshrined in international law.

The country operates 68 correctional facilities, including 55 district prisons and 13 central prisons, with a combined capacity of 42,887. Yet, the system remains overcrowded. Improvements are partial and unsustainable without deeper reforms. In late 2024, after the interim government was formed, calls grew to repeal colonial era prison laws and modernise regulations.

Under international law, Bangladesh is bound by several conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). Article 10(l) of the ICCPR stipulates: "All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person." Similarly, the CAT obliges states to prevent torture in all circumstances. Yet in practice, such rights are regularly violated inside Bangladeshi penal institutions.

During the long, unjust detention of one of the authors (Khadijatul Kubra) under a Digital Security Act (DSA) case during the Awami League regime, the author witnessed first-hand the inner workings of Bangladesh's prison system, especially how disciplinary measures are implemented against female

inmates. One striking example is the "case table" disciplinary culture. Inmates were routinely handcuffed to a fixed stand attached to a table, approximately 5.3 to 5.4 feet high. For minor infractions, women were forced to remain in that position for four to five hours a day, often without food, rest, or explanation. This continued for days, even weeks, and always without the opportunity to be heard by officials. It was a system devoid of basic fairness and humanity. This was not

a condemned cell without charge, without hearing, or any explanation, at the order of the then senior jail superintendent, Obaidur Rahman. This practice is not isolated. For example, 16-year-old Poritosh Sarkar was reportedly kept in solitary confinement for eight months, barred from contact with others and denied sunlight or communication. This violates Section 29 of the Prisons Act, which states that no cell shall be used for solitary confinement unless

## Impunity of prison officials

Impunity for jail officials is a profound problem. When instances of abuse surface, the response is not disciplinary action but bureaucratic relocation. Human rights monitors note that, despite Bangladesh's 2013 Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, virtually no custodial abusers are ever held accountable. By mid-2025, only one conviction has been secured under that act.

In 2023, Runa Laila, an apprentice lawyer,

Farhana Akhter ordered more beatings.

Victims and their families see no justice in mere transfers or brief salary demotions. In most cases, officials face no consequences at all. Notably, in all the cases mentioned, the same individuals—Obaidur Rahman and Farhana Akhter—were involved. They remain in their positions under powerful patronage, making a complete mockery of justice.

This failure of the prison system not only violates international legal obligations but also seriously undermines public confidence in the justice process. Justice must be absolute; it must flow beyond the courtroom. To this end, urgent and widespread legislative reform is required.

The archaic Prisons Acts and Jail Code should be repealed and replaced with a modern prison law that creates a bill of rights for prisoners in line with international standards, establishes independent oversight bodies, enforces a binding code of conduct for prison officials, ensures transparent and appealable disciplinary procedures within correctional facilities, and removes as well as prosecutes past offenders.

A promising step was taken on July 10, 2025, when the Council of Advisers approved Bangladesh's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT). This lays the groundwork for establishing an independent National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) to monitor places of detention. The OPCAT also allows international oversight through visits by the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), enhancing transparency and accountability. It is equally imperative to revive and rigorously implement the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.

The prison system is the missing pillar in Bangladesh's reform project. While there was an expectation that the interim government would initiate prison reforms and hold perpetrators accountable, no such steps have been taken yet. We had hope that victims would see culprits being brought to justice, but that hope is fading. Recent events intensify this failure. The consecutive deaths of Bawm prisoners following the regime change have laid bare the stark absence of progress.

No reform can be considered complete while our prisons continue to operate as sites of arbitrary power, systemic abuse, and legal vacuum. A just society is not only measured by how it treats the free, but also by how it treats those locked behind bars. The question is no longer "Who will reform our prisons?", it is "Will we allow this injustice to continue?"



ILLUSTRATION: STAR

an isolated anomaly but part of a pattern of punishment without process, especially for women.

This method is psychologically debilitating and blatantly cruel, in direct contravention of Article 7 of the ICCPR, Articles 1 and 16 of the CAT, as well as Article 35(5) of our constitution.

## Arbitrary use of condemned cells

Even more concerning is the arbitrary use of condemned cells, designated for death row inmates, as punishment for under trial detainees. Khadijatul Kubra was confined to

the prisoner can talk to a prison officer at any time, and anyone kept there longer than 24 hours must be visited daily by a medical officer or subordinate.

Such acts also contravene the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which enshrine proportionality and due process in prison discipline. Rules 36 to 46 state that solitary confinement or other very high-security measures should not be employed as a first choice, particularly in cases of persons not yet convicted.

was reportedly beaten by another inmate, political leader Papia of the Jubo Mohila League, while in custody. A stick was inserted through Laila's anus and vagina. She was then bound and gagged to a tree inside the jail premises, and sugar was poured over her body to attract ants to bite her. All of these (as seen by author Khadijatul Kubra) were orchestrated by Papia, with the assistance of the then Jailer Farhana Akhter under the authority of Obaidur Rahman. Rather than protecting the victim, Obaidur Rahman imposed punitive handcuffing on her. Later,

# Ambulance syndicates are holding patients hostage

Nafev Sajed Joy  
has a masters degree in social sciences from University of Dhaka. He can be reached at nafev.sajed@gmail.com.

NAFEV SAJED JOY

Syndicates are nothing new in Bangladesh. But can their unbearable excessiveness drive a family towards a cruel and tragic fate? Recently, our country witnessed one such brutal incident.

This time, the victim was a newborn, who had just arrived in this world, carrying a wave of joy for the family and promise of a future. But that journey was cut short by the ambulance syndicate of Shariatpur. A baby was born in a local clinic with severe breathing complications. The family was advised to rush the child to Dhaka, and in desperation, they hired an ambulance.

Not long into the journey, their ambulance was intercepted by a member of Shariatpur's ambulance syndicate. Despite desperate arguments and pleas, the ambulance was not released for a while. And in that cruel delay, the newborn, who had barely set foot on earth, was sacrificed at the altar of a syndicate's greed.

Ambulances of this syndicate routinely charge far more than the standard fare for trips such as Shariatpur to Dhaka. But does money carry more value than life? As citizens of this state, how devoid of conscience have we become to let a newborn's life be lost due to abuse of power? Whose responsibility is that?

The father who lost his child has worked for 18 years repairing electric lines in Dhaka's Mirpur. He refused to file a case, knowing he neither had the financial ability nor the willpower left to endure a legal battle. Perhaps the shock was too unbearable for him. The neatly folded baby clothes, prepared with care and hope, will now never be worn. The Rapid Action Battalion arrested one man named Sabuj Dewan in this connection.

In hindsight, there might be nothing wrong with forming an association to protect one's interests. But when such organisations or unions are turned into tools of extortion, pressuring ordinary people in their moments of helplessness, they must be dismantled

simply because I had not purchased all the listed items from his store. Given the urgent need of the medical supplies and their limited availability, the shopkeeper deliberately withheld from selling them. This is the reality of the syndicates that exist in our healthcare system: *profits first, lives come second*.

The health sector in Bangladesh is already sinking into a darkness of corruption and mismanagement. On top of that, when emergency services like ambulances are turned into rackets of extortion, it is like the final nail on the coffin. Ordinary people have been the victims of this ruthless business for years. The commissions from this exploitation reach everyone—from hospital staff to ward boys. There is no standardised ambulance fare, nor any regulatory policy. Owners and drivers collude to extort helpless patients as they please.

And whenever reforms are attempted, the predictable response is road blockades or strikes—pressuring the government into submission. And once again, it is ordinary people who pay the ultimate price.

