

UN declares famine in Gaza, blames Israel

Netanyahu calls report 'outright lie' as world condemns man-made mass starvation of Palestinians

AGENCIES

The United Nations officially declared a famine in Gaza yesterday, blaming "systematic obstruction" of aid by Israel during more than 22 months of war, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu swiftly dismissing the findings.

Netanyahu, whose defence minister meanwhile threatened to expand the offensive, rejected the UN-backed report as "an outright lie".

Hamas urged the United Nations and UN Security Council to "stop the war and lift the siege", calling for unrestricted access for food, medicine, water and fuel.

The Rome-based Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Initiative (IPC) said famine was affecting 500,000 people in the Gaza governorate, which covers about a fifth of the Palestinian territory, including Gaza City.

Israel has pressed ahead with plans to seize Gaza City despite an international outcry, saying that taking the territory's largest city is key to defeating Hamas.

The IPC projected that the famine would expand to Deir el-Balah and Khan Yunis governorates by the end of September, covering around two-thirds of Gaza.

With the vast majority of the territory's population displaced at least once, the UN said nearly a million people currently live in the Gaza governorate.

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- IPC warns avoidable deaths will soar if no actions is taken now
- UN rights chief says starving Gaza 'is a war crime'
- UK slams famine as a 'moral outrage'
- Hamas demands opening of Gaza crossings
- Israel vows to destroy Gaza City if Hamas doesn't disarm, free hostages
- At least 46 more people killed in Gaza



Palestinians jostle for food in front of a charity kitchen in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday, amid widespread hunger and devastation in the tiny Palestinian enclave.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Healthcare reform begins, service yet to improve

TUHIN SHUBHIRA ADHIKARY

Over the past year, the health administration initiated a series of reforms to improve medical care but struggled to implement them, leaving little impact on the delivery of health services, say health experts.

It moved to grant long-overdue promotions to around 7,000 doctors and appoint 3,000 new ones to address the manpower crisis. However, political influence remains a key factor in the selection of candidates for top positions

in health agencies, medical institutions and facilities, experts point out.

Though the health ministry pledged to prioritise treatment of those injured during the July uprising, lapses in medical care for them triggered protests on several occasions.

Experts attribute the sector's poor state to the delay in launching reforms, apathy of ministry officials, commotion among health workers, and the sudden suspension of USAID funding early this year.

The ministry also drew

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No let-up in violent crimes

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

The only fault of Rabbi, a resident of the capital's Jafraabad area, was that he questioned two unknown young men loitering near his home late at night on May 15.

A little later, a group of 10 to 12 men armed with sharp weapons stormed his house and attacked seven members of his family before fleeing, leaving a trail of blood and panic in the neighbourhood.

Two months on, the scars remain. Two of the victims are still fighting for life in the intensive care unit, while the rest continue to live with physical, emotional, and financial trauma.

In recent months, a string of brutal crimes like this across the capital and beyond, many caught on camera

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Hawkers move their shops on three-wheelers between two sets of rail lines for the train to pass at Jurain Level Crossing. After the train passes they move back on the rail lines. The photo of this blatant disregard for their safety and that of their customers was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Mob ties teens to bridge, beats one dead

Two boys hospitalised, 2 suspects held



This is an image generated by AI from a photo of the teens being beaten up. The Daily Star is not publishing the actual photo due to its violent nature and the victims being underage.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 15-year-old boy was beaten to death and two others were injured in an attack carried out by a mob of seven or eight people in Chattogram's Fatikchhari upazila early yesterday.

Deceased Md Rihan Uddin Mahin was the son of grocer Lokman of Chenga area. The injured two, aged around 15, were admitted to hospital.

Locals said Mahin used to help his father at their shop.

The mob attacked around 3:30am near Chengar Bridge when the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Youth found dead in Chakaria police custody; locals stage protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A man's body was found hanging inside the holding cell of Chakaria Police Station in Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

Police claimed that Durjoy Chowdhury, 27, of Chakaria municipality died by suicide.



Durjoy

The claim was met with disbelief by several hundred locals and Durjoy's family members, who staged protests and surrounded the police station yesterday evening, demanding justice. They later demonstrated in front of the Upazila Land Office.

Durjoy worked as an office assistant/computer operator at Chakaria Government High School.

His father, Komol Chowdhury, said acting headteacher Rabeya Khanam handed his son over to police on Thursday accusing him of forging cheques and misappropriation of funds.

He said before being handed over to police, Durjoy was called into work and confined to a room until 5:00pm on Thursday.

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An ode to Murtaja Baseer and his lifelong passions

MANNAN MASHIHUR ZARIF

As a painter, he was larger than life. Baseer entered art school not out of a passion for the creative field, but he was on a mission, a role he undertook as a sign of political allegiance to the leftist movement. After finishing art schooling in Dhaka, Murtaja Baseer honed his skills by learning from modern masters in Europe. He was one of the first breed of Bangladeshi artists who ventured beyond the traditional schools of the East and became truly cosmopolitan.

Apart from being one of the most prominent modern painters of Bangladesh, it is common knowledge that Baseer wore a hat with many feathers. He was also a noted novelist, a filmmaker, and nurtured a passion for collecting coins, stamps, bank notes, and matchboxes. Among his great achievements is a book he penned on the numismatics of the Habshi Sultans of Bengal and a thematic stamp collection on the life of Lenin.

It is no surprise that his identity as a painter surpasses all his other accomplishments, but it his perhaps his hobbies that kept him busy all his life, and gave him unmatched personal satisfaction.

The recently inaugurated exhibition at Galleri Kaya reveals to the larger audience, perhaps for the first time, a view into the life of Baseer beyond art.

It showcases stamps and coins from the collection of the eminent artist, which gives us a glimpse into the life of Baseer.