If we truly care about life and dignity, the syndicates entrenched around ambulances, hospitals, clinics, and even hospital beds must be uprooted. Because this is not just about services, this is about our very survival. Reform begins with the government fixing clear, transparent ambulance fares based on distance, and enforcing them with zero tolerance. Anyone who violates the rule should lose their licence for life, and owners who exploit patients should be permanently barred from running transport businesses.

Additionally, a 24/7 national hotline must be introduced so families can report such abuse in real time. The state itself must expand affordable ambulance services by buying more vehicles, ensuring coverage across all areas and at all hours. Finally, hospitals must come under independent monitoring so that no syndicate can hold lives hostage again. Because unless these steps are taken now, another family will bury their child, another newborn will be denied the right to live, and another life will be stolen by greed.

This is about survival, not convenience. Every delay, every inflated fare, every denial of service is a question of life and death. And until these syndicates are crushed, ordinary people will continue to be held hostage in their most vulnerable moments.

## CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

### ACROSS

1 Narrows down

7 Miles off

11 Slanted type

12 Lion's pride

13 One of the Gorgons

14 Daring

15 National park in Alaska

17 Casual eatery

20 Ship of 1492

23 "Not - dare!"

24 Illusory sights

26 Stir fry pan

27 Commotion

28 Solid wood

29 Newspaper issue

31 Purpose

32 Kidney-related

33 Meaty dish

34 Sleeve insert

37 Steel ingredient

39 Twin of Artemis

43 Clumsy oaf

44 Detected

45 "Why don't we!"

46 Like ranked

players

### DOWN

1 Director Burton

2 Had something

3 Knee protector

4 Steer clear of

5 Ascend

6 Checkout act

7 Aviator Earhart

8 Slowly disappearing

9 With 41-Down, "Life of Pi" director

10 Spanish king

16 Kitchen wear

17 Shrink in fear

18 Battery end

19 Successfully

misleading

21 Make sport of

22 Crooked

24 Posts

25 Groom's answer

30 Heckles

33 Go piece

35 Lip

36 Dueling weapon

37 Suffering

38 Sturgeon eggs

40 Hallucinatory drug

41 See 9-Down

42 Bizarre

### SATURDAY'S ANSWERS



8-2

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

**Nobody has the right to dictate choices: Badhan**

National Award-winning Actress Azmeri Haque Badhan has strongly criticised the backlash against artistes who paid tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his death anniversary, August 15. Responding on Facebook, she condemned attempts to brand celebrities as "cultural fascists" and questioned why anyone should control whom others choose to honour. Badhan stressed that showing respect to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is a personal choice and should not be policed. She also dismissed rumours about celebrities being paid for their posts, ridiculing claims that ranged from "200 crores" during the July movement to "Tk 20,000" for remembering Mujib. She warned that intimidation and misinformation would no longer work in an era of social media and globalisation. Concluding her post, Badhan said that anyone attempting to follow Sheikh Hasina's path would become "another failed copy of her tragedy."



PHOTOS: AISHWARYA RAIHAN

**'Opulence of Stone': Maynul Islam's mastery in stone carving**

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Since the Stone Age, stones have carried culture and civilisation—first as weapons, then shelters, and later as the earliest medium of written language through carving. Though replaced by papyrus and printing, this art endures.

In the 1990s, shifting architectural tastes evoked costly stone imports into Bangladesh, while in Rajshahi, cheaper boulders and granite from India and Bhutan for the Padma River dam were repurposed into



sculptures by artists like Maynul Islam Paul.

Kala Kendra in Lalmaia inaugurated *Opulence of Stone* on August 1, the fifth solo exhibition of Bangladeshi sculptor Maynul Islam Paul. Early in his career, he worked with wood, clay, and metal, but during his PhD at Rajshahi University, he began experimenting with stone carving.

*Opulence of Stone* is Paul's first solo exhibition in 20 years, and this long hiatus is a strong indication of the religious prejudice against sculptures

in Bangladesh. His exhibited stone sculptures, however, offer a modern take on traditional subjects of three-dimensional art.

Paul uses chisels to craft exquisite forms—sometimes abstract, sometimes semi abstract. The smooth, glittering surfaces of some pieces evoke a fairytale quality, while darker ones appear elegant and graceful. Human, bird, and animal forms emerge in some sculptures, while others bridge the tangible and intangible.

*Opulence of Stone* is a remarkable example of modern stone carving. Hopefully, this art will flourish in our country without bigotry. The exhibition at Kala Kendra runs until today (August 18).

**Radiohead releases new live album 'Hail to the Thief'**

Radiohead have unveiled a surprise live album titled *Hail to the Thief Live Recordings 2003-2009*. The collection was released digitally on August 13, with a limited-edition vinyl pressing scheduled for October 31. Alongside the announcement, the band shared a live performance video of *There, There*, filmed in Buenos Aires, which also appears on the album. The record features live renditions of tracks from *Hail to the Thief*, recorded in London, Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, and Dublin between 2003 and 2009. Frontman Thom Yorke connected the project to his 2024 reimagining of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, titled *Hamlet Hail to the Thief*. That production incorporated reworked songs from Radiohead's 2003 album, and Yorke said the experience ultimately inspired the release of this live collection.

**NEWS****Landmine-related injuries on the rise**

FROM PAGE 12  
Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sources said mines were placed only 300-400 yards inside Myanmar territory, near Naikongchhari border in Bandarban.

**TRAGEDIES ON THE BORDER**

The Bangladeshi injured by hidden landmines were either foraging for wood and bamboo in forests or trying to cross into Myanmar illegally for trade.

Moreover, Naikongchhari has become a major escape route for distressed Rohingyas fleeing Rakhine.

On July 13, Mohammad Hosain from Ukhia's Patabari village lost a leg after he stepped on a mine while collecting bamboo. He is now receiving treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

Several BGB officials said the AA plants mines not only to bar Rohingyas from returning to Myanmar but also to control informal trade routes. Many Rohingyas said they had to pay the AA while crossing the border.

**Mother tells tribunal**

FROM PAGE 12  
prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun.

Mamun, now a state witness after pleading guilty, sat in the dock yesterday.

Apart from Shahana, the tribunal recorded statements of three more prosecution witnesses, including vegetable trader Abdus Samad and student Naim Shikder who were shot "in police firing" during the July uprising in Dhaka's Uttara area and Khulna, respectively.

Shahana, 41, said she had called her son repeatedly that morning as victims of gunfire poured into a hospital in Savar where she worked as a cleaner. Sajal told her, "I'm your only son, Ammu, but I cannot abandon my brothers who are dying beside me. If I die, thousands of sons will stand by you."

As she kept calling repeatedly while the bodies of victims continue to arrive at her hospital from Ashulia's Baijapil area, by 2:45pm, Sajal told her, "If I become a martyr, identify me with my ID card."

Moments later, his phone went silent forever.

That night, Shahana searched

hospitals, morgues, and ICUs in vain. At dawn, a student told her that several youths had been killed and burnt near Ashulia Police Station.

"When I reached there, I saw a heap of charred bodies inside a police pickup. I recognised my son by his shoe stuck to one of his leg's charred bones," she testified. His half-burnt ID card of his work place and his twisted university ID card later confirmed the identity. Sajal had a part-time job at a food shop to support his poor family.

"When I first took a photo of my son's body, I saw his mobile phone lying next to his burned hand. Seeing that, I realised that he was still alive just moments before being burned. I think as he was being set on fire, he desperately tried to let us know what was happening by writing a text message. But because other bodies were piled on top of him, he couldn't send a message or make a call," she added.

While visiting his grave in Gaibandha, Sajal's two-year-old daughter cried out, "Baba, wake up, Baba, get up." The court was shown a video clip of that moment, along with another showing of Sajal waving the national flag and holding a stick during protest.

Sajal ended with a plea for justice. "I demand justice for my son

and the two thousand others who were killed during the uprising. I hold Sheikh Hasina, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, IGP Mamun, Obaidul Quader, MP Saiful, the Awami League, Jibto League, Chhatra League, and Police League responsible for this."

Another witness, Naim, a student of Mohsin College in Khulna, told the tribunal that police shot him from inside the residence of then Khulna City Corporation mayor on August 4 last year. He was hit by around 500 pellets, and he still has pain.

He claimed that doctors denied his treatment due to alleged orders from Hasina, and he was left untreated at Khulna Medical College Hospital for five hours.

Samad, a vegetable trader from the capital's Uttara, said he was shot in the head during the uprising on July 19 and the bullet was removed months later.

Defence counsel for Hasina and Kamal cross examined the witnesses.

The ICT-1 adjourned recording of statements of prosecution witnesses till today.

Meanwhile, the tribunal extended time for submission of probe reports in four cases filed with Jatrabari, Rampura, Gazipur, and Mohammadpur police stations over the atrocities during the uprising following the prosecution's appeals.

The authorities also instructed that a report be submitted without delay under Section 173(A) of the recently amended Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to complete the investigation.

**Election, reforms must proceed**

FROM PAGE 12  
changes of the constitution and protect it from judicial challenges.

On the issue of secularism versus religious identity in the constitution, Saki reaffirmed the party's commitment to building an inclusive state.

He opposed replacing "secularism" with "absolute faith in Almighty Allah" as demanded by BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, and instead advocated for equal rights for all citizens irrespective of religion, ethnicity, gender identity, or political beliefs.

"The spirit of the July uprising is to ensure every individual's rights and dignity. A citizen's identity should not be undermined by religion, profession, or ethnicity," he said.

Regarding issues where consensus could not be reached, he said, "If some issues remain unresolved, they will be placed before the people. The election will serve as the platform for the public to give their mandate."

"We demand accountability for each incident. At the same time, we reject disinformation campaigns and believe

"Any proposal should not be imposed forcibly."

Regarding the election, Saki said people will make the ultimate decision.

"Some may try to delay elections in the name of reforms, or bypass reforms for quick elections -- but the people want both," he said.

Addressing the deterioration of law and order after August 5, Saki said the collapse of law enforcement and state institutions -- long misused by the former authoritarian regime -- was a key factor.

He called for rebuilding these institutions to ensure public safety and accountability.

He condemned recent attacks on shrines, minorities, and women, which he said were often orchestrated by fascist elements, and criticised the exaggerated portrayal of these incidents by some foreign media.

"We demand accountability for each incident. At the same time, we reject disinformation campaigns and believe

in standing for justice, truth, and unity," he stated.

On calls to ban the Awami League over its role in past violence, including the July massacre, Saki maintained that such matters should be handled through democratic and judicial processes.

"There must be justice for 15 years of crimes, including the mass killings in July and August. Those responsible, including Sheikh Hasina and her party, must be held accountable through proper investigations," he asserted.

As for election preparedness, Saki said Ganosamhati Andolon is gearing up to contest in all constituencies.

He said the party's campaign would focus on democratic transformation, accountability, and economic justice.

"We are working to build a broad alliance for democratic change. We want an inclusive Bangladesh where reforms and elections happen simultaneously, with the people guiding the process," Saki added.

**Air Canada to resume flights after govt directive ends strike**

AFP, Toronto

Air Canada said it resumed flying yesterday after the country's industrial relations board ordered an end to a strike by 10,000 flight attendants that effectively shut down the airline and snarled summer travel.

The Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) "directed Air Canada to resume airline operations and for all Air Canada and Air Canada Rouge flight attendants to resume their duties by 14:00 EDT on August 17, 2025," the airline said in a statement.

Some flights are still set to be cancelled over the next seven to 10 days, it added.

Air Canada cabin crew walked off the job early Saturday over a wage dispute.

Hours later, Canada's labor policy minister, Patty Hajdu, invoked a legal provision to halt the strike and force both sides into binding arbitration.

"The directive, under section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, and the CIRB's order, ends the strike at Air Canada that resulted in the suspension of more than 700 flights," the Montreal-based carrier said.

## Govt forms body to boost pharma raw material industry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed an 11 member committee to provide recommendations aimed at developing the pharmaceutical raw material industry in Bangladesh.

The committee has been formed as part of implementing the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission and the government's export diversification strategy, the Health Services Division said in a notification yesterday.

The committee, led by Sайдур رحمن, secretary of the division, has been asked to submit its report within the next month.

Other members include representatives from Bangladesh Bank and the ministries of commerce and finance.

## Hospital and clinic owners' association gets new committee



### CITY DESK

The newly elected committee of the Bangladesh Private Hospital, Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association was officially inaugurated at the Shaheed Abu Sayeed International Convention Center in Dhaka on August 16, said a press release.

The event also marked the association's annual general meeting.

Law Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul was present as the chief guest while Prof Md Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, attended as special guest.

Association Secretary Dr AM Shamim gave the welcome address while association President Dr Md Mosaddeque Hossain Biswas Dumbell presided over the event.

## 33 proposals set for implementation

FROM PAGE 3  
directed them to provide weekly updates on implementation, as it has to submit progress reports to the Cabinet Division and the Chief Adviser's Office, officials said.

The 12-member commission, led by National Professor AK Azad Khan, submitted its report on May 5, recommending a sweeping overhaul of health service management to make it more pro people.

The report came at a time when the health sector faces major challenges, including inadequate funding, a shortage of health workers, high out-of-pocket expenses, unequal access to services, and weak governance. These issues, health experts say, deprive many of quality treatment and compel many others to seek medical care abroad.

A senior official of the DGHS said most of the recommendations involve the enactment or amendment of laws and the issuance of necessary directives from the ministry.

In some cases, inter-ministerial decisions will be required to implement certain recommendations," the official said. "However, implementation of some recommendations can begin immediately with just a few directives from the ministry."

Health Services Division Secretary Saidur Rahman said that the implementation of some recommendations can begin immediately, while others require consultations with stakeholders.

"There are some sensitive issues as well, which cannot be implemented without stakeholder consultation," he told The Daily Star last night. Replying to a question, he said the impact of the reform proposals will be visible to some extent within the next three months.

### SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations, categorised as short-term, are: necessary reform of existing health sector laws; formation of a search committee to give recommendations for the recruitment of top officials of the proposed health services; establishing a digital platform to address service seekers' complaints; setting up a service centre for the quick completion of licensing and administrative processes linked to private hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres; introducing E-GP for all procurements in the health sector; appointment of clinical pharmacists at hospitals and primary healthcare centres; establishing a national essential diagnostic list and fixing their costs; creating a national ambulance service network; introducing an e-prescription system; implementing prescription audits; strengthening the internal audit unit at directorates; and prohibiting the prescribing of unnecessary tests and drugs, as well as writing prescriptions on pharmaceutical company pads.

The mid-term recommendations are: formation of the Bangladesh Health Commission for devising health related policies and giving the government strategic advice; ensuring essential drugs at free or subsidised prices; forming an updated pay structure for interns, doctors, post-graduation students, and private health service providers; enacting a health information protection act; and increasing the allocation for health-related research.