As an exponent of abstraction, he leaves his viewers to make up their own interpretations of what his work stands for. The curated exhibition on Baseer also offers glimpses into his life, not just as a painter but also a human being who had a passion for philately and numismatics.

Baseer was also a novelist of fame, and "Celebrating Murtaja Baseer" adds some of his book titles as exhibits. However,



PHOTO COURTESY: GALLERI KAYA



what remains the most interesting objects at the show are the numerous letters written to him by artists and peers.

Some discuss his hobby, like the fascination for stones (which can also be seen in his iconic series, Epitaph of a Martyr),

others reveal his stand, as a young artist, against anti-imperialism. For the curious onlooker, these personal correspondences will serve as a bridge between his art, ideals, and private world.

Of course, no tribute to Baseer would be complete without his works,

and the exhibition features some of his finest pieces.

Starting from the famed linocuts of his early years, to the academic studies he produced as a student in Florence, the etchings of the 1970s, and culminating in the evocative Wings series, the show presents a concise yet powerful representation of his life's works.

Together, the sequence of artworks traces not only his evolution as a painter, his shifting philosophy, but also his idiosyncrasies regarding the spelling of his name, which changed a few times throughout his career!

Art exhibitions offer more than a chance to acquire paintings. It creates a space where one can learn about artists, their inspirations, and the life s/he led. At times, it gives us snippets into the life of the visual storyteller through artefacts that were close to him. A brush, perhaps. Maybe a colour palette. And, of course, there are the artworks that present a story of their own.

The inauguration of the art exhibition, "Celebrating Murtaja Baseer" at Galleri Kaya, Uttara, gives connoisseurs and art enthusiasts a rare chance to experience just that and more.

The exhibition concludes on August 31. Visit Galleri Kaya at House 20, Road 16, Sector 04, Uttara, Dhaka, between 11:30am and 7:30pm, daily.

Pakistan foreign minister due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Pakistan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on a two-day official visit today at the invitation of Bangladesh.

He will meet with Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain tomorrow and also call on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, the Pakistan foreign ministry said in a statement.

They will discuss the whole range of bilateral relations and a number of regional and international issues will be discussed during these meetings, it added.

Earlier on August 21, Pakistan Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan arrived in Dhaka on a four-day visit. He will also join the bilateral meeting at the state guesthouse Padma.

The two countries will sign five MoUs to boost bilateral relationship in the areas of trade, culture, media, training and travel, said a diplomatic source in Islamabad.



Ishaq Dar

Avijit murder convict Farabi freed on bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Shafiur Rahman Farabi, who was sentenced to life in prison in a case over the murder of writer-blogger Avijit Roy, has been released on bail.

Farabi walked out of Kashimpur High Security Central Jail in Gazipur at 10:15am yesterday, said Senior Jail Superintendent Abdullah Al Mamun.

"Last night, we received the bail-related documents from the High Court. He was released this morning after verification," Mamun said. The HC granted him bail on July 30.

Avijit, a US-based Bangladeshi writer-blogger, was hacked to death near Dhaka University's TSC on February 26, 2015, as he and his wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya were leaving the Ekushey Book Fair. Bonya was critically injured while trying to shield her husband.

Avijit's father, Prof Ajay Roy, filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station the following day against unidentified assailants. After years of trial, a Dhaka tribunal on February 16, 2021, sentenced five members of banned militant group Ansar al Islam to death.

Farabi was handed a life term at the time on charges related to social media posts threatening to kill Avijit.

Those given the death penalty are Sayed Mohammad Ziaul Haque alias (sacked) Major Zia, Akram Hossain, Abu Siddiq Sohel, Mozammel Hossain, Saimon, and Arifat Rahman Siam. Of them, Major Zia and Akram remain absconding.

Pakistan fireworks warehouse blast kills 4, injures more than 30

REUTERS, Karachi

An explosion at a fireworks warehouse in the Pakistani city of Karachi killed four people and injured more than 30 on Thursday, police said.

The warehouse and some nearby shops caught fire after the initial blast, which was followed by several smaller explosions, forcing residents to flee for safety.

"I thought several bombs have exploded," resident Aqib Khan told reporters.

The impact of the blast was strong enough to shatter glass in neighbouring shops, peppering people in the street with shards of glass.

At least 34 injured people were admitted to hospitals, said police official Summaiya Tariq, adding that four of those died overnight.

Smoke billowed from a multi-storey building as firefighters worked to put out a blaze, local news channels showed. There was no indication as to what caused the initial explosion.

Closed-circuit camera footage aired by local television channel Geo News showed people running for safety and motorists turning their vehicles around in haste.

Sohan, Saif return

FROM PAGE 12

Saif, meanwhile, returned to the side after a nearly four-year hiatus. He, however, featured for Bangladesh in the Asian Games in Hangzhou in 2023 -- a tournament where BCB sent a second-string side.

Saif scored a half-century and played a 45-run knock in the ongoing Top End T20 Series, following a decent showing with the willow in the recent Global Super League, in which his Rangpur Riders side ended as runners-up in Guyana.

Mohammad Naim and all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who were part of Bangladesh's last T20 series against Pakistan at home last month, could not retain their places. Naim, who returned to the side in the Sri Lanka series in July after a three-year gap, could not impress the selectors, as he could only make 45 runs in three matches since his return.

Miraz, who took a leave for the Netherlands series due to family reasons, has had similar performance issues in his recent outings. However, he was named as one of the stand-bys alongside Soumya Sarkar, Tanvir Islam and Hasan Mahmud.

Bangladesh have been drawn in Group B in the Asia Cup alongside Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong. They will open their campaign against Hong Kong on September 11 in Abu Dhabi.

No let-up in violent crimes

FROM PAGE 1

and spread on social media, has added to public fear and frustration over law and order.

Data from the Police Headquarters (PHQ) shows violent crimes rose in the first half of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024 across nearly all major categories.