The long-term recommendations are: establishing a secretariat for Bangladesh Health

Services; keeping pharmacies at government hospitals and primary healthcare centres open 24 hours; introducing a unique health ID for all and preserving all health and treatment related information there; activating a referral system and making it mandatory; and establishing an administration under a director general for food, drugs, and IVD medical devices.

## Student groups

FROM PAGE 3  
JCD sources said the issue was discussed in several meetings with BNP acting Chairman Tarique Rahman and senior JCD leaders, but no decision has yet been made.

Among the names under consideration for the top two positions are Md Abidul Islam Khan, joint general secretary of JCD DU unit (2015-16 session), and Shaikh Tanvir Barre Hamid, convener of Jashim Uddin Hall unit.

Nahiduzzaman Shipon, general secretary of JCD DU unit, said, "We are yet to finalise anything over the election panel, but leaders and activists have been advised to collect nomination forms for now if they are eligible."

Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Songshad, formed by a faction of student leaders from the anti-discrimination movement, has finalised its candidates for the top two posts but is still undecided on others, and the works will be implemented shortly."

Established in 1958, Bagerhat municipality has a total of 78.38 kilometres of roads under its jurisdiction.

## Most Bagerhat

FROM PAGE 4  
tenders in two separate packages covering 22 damaged roads. Work will start very soon."

Echoing him, Abdulla Al Masud, the municipal executive officer, said, "Almost all the major dilapidated roads of the town have been included in the two packages. Tenders have already been invited, and the works will be implemented shortly."

Established in 1958, Bagerhat municipality has a total of 78.38 kilometres of roads under its jurisdiction.

## Accusations

FROM PAGE 4  
Among the 122 signatories are DU Emeritus Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury; rights activist Hameeda Hossain; lawyer and rights activist Sultana Kamal; development activist Khushi Kabir; Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam; senior Supreme Court lawyer Zi Khan Panna; DU Prof Nurul Amin Bepari; DU retired Prof MM Akash; visiting Professor at London School of Economics and Political Science Shapan Adnan; and DU retired Prof Monowar Uddin Ahmed.

Talks are ongoing about including three more leftist bodies: Chhatra Union (Mahir-Bahuddin), Chhatra Front (BASAD), and BCL (Jasad).

Though the panel is not yet finalised, names being considered for the top three positions include Meghmalibar Bosu of Chhatra Union, Jaber Ahmed Jubel of Biplobi Chhatra Moitree, and Muzammel Haque of Chhatra Front.

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Debates continue over the AGS post, with Zahid Ahsan, Tahmid Al Muddassir Chowdhury, and Hasib Al Islam under discussion.

"We wanted to bring someone from outside our organisation for the position. If that does not happen, someone among them will be finalised," Kader said.

The left-leaning Gonotantrik Chhatra Jote, an alliance of seven student organisations including Chhatra Union (Tajmid Shimul), Chhatra Front (Marxist), Biplobi Chhatra Moitree, Gonotantrik Chhatra Council, Pahari Chhatra Parishad, Chhatra Federation, and Biplobi Chhatra Jubo Andolon, is also working on a panel.

According to sources, Shibir is considering including female and minority representatives in its panel. Abu Sadik Kayem, former DU unit president, is being discussed for the vice president post, while current president SM Farhad may run for general secretary.

Shibir panel members will collect nomination papers on the deadline day today, said Farhad.

According to DUCSU Election Commission, 125 nomination papers have been collected in the last six days, of which 19 are for vice president, 2 for general secretary, 5 for assistant general secretary, 44 for secretary positions, and 55 for member positions.

## Narrow roads, illegal Must ensure

FROM PAGE 4

Chairman Md Nurul Karim said the roads are critically important for city dwellers, and the ongoing

congestion is causing both direct and indirect losses.

"To ease the sufferings of residents, we have taken the initiative to widen these roads," he said, adding that the project is still in its preliminary phase.

He said the CDA's existing master plan had already designated these roads to be 60 feet wide. As a result, no approvals were granted for high-rise constructions along either side of the roads. "Therefore, it is possible to widen the roads simply through land acquisition," he added.

NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossen said it was the interim government's responsibility to implement the July Declaration. "They should present a new electoral system to the nation, one that is the opposite of a fascist system."

Representatives of various socio-cultural organisations also spoke.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Environment

Implementing Ecosystem-based Management in Ecologically Critical Areas in Bangladesh Project

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room: 903, Poribesh Bhaban New Building

E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

www.doe.gov.bd

### Request for Expression of Interest (EoI) for Selection of Consultant Firm/Organization (National)

1.	Ministry/Division	:	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2.	Agency	:	Department of Environment (DoE)
3.	Procuring Entity Name	:	Project Director
4.	Procuring Entity District	:	Dhaka
5.	Expression of Interest for	:	Consultant Firm (National)
6.	Title of Service	:	Development of management plan and operational guideline for Halda river
7.	EoI Ref No	:	22.02.0000.045.14.010.25-192
8.	Date	:	17 August 2025
Key Information			
9.	Procuring Method	:	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
Funding Information			
10.	Budget and Source of Funds	:	Global Environment Facility (GEF)
11.	Development Partners	:	GEF-UNDP
Particular Information			
12.	Project Code	:	223053500
13.	Project Name	:	Implementing Ecosystem-based Management in Ecologically Critical Areas in Bangladesh Project
14.	EoI Closing Date and Time	:	21 September 2025, 02:00 pm
Information for Applicants:			
15.	Eligibility of the Consulting firm/organization:		
a.	the consulting firm/organization must have minimum 10 years' experience in Natural Resource Management (NRM) sector, environment, climate change, institutional assessment, ecosystem valuation, management plan development, policy formulation and financial strategy development.		
b.	Proficiency in statistical analysis, economic modeling, and data standardization.		
c.	Experience in conducting stakeholder engagement and participatory research in wetland ecosystems.		
d.	Submission of latest (2023-24 and 2024-25) annual audit reports of the firm that should be at least BDT 02 crore net turnover from competent authority or firm.		
e.	Successfully completion of at least two (2) similar assignments in the last 10 years with the evidence of Job completion certificate/Work Order/ Purchase order/Any Professional contract from competent authority.		
f.	Submission of bank solvency certificate along with last three months bank statement (Income statement and balance sheet to indicate its financial stability, liquidity, credit standing, and market reputation, etc.)		
g.	Submission of VAT and Tax Registration Certificate and evidence of payment issued by competent authority evidencing that the Bidder is updated with its tax payment obligations, or Certificate of Tax exemption, if any such privilege is enjoyed by the Bidder.		
h.	Certificate of Registration of the business, including Articles of Incorporation, or equivalent document if Bidder is not a corporation or valid trade license or registered as Joint Stock Company.		
16.	Other Details (if applicable):		The Terms of References (ToR) for the services including the scope of works, deliverables, team composition with educational qualifications, and experiences are available on the DoE's official website ( <a href="http://www.doe.gov.bd">www.doe.gov.bd</a> ). Applicants are advised to provide all the necessary information and proven documents with a cover letter. One original and two copies of the EoI must be submitted in a sealed envelope and be clearly marked the title of service for the EoI.
Procuring Entity Details			
17.	Name of Official Inviting EoI	:	Farhana Mustari
18.	Designation of Official Inviting EoI	:	Project Director, Implementing Ecosystem-based Management in Ecologically Critical Areas in Bangladesh Project
19.	Address of Official Inviting EoI	:	Department of Environment 8 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Room: 903, Poribesh Bhaban New Building E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
20.	Contact details of Official Inviting EoI	:	Phone: +880-2222218305, Email: <a href="mailto:fmmunn@ yahoo.com">fmmunn@ yahoo.com</a>
21.	Place of submission of EoI	:	Office of the Project Director, Implementing Ecosystem-based Management in Ecologically Critical Areas in Bangladesh 8 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Room: 903, Poribesh Bhaban E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
22.	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject all EoIs.		

The Department of Environment (DoE) is implementing a project titled "Implementing Ecosystem-based Management in Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs) in Jhenaidah and proposed Biodiversity Heritage Halda river in Chittagong in Bangladesh to enhance the conservation of globally significant biodiversity and support local livelihoods. The Project period is July 2024 to June 2029.

Farhana Mustari  
Project Director  
Email: [fmmunn@ yahoo.com](mailto:fmmunn@ yahoo.com)

17/8/25

GD-1810

17/08/2025  
মোঃ আহসান উদ্দিন মুরাদ  
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## গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ বিভাগ

খনিজ সম্পদ উন্নয়ন বৃত্তো (বিএমডি)

১৫৩, পাইওনিয়ার রোড, সেগুনবাগিচা, ঢাকা-১০০০

# BRIDGING THE PARTITION THROUGH EDUCATION

## The transformation of East Pakistani society

**Unlike the political divisiveness that is habitually imagined in the context of Partition, the imagined society of the elites of the new country was focused on an education based on equanimity that would lend vibrancy and vitality to their future generations.**

MEGHNA GUHATHAKURTA

The 1947 Partition of South Asia is usually associated with divisions, disruption, and the melancholia of displacement. This is the dominant narrative that pervades the literature on Partition today, even after 75 years have passed. Yet the 1947 Partition was also about new social transformation and institutional frameworks. Pakistan was a new state created out of old British India. India too had new visions of state-building which were injected into its planning in its initial years. But the really intricate processes of social transformation took place on the ground, in the interstices of a society undergoing tumultuous change. The changes manifested themselves more clearly and acutely in individual stories or family and community relations than they did at the national level. I will relate two such stories. The first is about my mother, Basanti Guhathakurta, and the girls' school she helped build in Gandaria, an old quarter of Dhaka. The second is about a family friend, Mobarok Hossain, who migrated from West Bengal to East Bengal as a result of Partition dynamics.

Basanti Guhathakurta, born in 1922 and originally from Vikrampur, later relocated to Fatullah, Narayanganj, and married Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta in 1948. She joined Gandaria Girls' High School (later renamed Maniza Rahman Girls' High School) as Headmistress and stayed there until her retirement in 1988. At the time of Partition, Gandaria was a neighbourhood inhabited mostly by upper middle-class Hindus. Gandaria school also reflected that composition in its students as well as faculty members. The Partition witnessed the mass exodus of the Hindu population from East



Event at Maniza Rahman School. In the front row, seated is Asha Lata Sen (second from left); next to her is the famous literary figure and student of Begum Rokeya, Shamsunnahar Mahmud. Standing fourth from the left is Basanti Guhathakurta.

High School. Though both came from Hindu families, both chose to remain in East Pakistan at the helm of their respective institutions. Dr Shamsul Bari, a veteran resident of that area, reminisced about the time:

"Because of the tumultuous times, it was expected that there would be major disruptions in the educational sector, but there weren't, because of the continuous presence of the two schools and the beacon of light they could cast on future generations."

I myself was mortified to see my school friends leave for India, often silently, without telling any of their neighbours. But I also saw my

based on equanimity that would lend vibrancy and vitality to their future generations. What better way to do it than through the very educational institutes that had organic roots in our social history?"

Maniza Rahman Girls' School faced enormous challenges in this journey, but under the guidance of well-wishers like M.A. Khaleque, Dr Wahid, and women leaders like Asha Lata Sen, it received enormous impetus and support to take on this immense task. I grew up hearing stories from my mother about how she dealt with the dwindling number of students and faculty at her school in the initial years. The demography of the Gandaria neighbourhood was fast changing. The Hindu-owned households were gradually being sold off, and the wholesale iron traders of Dholai Khal were moving into the area. But they were a conservative community who did not believe in higher education for their daughters.

My mother, along with several teachers, strategised to bring those girls to school. They went in groups, knocked on each door, and asked the parents to send their daughters to school, assuring them of their safety and security. The school also had an escort service for girls who lived at some distance and could not pay enough for rickshaw fares. The school had a troop of dais or ayahs (women assistants) who would collect each girl from their homes (one *dai* for each area), escort them walking to school, and similarly take them home after school. Midday meals were also given to the girls at the school.

My mother dealt with the dearth of faculty members in different ways. Muslim women were only beginning to receive higher education, but my mother could not afford to recruit trained teachers, so she would take the

help of any young woman who was reasonably educated and give them hands-on training. Several of my aunts, once they had graduated or at least passed their Intermediate, were recruited to fill in the gaps. I had heard that Hena Das, the communist leader, who was once in a dire strait as no one would offer her a job because of her political leanings, was also provided with a teaching post at the school for a brief while. 'Abeda apa', a student of that school herself, married the left leader Nasim Ali who had to take to underground politics most of the time in East Pakistan, became a teacher initially for the sheer survival of her family but later turned it into a lifelong career. Many girls from the neighbourhood who had just passed out from schools or colleges in the vicinity would be invited to teach at the school until the time the school itself had recovered from the blow of Partition. It is amazing how history and social historians have neglected this aspect of women's contribution in transforming our societies!

As mentioned before, the school became a focal point not only for text-based education but also a crucible for nurturing culture and creativity. It included classes in songs, painting and instrumental music, along with time spent in getting to know nature through gardening, cooking, and other arts and activities. The whole idea was to broaden the horizons of the girls who were expected to play an important role in transforming our societies in the better interests of future generations.

But there is another angle that needs further investigation in the education sector and that is the education of youth who came as migrants from India and the process of inducting them into the education system of the newly



Teachers of Maniza Rahman Girls' School, Gandaria.

Bengal into India and the reverse migration of Muslims from India into the new state of East Pakistan. Given the higher literacy among the Hindu population in colonial Bengal, this meant that many of the local schools in East Bengal lost their students and teachers, leaving behind a gap that could not be filled immediately.

But despite the mass exodus in the neighbourhood of Gandaria, the education scene remained stable, possibly because of the two stalwart educationists heading the two high schools in the area: Sudhir Chandra Ray of Gandaria High School for Boys and Basanti Guhathakurta of Gandaria Girls'

father, M.A. Khaleque, who, as the President of the School Board at Maniza Rahman Girls' School, gave great impetus to women's education and generously supported Basanti Guhathakurta during those times. He, like many others who lived through Partition, felt the necessity to build the new state of Pakistan through the education of future generations—an education which would be deeply ingrained in the composite and inclusive culture of religious coexistence. Hence, unlike the political divisiveness that is habitually imagined in the context of Partition, the imagined society of the elites of the new country was focused on an education

created nation. We can hear about this from the stories of migrants who came in from India. One such person was Mobarok Hossain, a family friend who passed his Secondary Examination from Barasat in West Bengal and had entered for his Higher Secondary studies at Bangabasi College, Calcutta. But during the 1965 Indo-Pak war his parents, who had gone to see their eldest son, now working in Pakistan, became trapped due to the cessation of communication between the two countries. It was only in early 1966 that his parents could return to India. On their return, jarred by their experience, they instructed Mobarok to go to Pakistan and give company to his brother. His mother's words were that one needs to have a family when in a foreign country (*bidesh*). Mobarok could not disregard his mother's words and set off to East Pakistan to stay with his eldest brother, who was then working in Jashore.