The number of murder cases increased to 1,930, compared to 1,533 in the same period last year, marking an around 26 percent increase. Police, however, clarified that more than 400 of this year's murder cases were filed over incidents that had actually taken place last year, especially during and after the uprising.

Kidnapping incidents rose by a staggering 64.50 percent, the highest year-on-year increase in any category, with 515 reported cases, up from 313 in the same period last year.

Dacoity and robbery jumped 53.4 percent. A total of 1,336 such cases were recorded in the first half of 2025, compared to 871 during the same period of 2024.

Crimes against women and children also rose by 22.29 percent in the first half of 2025, with 11,008 cases compared to 9,002 in the same period last year.

During this period, 2,744 rapes were reported -- just over 15 cases a day -- and 2,159 cases of violence against children were recorded, averaging 12 incidents per day.

According to data from Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), at least 111 women were killed by their husbands between January and June this year. Additionally, 33 women were murdered by in-laws and 29 by other family members.

Meanwhile, 111 people were killed in mob violence during the first eight months of 2025, according to ASK's latest data published on August 12.

SPATE OF VIOLENT CRIMES

The violent crime spree continued this year despite repeated warnings from law enforcement officials and government advisers.

One incident that sparked nationwide outrage was the killing of

Ruplal Robidas, 40, and his relative Pradeep Lal Robidas, 35, in Rangpur's Taraganj upazila. On August 9, a mob beat them to death, suspecting them of van theft. Ruplal was a cobbler, and Pradeep drove a rickshaw van. Reports said 12 to 14 policemen were present at the scene but left without rescuing the victims.

Exactly a month earlier, on July 9, an Old Dhaka trader, Sohag, also known as Lal Chand, was crushed to death with concrete blocks in front of horrified witnesses, near an Ansar camp by Mitford Hospital.

On Thursday, a woman and her daughter were found dead, their throats slit, at their home in a remote area of Ramgarh upazila in Khagrachhari. Police are investigating but have yet to determine the motive.

On June 10, a man was found dead in Mirpur-11, his hands cuffed and legs tied, his body riddled with hack wounds. His mother, Rozina Begum, said he had survived a similar attack just 10 days prior. Autopsy reports confirmed an older injury on his arm had not yet healed.

Another heartbreaking case is the murder of five-year-old Roza Moni. She went missing on May 12 and was found the next day inside a sack near her home in Tejgaon's Tejgunipara. Her tiny body, wrapped in three layers of bags, was discarded like garbage.

Earlier in May, two masked assailants shot dead Kamrul Ahsan Shadhon, 52, joint convener of BNP's Gulshan unit, in Badda's Gudaraghat area. CCTV footage of the incident went viral.

On May 31, two suspected criminals were beaten to death by a mob in the capital's Darus Salam area in broad daylight.

GOVT ADMISSION AND AN UNSTABLE SYSTEM

Criminologists say the country is facing a breakdown in governance, where weak state response and lack of accountability are emboldening criminals.

Top police officials have repeatedly said that "lost morale" in the police

false.

He said after receiving information, police went to the spot around 6:00am and sent the injured to a hospital with the help of locals.

Before police reached the spot, the attackers fled the scene. However, some locals and journalists who were in the area identified some of them, SI Faruk said.

Police detained two suspects, Noman, 23 and Azad, 35.

Nur Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Fatikchhari Police Station, told this newspaper, "Since the attackers were from the same village, it seems unlikely to be a random mob beating over theft suspicion. We believe an earlier conflict could be a reason for

force since last year's mass uprising has affected its ability to tackle crimes effectively.

Last month, after the brutal killing at Mitford, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Baharul Alam admitted that the police were yet to regain full control following last year's traumatic events. "You may say we haven't been 100 percent successful. Maybe not even 50 percent," he said.

On August 18, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury acknowledged that mob violence continues in parts of the country despite government efforts. He added that such incidents have decreased in and around the capital but still occur outside it, citing the Rangpur case as an example.

AHM Shahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general (Media and PR) at PHQ, yesterday said that police are responding promptly to violent crimes.

"We are trying our best to tackle the situation. In some cases, we have nabbed culprits within 24 hours," he said, adding that senior officials are monitoring the situation closely.

Omar Faruk, professor at the Department of Criminology and Police Science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said the country is currently operating under an unstable system where anything can happen, and the state shows little responsibility.

"They are merely carrying out routine tasks, showing no willingness to take accountability. Due to weak governance, criminals feel emboldened, knowing they can often escape consequences. Multiple ideologies are at play -- some former victims now seek retaliation. As a result, both visible and hidden forms of violence may continue," he said.

Faruk added that ideological conflicts also limit the government's ability to act effectively. "The state lacks the capacity and skill to govern properly. Unless it breaks out of this cycle, we may face more serious consequences in the future."

the attack."

Police are conducting raids to arrest the others involved, he said.

Mahin's body was sent to Chattogram Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

Anwar Hossain Sumon, uncle of one of the injured, said his nephew is a 10th grader at a local school. He and two of his friends had gone on a trip to Cox's Bazar. Around 2:30am, after getting off a bus in Chattogram city's Oxygen area, they hired a CNG-run autorickshaw to return home.

He added, "The three boys' homes are within a kilometre of the spot. The family of Mahin had a long-standing conflict with the family of detained suspect Azad."

UN declares famine in Gaza

FROM PAGE 1

UN agencies and aid groups had warned for months of a looming famine in Gaza, where Israel has severely restricted aid and at times completely cut it off during its nearly two-year war with militant group Hamas.

COGAT, an Israeli defence ministry body which oversees civil affairs in the Palestinian territories -- including coordinating aid to Gaza -- argued that the IPC's findings rely on "partial data and unreliable sources".

UN aid chief Tom Fletcher said the famine was entirely preventable, saying food could not get through to Palestinians in need "because of systematic obstruction by Israel".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a ceasefire, saying: "We cannot allow this situation to continue with impunity."

UN human rights chief Volker Turk said it was "a war crime to use starvation as a method of warfare" -- a charge for which the International Criminal Court in November issued an arrest warrants for Netanyahu.

In a statement, Netanyahu said "Israel does not have a policy of starvation", citing figures on aid it had allowed into Gaza.

The IPC report said that "over half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic conditions characterised by starvation, destitution and death."

It said the deterioration between July and August was the most severe since it began analysing hunger in Gaza, driven by a sharp escalation in the war and restrictions on supplies.

In early March, Israel completely banned aid from Gaza for two months, leading to severe shortages of food, medicines and fuel.

Speaking in Geneva, the UN's Fletcher said: "It is a famine that we could have prevented if we had been allowed. Yet food stacks up at borders because of systematic obstruction by Israel."

The International Committee of the Red Cross said Israel "must ensure that the basic needs of the civilian

population in Gaza are met".

The famine declaration "must serve as a catalyst for immediate and concrete action," it added.

Britain's foreign minister, David Lammy, said that "the Israeli government's refusal to allow sufficient aid into Gaza has caused this man-made catastrophe. This is a moral outrage."

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz earlier warned that "the gates of hell will open upon" Hamas leaders, specifically in Gaza City, "until they agree to Israel's conditions for ending the war, primarily the release of all hostages and their disarmament."

Military chief Eyal Zamir said "we are expanding operations in Gaza in the coming days."

Late Thursday, Netanyahu said he had ordered immediate negotiations aimed at freeing the hostages still held in Gaza -- 49 people, including 27 the Israeli military says are dead.

The Israeli premier said the diplomatic push would accompany the operation to take control of Gaza City.

Mediators have been waiting for an official Israeli response to their latest ceasefire proposal, which Hamas accepted earlier this week.

On the ground, Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli fire killed at least 46 people yesterday, more than half of them in Gaza City.

Umm Mohammed Nasr, a 42-year-old mother of four from Gaza City, said that "the bombing hasn't stopped since this morning... but we have no idea where to go."

"We are dying," she said.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties in accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by the civil defence agency or the Israeli military.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel's offensive has killed at least 62,192 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza that the United Nations considers reliable.

Youth found dead

FROM PAGE 1

Rabeya lodged a complaint accusing Durjoy of embezzling Tk 2.83 lakh. He was seen pacing inside the cell until 1:27am and around 4:00am on Friday, police found him hanging, claimed police sources.

A photo of Durjoy's body hanging from the holding cell bars has gone viral on social media.

Durjoy's cousin Sanjib Das, who saw the body inside the cell, said, "His feet were only two inches above the ground. He could have held on to the bars and saved himself... we cannot accept this. It might not be suicide. A constable was supposed to be on duty outside the cell. Was he not there?"

Assistant Sub-inspector Mohammad Hanif Mia and constables

Mohi Uddin, and Ishraq Hossain have been withdrawn following the incident.

Chakaria Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Shafiqul Islam said, "The three were withdrawn for negligence in duty."

Cox's Bazar Additional Superintendent of Police Jasim Uddin Chowdhury said, "Durjoy Chowdhury died by suicide inside the custody cell. The body has been sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A probe committee will be formed over the incident."

Chakaria Circle Assistant Superintendent of Police Abhijit Das said CCTV's inside the station did not cover the spot in question but it recorded Durjoy's movements.



The six-storey New DNCC Market building, located beside Paris Road in Mirpur, has remained abandoned for the past 18 years. The structure was erected in 2007 under the then Dhaka City Corporation. Following the city corporation's split in 2013, the market's ownership was transferred to DNCC, but no further work has been carried out since.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

UNDER-CONSTRUCTION NEW DNCC MARKET

Left abandoned for 18yrs

Traders say they are 'trapped' with no refunds;
building now hub for crime, drugs

DIPAN NANDY

Construction of a six-story building beside Paris Road in Mirpur, locally known as Paris Market, began in 1996 and was erected by 2007. Since then, 18 years have passed, but no further work has been done on the structure.

The building was originally owned by the undivided Dhaka City Corporation. After the corporation was split in 2013, ownership was transferred to the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

On paper, the market is named New DNCC Market.

According to DNCC sources, construction began with plans to build a six-story market on six bighas of land. The roof and structural framework were completed, but in 2007 the city corporation halted construction, leaving walls and other finishing work unfinished.

DNCC sources said work stopped because contractors demanded additional payment. Since then, the building has remained abandoned.

The market building contains 2,363 shops. To allocate these shops, the city corporation initially collected around Tk 14 crore through three local associations, of which Tk 12.32 crore was collected during the time of the undivided Dhaka City Corporation.

A recent visit to the building revealed a Secondary Transfer Station (STS) for household waste on the west side, while some people living at the front. As a result, construction began by excluding this portion from the original design.

DNCC engineering officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said in 2017 a delegation from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology was appointed to assess the building's condition.

In 2020, Buet submitted a technical evaluation report recommending

retrofitting at an estimated cost of Tk 23 crore.

Engineers explained that retrofitting involves reinforcing weakened columns, beams, or roofs with additional rods or construction materials to make them strong and usable again.

Some businesspeople who deposited money for shop allocations have died. Those still alive say they have suffered financial losses and remain trapped. Imtiaz Alam, who deposited money for a shop, told The Daily Star, "We're completely trapped after depositing money. The city

Administrator Mohammad Azaz told The Daily Star, "We've decided to conduct tests through Buet to assess the current condition of the building. Once we get the results, we'll know whether retrofitting is possible. If it is, we'll quickly hand over the shops to those who were previously selected."