In Jashore, Mobarok tried to gain fresh entrance into the Higher Secondary level at Michael Madhusudan Dutta College (M.M. College). But he was faced with a problem. Mobarok's journey into East Pakistan occurred at the spur of the moment, without proper planning. Given the suddenness of his parents' decision to send him to East Pakistan, he came without a passport. On entering Jashore, he collected a refugee registration card from the DC of Jashore. But that was not enough to enrol him into M.M. College. They needed a Board Migration paper which he did not possess. The formalities were too formidable to explain to his father and family across the border. Instead, through the goodwill of friends and acquaintances, he was admitted conditionally on the premise that he would provide his Board Migration certificate from Kolkata. But that day never came. He kept on studying and graduated from M.M. College and, prior to March 1971, just before the Liberation War started, was admitted to the Master's Course in Economics at Rajshahi University.

His journey had continued unhampered until his graduation from M.M. College when he tried to take up a job. He then realised that he had been living a stateless existence. All he had was a refugee registration card from the DC's office in Jashore. But that was not enough to get him a job. He needed citizenship. He then started the process of gaining domiciled citizenship by virtue of his registration as a refugee. Once a citizen, he had no trouble gaining admission into a Master's degree course at Rajshahi University and he opted to do that.

The reason for going into Mobarok's journey in detail was to demonstrate the fragile fate that young people were faced with in attaining simple objectives such as education when everything around them was falling apart: families, homes, careers, destinies. Yet they made a future for themselves in a new land, raised a family and children in circumstances that many would not have survived. The bravery, courage, and resilience of these young people have never adorned the annals of our history, and yet they are our legacies: legacies both of 1947 and 1971.

Meghna Guhathakurta is a researcher and writer.



Domicile certificate of Mobarok Hossain.

# Star SPORT

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## what to WATCH

Star Sports Select HD2  
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Leeds vs Everton  
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Sony Sports 2  
Cincinnati Open final  
Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)

## Imrul skips NTC meeting as BFF waits on Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

National Teams Committee (NTC) deputy chairman and Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) senior vice president Imrul Hassan, who is also president of Bashundhara Kings, was the only absentee from an emergency NTC meeting with BFF president and NTC chairman Tabith Awal yesterday.

The meeting was held regarding Bashundhara Kings' refusal to release 10 players for the national team's ongoing preparation camp for the September friendlies against Nepal in Kathmandu.

"It would have been better for us to make a decision, but neither the Bashundhara Kings president nor their manager picked up phone calls despite repeated efforts," BFF media committee chairman Amirul Islam Babu said yesterday, having failed to communicate with Kings officials in the last two days.

Apart from Tabith, four other NTC members -- Babu, Satyajit Das Rupu, Iqbal Hossain, and Imtiaz Hamid Sabuz -- physically attended the meeting, while another member, Shahadat Hossain, joined virtually. BFF yesterday decided to send another letter to Kings, requesting them to release players "for the sake of national team." Hoping for positive feedback from Kings, the federation also announced it would hold another meeting in three to four days.

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera has been training with only 12 players in the ongoing camp and Babu said they have no plans to stop it or cancel friendlies against Nepal on September 6 and 9.

## No Babar, Rizwan in Pak's Asia Cup squad

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan left out Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan from the T20 squad named Sunday for the Asia Cup and a warm-up tri-series beginning this month against Afghanistan and the UAE.

Azam and Rizwan have been star performers in the shortest format in the past, but have not played since December, which head coach Mike Hesson put down to other players performing well.

"Babar has been asked to improve in certain areas, like taking on spin, and his strike rate, and he is working hard on these things," said Hesson. "The players we have are performing well and having a positive impact."

Since Hesson took over as head coach in May, Pakistan have played three T20 series -- winning 3-0 at home but losing 2-1 away to Bangladesh. They then beat the West Indies 2-1 in the United States.

"Our focus is to win the tri-series and the Asia Cup, and the aim is to peak from these pinnacle events," said Hesson.

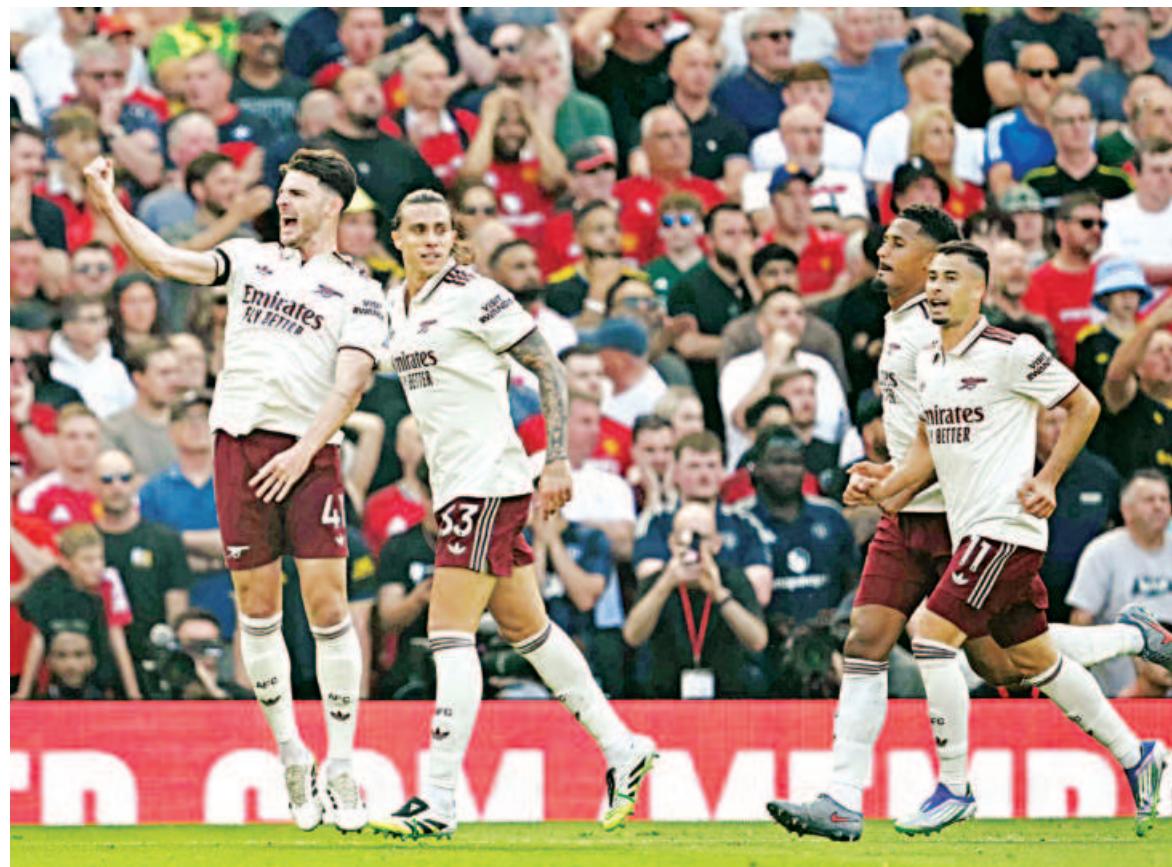
All-rounder Salman Agha will lead the side, which also includes star pacer Shaheen Afridi, who returned to the T20 side in the series against West Indies. Fakhar Zaman also returns after being injured for the ODI series in the West Indies, which Pakistan lost 2-1.

The tri-series, which starts on August 29, and the Asia Cup from September 9 will both take place in the UAE.