Meanwhile, locals say the city corporation has not maintained or supervised the building, causing it to deteriorate. After dark, the building has become a site for drug use and various criminal activities, including murders.

The market building contains 2,363 shops. To allocate these shops, the city corporation initially collected around Tk 14 crore through three local associations, of which Tk 12.32 crore was collected during the time of the undivided Dhaka City Corporation.



corporation doesn't care about the future of the building. Even though we paid for the shops, they neither give us the shops nor refunded our money. Many of the original allottees have died. Some have grown old and become bedridden."

He said the city corporation first advertised shop allocations in 1984. Since then, senior members of his family deposited amounts ranging from two to three thousand taka. He himself does not know the full account of those payments. Most recently, he deposited Tk 90,000 for a shop.

Regarding the overall situation, DNCC

Local resident Zulkar Nain said, "This building has become a haunted place for us. We're afraid to even walk near it. Local youths take drugs here, muggers take shelter, and even bodies have been recovered from here. The city corporation should arrange for its maintenance and supervision."

Pallabi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shafiul Alam said, "It's true that a crime zone has developed around the building. Since taking charge here, I've arranged for regular block raids and patrols. I'm doing my best to eliminate crime from the area."

DENGUE SURGE

Delayed diagnosis putting children at greater risk

HELEMUL ALAM

Six year-old Omar had been suffering from a fever for 10 days before his condition worsened on Thursday. His uncle, Saddam Hossain, then admitted him to Mugda Medical College Hospital.

"He stopped eating on Wednesday, and after tests, doctors confirmed it was dengue. That's when we rushed him to the hospital," said Saddam, a resident of Razarbagh. "We didn't realise earlier that it was dengue, as his condition seemed stable until Tuesday."

Another patient is 11-year-old Shahed from Jurain. He had a fever for five days, but his parents did not get him tested until his condition

worsened.

"My son was diagnosed with dengue on Thursday night and we admitted him immediately," said his mother, Mukta. "We didn't know it was dengue."

Shahed, who is suffering from dengue for the second time, is now in a slightly better condition, she added.

Another child admitted to the hospital had a similar story. Four-year-old Anas from Khilgaon was diagnosed with dengue six days ago and was treated at home. "I admitted him to the hospital on Friday after his condition worsened," said his mother, Rabeya Begum.

Meanwhile, the condition of six-year-old Yasen Arafat is even more critical. Alongside dengue, he is also suffering from pneumonia and anaemia.

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Police stop minority conference

Say organisers did not take permission from DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police did not allow the National Minority Conference to be held in Dhaka yesterday at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh, saying the organisers had not obtained permission from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police for the event.

"They could not apply to the DMP in time and get approval. For this reason, the programme could not be allowed here," said Md Mobarak Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station.

Asked why permission was needed to hold an indoor

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Ensure justice for Rohingyas

Demand 58 rights groups marking 8 years of Myanmar military atrocities

STAR REPORT

Ahead of the eighth anniversary of the atrocities of the Myanmar military against the Rohingyas, 58 rights organisations have called for urgent international action to end impunity and ensure accountability.

"Since August 2017, Myanmar's security forces have razed hundreds of Rohingya villages, killing men, women, and children and forcing more than 700,000 people to flee to Bangladesh. Yet, eight years later, not a single perpetrator has been held accountable," said the organisations.

August 25 marks eight years since the Myanmar military launched atrocities against the Rohingyas in Rakhine state.

In a joint statement released yesterday, they recalled that an independent international fact-finding mission had found evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The statement also highlighted ongoing persecution of Rohingyas who remain in Myanmar, including movement restrictions, food

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



CUCSU POLLS

Voter list yet to be finalised

Inclusion of MPhil, PhD students as voters, candidates sparks criticism

CU CORRESPONDENT

Despite publishing guidelines for the long-awaited Chittagong University Central Students' Union (Cucusu) election on August 1, the process has made little progress, with the voter list yet to be finalised and no schedule announced.

Cucusu Election Commission Chairman Prof Monir Uddin said changes in

the committee and the absence of a permanent office had slowed down their work as meetings were being held at different venues.

"We have so far received voter lists from 36 out of 54 departments and institutes. A final decision regarding the voter list and schedule may come in our meeting next Monday (August 25)," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Rice mill workers in Rajshahi's Paba upazila rush to gather dried paddy with shovels as rain clouds loom overhead. The paddy is then covered with polythene sheets until the sun reappears. Workers said frequent rainfall has severely disrupted the boiling and drying process, which normally takes two to three days but has remained incomplete even after 13 days. The photo was taken in Nowhata area yesterday.

Journalist Rukunuddoulah passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran journalist, freedom fighter, and special correspondent of the Daily Sangbad, Rukunuddoulah, passed away yesterday at the age of 74. He breathed his last at 7:30pm at Jessore 250-bed General Hospital.

Family sources said he had been suffering from heart and kidney complications.

SM Tauhidur Rahman, general secretary of Jessore Press Club, said Rukunuddoulah will be given a guard of honour today at 1:00pm at Jessore Central Eidgah ground.

He will be buried at Jessore Karbala graveyard.

Rukunuddoulah spent more than five decades in journalism. His regular column Gram-Gramontore in the Daily Sangbad earned him wide recognition. He also worked with Channel i, Radio Today, and several Jessore-based dailies. Most recently, he served as advisory editor of Jessorer Kagoj.

He received several awards, including the Bazlur Rahman Memorial Award.

He also authored several books.



Vehicles struggle to navigate a pothole-riddled road on the Boyra-Koiya Link Road in Khulna's Koiya Bazar area. Despite repairs just three months ago, recent rains have left the road in a dilapidated state, posing risks to both drivers and pedestrians. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

BOOK READING EVENT 3,909 students awarded in Khulna city

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A total of 3,909 students from 57 schools in Khulna city were awarded yesterday for their outstanding participation in a year-long book reading programme jointly organised by Bishwo Shahitto Kendro and Grameenphone.

The colourful, daylong award ceremony was held at the Khulna District Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

Of the awardees, 2,260 students, including 1,222 girls from 32 schools, received their prizes directly on stage. Teachers and organisers collected awards on behalf of students from 18 other institutions.

Among the winners, 2,100 received

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

River land filled up, marked for sale in Jashore

MOHSIN MILON, Benapole

A portion of the Mukteshwari river in Jashore has allegedly been filled up and marked for sale, sparking outrage among locals and environmental activists.

A signboard erected beside the filled-up section in Chanchra union's Bat Tala Bazar reads that the plot is for sale.

The encroached section, which flows beside the Kalibari temple in Bat Tala, has been fenced off with bamboo and levelled by the grabbers.

Locals alleged that the encroachment stretches from the western side of the temple to the eastern bank near Bat Tala village.

"We've seen this happening over the years. This river, once vital to the community, is being slowly erased," one resident said.

Mukteshwari River Conservation



Committee convener Jahangir Alam said, "We've informed the administration several times. But due to lack of proper enforcement, these practices continue unabated."

Contacted, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Jashore Sadar Md Anisur Rahman said he was unaware of the incident. "But now that we've received the report, necessary

action will be taken after investigation," he said.

Locals said the encroached area is part of the river that flows towards Dhakuria via Satighata, known as Ziar Khal, which later branches into canals in Beel Haryana.

Locals said influential groups began farming fish by leasing the lower part of the Mukteshwari. Although water flow continued, residents said an influential group recently started filling the riverbed with soil from the north side of Bhaturia Narayanpur Road culvert to the junction of Ziar Khal, before putting up a signboard to sell plots.

"This river was part of our lives. I planted jute here, bathed cows and goats, and cultivated with its water. Now it is being claimed as private land," said

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

PIROJPUR SADAR HOSPITAL Patients suffer amid doctor, staff crisis

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

A severe shortage of doctors and staff is hampering healthcare services at Pirojpur Sadar Hospital, leaving patients to suffer.

Hospital sources said only 14 doctors are currently posted against 35 sanctioned posts, while 42 positions out of 171, covering second class, third class, fourth class, and outsourcing employees, remain vacant.

Of the existing doctors, some are assigned to male, female, and children's indoor wards, while others serve in the emergency unit. This leaves at best 5-6 doctors available to attend patients at the outdoor department.

From January to July this year, 1,10,985 patients received treatment at the outdoor department. During the same period, 46,603 patients sought emergency care and 17,372 were admitted indoors.

"The number of patients in the outdoor is very high because there are not enough doctors," said Mohammad Shahriar of Pirojpur town, who accompanied a relative to the hospital.

Sumon, a resident of Royerkathi area, said most patients coming to the hospital are insolvent and



seek low-cost treatment, but sometimes cannot consult the required doctors.

"There is a huge rush, and we have to stand for a long time," said Tanzila, who came from Nazirpur upazila. "It takes over an hour to see a doctor after collecting the ticket," she added.

Dr Suranjit Kumar Saha, junior consultant (medicine), said, "A doctor has to treat far more patients than his capacity."

Civil Surgeon and Hospital Superintendent Dr Md Matiur Rahman said, "Doctors here attend over 600 patients daily at the outdoor alone. I have already informed higher authorities about the shortage and requested more doctors. Despite the crisis, we are trying our best to provide proper treatment.

Police stop minority conference

FROM PAGE 3

programme, he told The Daily Star that approval from the DMP was required for such events.

The conference, titled "National Minority Conference 2025: From Hills to Plains, Standing Firm to Protect Existence", was scheduled to begin at 10:00am.

The event was organised by the Sanhkhyaloghu Odhikar Andolon (Minority Rights Movement), which later announced that the programme had been

postponed and that a new date would be announced.

A documentary on communal attacks in Bangladesh over the last 54 years was also supposed to be screened at the event.

Yesterday morning, many people from different parts of the country arrived to join the conference, but none were allowed to enter the venue.

Tarun Kumar Roy, who came from Nilphamari, told reporters, "I reached Dhaka around 8:00am to

join the programme, but when I came here, I heard the conference would not be held."

Around 11:45am yesterday, leaders of the Minority Rights Movement tried to hold a press briefing in front of the auditorium gate after hanging a banner.

Police, however, stopped them.

Following discussions, the organisers shifted their briefing to in front of the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Sushmita Kar, convener of the Sanhkhyaloghu Odhikar Andolon, said, "We had to postpone the conference due to unavoidable reasons. The

next date will be announced soon. But programmes like this cannot be silenced in this way."

Earlier in the day, the organisation shared a post on Facebook that read: "An indoor programme! At the last moment, the security forces blocked it. In Bangladesh, all the minority attacks are political. Then why be so afraid of a minority conference? You say 8 percent are not united. So, when everyone comes together, why stop it? Why so much fear about showing a documentary on 54 years of communal violence?"

Voter list yet to be finalised

FROM PAGE 3

Asked which departments had not yet submitted their lists, he said they did not want to disclose that information for now, as several tasks remained to be completed with the departments concerned.

Member Secretary Prof Ariful Haque Siddique said, "We had asked all departments to submit voter information a week ago. But many submitted IDs without names, while others provided names without IDs, causing delays. We hope to finalise everything by Sunday and discuss the schedule on Monday."

Following the July uprising and political changeover, universities across the country revived discussions on student union elections. While Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Jahangirnagar

universities have already announced election dates and are nearing completion of the nomination process, CU remains stuck with an incomplete voter list and no schedule.

Mehedi Hasan, a student of International Relations at CU, said most students failed to realise the importance of Cucus and the leadership had not been able to convey its significance.