Teen sensation Lamine Yamal celebrates scoring Barcelona's final goal in a 3-0 rout of Mallorca away from home, as the defending champions opened their LaLiga campaign with ease on Saturday. Yamal, who assisted Raphinha's opener and also played a key role in Ferran Torres' goal in the 23rd minute, scored with the final shot of the game after having picked up the ball on the right flank and leaving three defenders trailing before curling a left-foot shot into the top corner. Mallorca were reduced to nine men in the first half, as Manu Morlanes and Vedat Muriqi were sent off inside just six minutes.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Arsenal's Riccardo Calafiori (C) celebrates with teammates after heading home the winner in a 1-0 win over Manchester United in their Premier League opener at Old Trafford yesterday. The Italian struck in the 13th minute from a corner, capitalising on United's stand-in keeper Altay Bayindir's weak parry. Arsenal have now netted 31 league goals from corners since the start of the 2023-24 season, 11 more than any other side, with three of their last four against United also coming from corner kicks.

PHOTO: AFP

## U-23s eye right combination in first Bahrain friendly

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-23 football team is looking forward to crafting the right combination and building team chemistry ahead of next month's U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers, as they face their Bahraini counterparts in the first of two friendly matches in Bahrain today.

The match will be held behind closed doors at 9:00 pm (Bangladesh time) at the BFA Football Field.

With the ambition of achieving good results in the AFC U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Vietnam, the team has been sent abroad for the first time for a solid preparation by playing two friendly matches against strong Bahraini opponents. However, head coach Saiful Baru Titu will not have access to Italy-based Fahamedul Islam and England-based Cuba Mitchell, who are expected to join the Vietnam-bound squad later.

Titu, who also serves as the technical director of the Bangladesh Football Federation, will nevertheless have the opportunity to assess two more overseas players -- Zayyan Hakim and



Tanil Salik -- alongside the remaining 22 players, which include six current national players with experience in the Bangladesh Premier League.

The squad will play their first preparation match following just three days of training in Bahrain. The head coach believes that facing the hosts presents a valuable opportunity, as Bahrain are considered a strong side, comparable to hosts Vietnam. Vietnam will host the group-stage matches that also include Bangladesh, Yemen, and Singapore.

"It is a big opportunity for us. We want to build the right combination and team chemistry by playing two matches against the Bahrain U-23 side because our main aim is to test the strength of every department," said Titu in a video message sent by the BFF.

"If we are tested intensively, then we will learn from these matches, and that will help us in the U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers," added Titu. He also noted that midfielder Sheikh Morsalin is likely to miss today's match following an injury sustained during his club's encounter in the AFC Challenge League.

National team defender Rimon Hossain mentioned that the players have been trying to adapt to the weather conditions in Bahrain, which are similar to those in Bangladesh, though the humidity is higher.

"I think this squad is a better one because it is comprised of players from the Bangladesh Premier League. So, we are hopeful of having a good preparation in Bahrain," said the Bashundhara Kings defender.

According to assistant coach Atiqur Rahman Meshu, the players focused on activation, build-up, and finishing in the attacking third during yesterday's training session, before being briefed about their opponents in the afternoon.



the batting coach of the women's team, argued that playing against age-level men's sides is actually good preparation for the Tigresses ahead of the World Cup.

"The [U-17 men's team's] bowling unit that we faced in Sylhet was quite quick. It reflected the standards of big international sides such as Australia and England. The conditions were good, the wickets had variety where we got batting friendly surfaces, wickets with grass and seaming conditions too along with spinning tracks," Nasiruddin, who has been with the side in an on and off basis since 2021, told The Daily Star.

"In difficult times, your mindset comes out. I feel it's very stable and strong right now... I feel because of our improved mindset, we scored 230-240 regularly against that bowling attack in Sylhet. We scored 245 twice and also twice we reached 250. Since we averaged 240

against unknown quality opponents, I am hopeful," he added.

Nasiruddin felt that the overall preparation for the World Cup has been good and is expecting a better performance than the Tigresses maiden World Cup campaign in 2022 in New Zealand, when the side won only one out of their seven games.

"We have seen players come up through the qualifiers. After that we also observed new players in the Emerging programme, where the girls played against a quality South Africa side. There was a conditioning camp in Dhaka, another conditioning camp in Cox's Bazar and we also played matches in Sylhet. So, in general the preparations have been fruitful."

"We obviously expect better results and I believe execution would make the difference. I feel they are in a good flow at the moment."

## Alcaraz-Sinner title showdown ahead of US Open

AGENCIES

World number one Jannik Sinner and world number two Carlos Alcaraz on Monday (early hours of Tuesday in Bangladesh) will renew their fast-growing rivalry in the final of the Cincinnati Open, a tune-up event for next month's US Open.

The pair, regarded as the leaders of tennis' new generation, will be meeting in a major final for the fourth time this season.

Both players advanced with straight-set wins on Saturday. Defending champion Sinner ruthlessly subdued 136th-ranked qualifier Terence Atmane 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, while Spanish second seed Alcaraz defeated an ailing Alexander Zverev, who was suffering badly from the 32 Celsius heat and humidity, by 6-4, 6-3.

Sinner and Alcaraz have faced off in finals in Rome, Roland Garros, and Wimbledon this season. Last month, Sinner snapped a five-match losing streak to Alcaraz to become the first Italian man to win the Wimbledon singles crown. Alcaraz, who lost that final, is eager to turn the tables in Cincinnati.

"We always bring our best tennis. We raise each other's level. I'm ready

to take the challenge," Alcaraz said.

"I will try and adjust my game better and correct what I did wrong in our last match. I want to be ready with my 100%. Mentally I'll be ready -- I'm excited for Monday."

Sinner, celebrating his 24th



birthday, has not dropped a set in his first tournament since Wimbledon and now aims to become the first man since Roger Federer in 2014-15 to win consecutive Cincinnati titles.

"It's a very, very tough challenge every time you play a new opponent," Sinner said. "In the later stages of the tournament, the pressure is on, they deserve to be there."

For Alcaraz, this will be a second appearance in a Cincinnati final after losing to Novak Djokovic in 2023. The

Spaniard, already boasting five titles this season, extended his ATP match-win lead to 53 with his victory over Zverev.

The German, a diabetic, needed a medical timeout early in the second set and struggled to finish the match,



allowing Alcaraz to sweep the last 12 points despite some patchy play. "We started with some good rallies, but when he felt bad, I was more focused on his condition than on my tennis," Alcaraz said. "I just wish him all the best."

Monday's clash will once again showcase tennis' most compelling rivalry in recent times, with Sinner holding the momentum after Wimbledon and Alcaraz seeking revenge before the season's final Grand Slam.

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## ICT CASE

### Mother tells tribunal about last conversation with her son 3 more witnesses testify

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A grieving mother told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday that her son had rejected her desperate plea to return home from Ashulia during the August 5 police firing, saying that if he died, she should identify his body with the help of his ID card.

"Why are you being so selfish, Ammu? I can't come home now. There are four bodies in front of me, and I'm holding an injured protester," recalled Shahana Begum as she described her last conversations with her son, Sajjad Hossain Sajal.

Sajal, a textile engineering student at City University and the family's only son, was allegedly shot and later burnt alive with five other bodies of protesters near Ashulia Police Station.

The atmosphere in the courtroom became heavy as the mother broke down in tears, again and again, while testifying as a

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Displaced Palestinians take shelter in a tent camp in Gaza City as the Israeli military prepares to relocate residents to southern Gaza, following ongoing military operations.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Star INTERVIEW

### Election, reforms must proceed simultaneously

**Says Zonayed Saki**

MID ABBAS

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, has emphasised that reforms and the upcoming national election must move forward hand in hand.