"Using students' apathy as an excuse, the administration is deliberately delaying the election," he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the inclusion of MPhil and PhD students as voters and candidates in the polls, along with the age limit set at 30, sparked criticism.

Student groups alleged that the administration

brought MPhil and PhD students under the electoral process even though most organisations opposed their inclusion during earlier discussions.

At a recent press conference, the CU unit of Chhatra Dal claimed the move was intended to benefit a particular political group.

Md Sabuj, joint secretary of Chhatra Adhikar Parishad, said delays were either due to a lack of sincerity or pressure from higher authorities.

CU Chhatra Dal General Secretary Abdullah Al Noman said the administration was not neutral, alleging the guidelines had been tailored to benefit certain groups.

"They are delaying the date to calculate how best to favour them," he said.

CU Shibir President Mohammad Ali, however, announced a rally for next Sunday, rejecting allegations that his organisation influenced the inclusion of MPhil and PhD students.

Revolutionary Student Union Convener Tahsan Habib said CU students had fought the hardest for the polls, but the administration had failed to deliver, calling it "a clear sign of insincerity".

CU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Kamal Uddin said there was no reason for the polls not to be held.

"The commission is working, and the voter list will be ready by Monday. We expect the schedule within a week and aim to complete the election by September," he said.

The last Cucus polls were held in 1990.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1486 OF 2025

An application under Section 12 read with Section 13 of the Companies Act, 1994, AND
IN THE MATTER OF:
Ibrahim Iqbal Memorial Hospital Limited PETITIONER
-VERSUS- Respondents.
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215

Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 12 read with Section 13 of the Companies Act, 1994, for the alteration and addition of the objects clause of the Memorandum of Association of Ibrahim Iqbal Memorial Hospital Limited has been filed before the Hon'ble Company Judge of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Pursuant to the said application, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, the Hon'ble Justice of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh was pleased to admit the application by an order dated 20.08.2025. Any person wishing to contest or oppose the aforesaid application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through a duly appointed Advocate.

A copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of requisite costs.

Intiaz Uddin Ahmad Asif
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Room No. 105 (Annex-Extension) Sher-e-Bangla Bhaban,
Supreme Court Bar Association Building

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NOTICE OF INVITING QUOTATION

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The schedule containing detailed Terms & Conditions may be collected from the Common Services Division, Level-5, NCC Bank PLC. Head Office, Dhaka and submit the same under sealed envelope to the Tender Box placed at Common Services Division (CSD). Manipulation or any kind of unusual approach or failure to submit offer within the stipulated time frame will be treated as "Disqualified" for the bidding. The Bank authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposal without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Vice President &
Head of Common Services Division

NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1471 OF 2025

[An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 183(2) & (5) of the Companies Act, 1994]

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC)
VersusPetitioner
Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms and Others
.....Respondents

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 183(2) & (5) of the Companies Act, 1994 for condonation of delay in holding the 43rd Annual General Meeting of "Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company Limited" for the year of 2024 and/or relieving the Members of the Company from the liabilities of fine and for obtaining other necessary declarations from the Hon'ble High Court as specifically elaborated in the prayer portion of the Application has been filed and moved before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. The Hon'ble High Court Division comprising his Lordship Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, upon hearing the learned Advocate and perusing the application along with documents annexed therewith, was pleased to admit the application and directed to issue notices to the Respondents vide order dated 19.08.2025.

Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate on or before the date so fixed. Copy of the Application may be collected from the undersigned upon payment of necessary costs.

(Gobinda Biswas)
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
ATTORNEYS, House No. 482(1st Floor)
Road No. 32, New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1206.

NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1472 OF 2025

[An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 183(2) & (5) of the Companies Act, 1994]

Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company Limited
VersusPetitioner
Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms and Others
.....Respondents

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 183(2) & (5) of the Companies Act, 1994 for condonation of delay in holding the 34th Annual General Meeting of "KAFCO International Company Limited" for the year of 2024 and/or relieving the Members of the Company from the liabilities of fine and for obtaining other necessary declarations from the Hon'ble High Court as specifically elaborated in the prayer portion of the Application has been filed and moved before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. The Hon'ble High Court Division comprising his Lordship Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, upon hearing the learned Advocate and perusing the application along with documents annexed therewith, was pleased to admit the application and directed to issue notices to the Respondents vide order dated 19.08.2025.

Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate on or before the date so fixed. Copy of the Application may be collected from the undersigned upon payment of necessary costs.

(Gobinda Biswas)
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
ATTORNEYS, House No. 482(1st Floor)
Road No. 32, New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1206.

Iran to meet Europeans to avoid snapback sanctions

AFP, Tehran

Iran will meet next week with Britain, France and Germany on its nuclear programme, the parties said yesterday, as the European powers warned Tehran to engage swiftly to avoid snapback sanctions.

The Islamic republic suspended cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in July in the wake of its 12-day war with Israel, citing the UN nuclear watchdog's failure to condemn Israeli and US strikes on its nuclear facilities.

The European trio – parties to the landmark 2015 Iran nuclear deal – have threatened to trigger a “snapback mechanism” by the end of August.

The move would reimpose sweeping UN sanctions lifted under the 2015 agreement unless Iran agrees to curb its uranium



Palestinians flee the Abu Iskandar neighbourhood of northern Gaza City yesterday. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz yesterday vowed to destroy Gaza City if Hamas did not agree to disarm, release all remaining hostages in the territory and end the war on Israel's terms.

PHOTO: AFP



enrichment and restore cooperation with IAEA inspectors.

“It was agreed that Iran's talks with the three European countries and the European Union would continue next Tuesday at the level of deputy foreign ministers,” Iran's foreign ministry said after a phone call between Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and senior European diplomats.

France confirmed the talks and cautioned that Iran faced a narrowing window of time.