In an exclusive conversation with The Daily Star at his party office recently, Saki outlined his Ganosamhati's stance on the reform process, efforts to change the constitution, and the political situation following the July uprising.

He said the interim government has initiated a participatory and consensus-based approach by forming commissions, gathering political input, and drafting reform proposals.

According to Saki, the commission has to find a way to implement the issues which have been compiled into the "National Charter" or "July Charter". The unresolved matters can be left to the next parliament.

"We believe any reform must be rooted in mutual agreement. Administrative and institutional reforms can be immediately enforced by executive orders from the interim government and later ratified by parliament," he said.

"However, constitutional reforms require a new parliamentary mandate."

To that end, Ganosamhati Andolon has proposed that the next parliament serves as a Constituent Assembly, tasked with implementing unanimously agreed constitutional changes within six months of its formation.

Such a move, Saki said, would ensure the legal sustainability of the



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## New type of supernova found after star explosion

REUTERS, Washington

Astronomers have observed the calamitous result of a star that picked the wrong dance partner.

They have documented what appears to be a new type of supernova, as stellar explosions are known, that occurred when a massive star tried to swallow a black hole with which it had engaged in a lengthy pas de deux.

The star, which was at least 10 times as massive as our sun, and the black hole, which had a similar mass, were gravitationally bound to one another in what is called a binary system.

But as the distance separating them gradually narrowed, the black hole's immense gravitational pull appears to have distorted the star - stretching it out from its spherical shape - and siphoned off material before causing it to explode.

"We caught a massive star locked in a fatal tango with a black hole," said astrophysicist Alexander Gagliano of the US National Science Foundation's Institute for AI and Fundamental Interactions located at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, lead author of the study published this week in the *Astrophysical Journal*.



Demonstrators blocked the main gate of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal yesterday, protesting the August 14 attack on those demanding sweeping reforms in the health sector. The blockade disrupted healthcare services. A female patient, who had been admitted earlier, faced difficulties in returning to the hospital after she underwent tests at a diagnostic centre.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## ASSAULTED ON AUG 15 Rickshaw-puller Azizur gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rickshaw-puller Azizur Rahman, who was assaulted by a mob while trying to pay tribute to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi 32 on August 15 and later sent to jail, secured bail yesterday in an attempted murder case linked to last year's July uprising.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate MA Azharul Islam granted him bail after his lawyer submitted a petition, said Abul Bashar, sub-inspector and general recording officer.

"There is no legal bar for him to walk out of jail," said Azizur's lawyer Advocate Farzana Yasmin Rakhi.

Azizur was shown arrested in a case filed on April 2 with Dhanmondi Police Station. Sub-inspector Mohammad Touhidur Rahman produced him in court on Saturday.

In the forwarding report, Touhidur appealed to keep him in jail until the investigation was complete, saying the plaintiff alleged he was shot in the back during a student procession in Dhaka's New Market on August 4, 2024. The court then sent him to jail.

However, a day later, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) issued a

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## BANGLADESH-MYANMAR BORDER

### Landmine-related injuries on the rise

PORIMOL PALMA, MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Having lost her right leg in a landmine explosion, Nur Kaida, a 23-year-old Rohingya woman, now feels helpless at a refugee camp in Teknaf.

"I have become a burden," said Kaida who was maimed while trying to return home in Maungdaw, Rakhine State, in February this year.

"Our family is devastated," she said softly, her frail body bearing visible signs of malnutrition.

Like many others, she and her family fled their village to a forest in August last year amid fierce fighting between Myanmar military and Arakan Army (AA). Hiding in the forest for months, they attempted to return to the village after the AA claimed control over much of Maungdaw in early December.

But their hope was short-lived. On February 3, as they approached the entrance to their abandoned home, a hidden landmine detonated, leaving Kaida and her two siblings severely injured.

"Landmines were laid around many houses after we fled the village. Now, people are too afraid to go back," she said, adding that local villagers believe the landmines were planted to prevent the return

of displaced Rohingyas.

Kaida, along with her parents and two siblings, escaped to Bangladesh and took shelter at the refugee camp in the second week of February.

**"Landmines were laid around many houses after we fled the village. Now, people are too afraid to go back."**

NUR KAIDA, a Rohingya woman, about her neighbourhood in Maungdaw

They are among more than a million Rohingyas who have fled to Bangladesh since 2017 -- around 750,000 during the military crackdown that year, and another 200,000 after a fresh conflict between the AA and military junta in late 2023.

**RISING LANDMINE CASUALTIES**  
Landmine-related injuries along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border have been on the rise over the last couple of years, according to Border Guard Bangladesh data.

In the first six months of this year, at least 18 people -- 17 Bangladeshis and one Rohingya -- were wounded in landmine explosions on the Myanmar side of the border. Two Rohingyas were killed and six others wounded last year, while five people were injured in 2023.

Human Rights Watch reported last November that the Myanmar military continues to deploy banned antipersonnel landmines across all 14 states and regions despite international prohibitions.

Since the military coup in February 2021, both the junta and non-state armed groups, such as the AA, reportedly increased the use of these mines, it said.

Landmine Monitor 2024 ranked Myanmar the world's deadliest country for landmine casualties, with 1,003 civilian deaths and injuries recorded in 2023 -- nearly triple the figure in 2022. The grim trend continues, with 692 civilian casualties, including many children, reported in the first six months of this year. Experts believe the actual toll is significantly higher.

With the junta losing ground in Rakhine, the AA has been accused of planting mines, particularly near houses and along routes used for cross-border movement.

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## ACC seeks wealth info of Bashundhara chairman, wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti Corruption Commission has issued a notice to Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan and his wife Afroza Begum, seeking their wealth statements.

In a press release issued yesterday, the commission said the notice was served under section 26(l) of the ACC Act, 2004.

According to the notice signed by ACC Deputy Director Sheikh Golam Mawla, the Bashundhara Group chairman has acquired movable and immovable properties worth Tk 252.22 crore in the country, while his wife Afroza Begum has movable and immovable properties worth Tk 453.12 crore in Bangladesh.

The notice further said the couple jointly obtained citizenship of Saint Kitts and Nevis by spending \$250,000, and laundered a huge amount of money through bank accounts opened in Switzerland, under companies registered in the British Virgin Islands and the Isle of Man.

It stated that the couple -- either in their own names or through others acting on their behalf -- possess movable and immovable properties, both at home and abroad, which appear to have been accumulated through dishonest means and are inconsistent with their known sources of income.

Without obtaining proper approval from Bangladesh Bank, they illegally transferred money to Saint Kitts and Nevis, the notice added.

## 'Mob' beats man to death in Lalbagh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 26-year-old man was beaten to death allegedly by a mob in the Shahidnagar neighbourhood of Lalbagh in Dhaka early yesterday, police said.

The victim was identified as Tofiqul Islam, aka "Killer Babu" and "Tera Babu", said Mostafa Kamal Khan, officer-in-charge (OC) of Lalbagh Police Station.

Locals caught him around 3:30am near Shahidnagar Lohar Bridge and assaulted him, suspecting his involvement in criminal activities, the police officer said.

Upon being informed, army personnel from Azimpur camp rescued him in a "critical state", OC Kamal said.

He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead around 7:45am, the OC added.

The body was kept at the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

"We are investigating the incident," said the OC.

He was accused in around 10 cases filed with Lalbagh Police Station, including on drug-related charges, according to the police officer.