The 2015 nuclear deal was aimed preventing Iran from developing an atomic bomb – an ambition it has consistently denied. The deal was torpedoed in 2018 when Donald Trump, during his first term as US president, unilaterally withdrew the United States from the agreement and slapped crippling sanctions on its economy.

Iran has ever since criticized Europe over failing to meet its commitments under the deal.

Russia rejects Zelensky meeting

Trump says getting Zelensky, Putin together like mixing ‘oil and vinegar’

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday ruled out an immediate meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky, as diplomatic tension escalated with the Ukrainian president and US mediation efforts appeared to stumble.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said “no meeting” between Vladimir Putin and Zelensky was planned, as Nato chief Mark Rutte visited Kyiv, largely to discuss security guarantees for Ukraine.

US President Donald Trump raised expectations for a swift summit between the Russian and Ukrainian presidents by saying they had both agreed to meet after Zelensky, Rutte and Kyiv's European allies visited the White House on Monday.

Lavrov yesterday dashed hopes for direct Putin-Zelensky talks to resolve the conflict, now in its fourth year, by questioning the Ukrainian president's



legitimacy and repeating the Kremlin's maximalist claims.

“There is no meeting planned,” Lavrov said in an interview with NBC's “Meet the Press with Kristen Welker”.

Lavrov told the US broadcaster Putin was “ready to meet Zelensky” as soon as an agenda was prepared, adding that the agenda was “not ready at all”.

Speaking alongside Rutte in Kyiv, Zelensky said Ukraine had “no agreements with the Russians”, saying Ukraine had agreed only with Trump

on how the diplomatic direction could proceed.

The question of eventual security guarantees for Ukraine has been front and centre during the latest US-led diplomatic push to broker a peace deal to end the conflict.

Trump earlier said Russia had agreed to some Western security guarantees for Kyiv.

But Moscow later cast doubt on any such arrangement, by saying discussing them without Russia was “a utopia, a road to nowhere”.

Trump yesterday said setting up a meeting between Zelensky and Putin is as hard as mixing “oil and vinegar”.

“We're going to see if Putin and Zelensky will be working together. You know, it's like oil and vinegar, a little bit. They don't get along too well, for obvious reasons,” he told reporters in Washington.

China tightens grip over rare earth supply quotas

REUTERS, BEIJING

China, the world's dominant rare earth supplier, issued on Friday measures to regulate the mining, smelting and separation of the critical minerals key to energy transition, further tightening its grip over supply.

Beijing already regulates and manages rare earth mining, smelting and separation via a quota system. The new rules will include imported raw materials in that quota system, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said in a statement, following a public consultation process that began in February.

4 of family killed

FROM PAGE 12

a U-turn near the Palli Bidyut office at Paduar Bazar.

Abul Kashem was driving the car.

Abul Hashem was head of a private bank's Rupnagar branch (first vice president), while Kashem was employed in the private sector.

Locals described the spot as a “risky turn” where accidents often occur.

Jahir, a security guard in the area, said the car was making a U-turn from the Chattogram lane towards the Dhaka lane after crossing a railway overpass. At that moment, a speeding lorry overturned onto it, also hitting a CNG-run auto.

During a visit, this correspondent found an under-construction flyover beside the Dhaka-bound lane, narrowing the road and making it more accident-prone for vehicles unable to control speed.

SI Anisur Rahman said the lorry driver and his helper fled after the accident.

The bodies were later handed over to family members.

Sri Lanka's former president

FROM PAGE 12

was politically motivated.

“Ranil Wickremesinghe has never misused public funds or state funds,” UNP member Nishantha Sri Wernasinghe told reporters gathered outside the court complex where the former president appeared in Colombo.

“He was the person who stepped up and accepted the challenge to save this country when the economy collapsed,” Wernasinghe said. “That is the person who is being treated like this today by this government.”

Sri Lanka's cabinet spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Wickremesinghe, a lawyer who also served as Sri Lanka's prime minister a record six times, became president in 2022 at the height of the Indian Ocean island nation's debilitating financial crisis.

Wickremesinghe, who leads the UNP, took over after widespread protests caused by an economic meltdown forced his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country and later resign.

He finished third in last year's presidential election – the first since the economic crisis – behind Marxist-leaning Anura Kumara Disanayake, who won the vote, and opposition leader

Sajith Premadasa.

The election was largely seen as a referendum on Wickremesinghe, who led a successful but fragile economic recovery that included painful austerity measures.

Born into a prominent family of politicians and businessmen with large media interests, in 1978 Wickremesinghe was, at 29, made the country's youngest cabinet minister by his uncle, President Junius Jayewardene.

In 1994, following the assassinations of several of his senior colleagues, Wickremesinghe became leader of the UNP.

A life in print ends in tragedy

FROM PAGE 12

and people, often publishing under pseudonyms to avoid repression during the Ershad regime and other turbulent times. He never sought personal gain and refused to exploit the Liberation War for benefit.

He recalled his journey from his school days, writing for Dainik Azad to his later work in Sangbad, Rupali, Janakantha, and Ajker Patrika, as well as many weeklies and online outlets.

Though once “praised by intellectuals, politicians, and even Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus”, Bibhuranjan lamented that in recent years his writings no longer drew attention.

Despite thousands of articles, he received little payment and often worked without honorarium.

The letter detailed his hardships: chronic illnesses including arthritis, liver cirrhosis, diabetes, and heart disease; soaring medical bills; debts; and the added burden of his son's illness and unemployment.

His son, a BUET graduate, has struggled to find a stable job despite his qualifications, while his daughter, a medical officer, recently failed her MD thesis exam, which he alleged was due to political bias.

Bibhuranjan also expressed frustration that

many journalists had received land, financial benefits, or career advancements under Sheikh Hasina's government.

He felt sidelined at his current workplace as well, “having been denied promotion, underpaid, and struggling with rising living costs”. Writing critical but factual articles, he added, often risked backlash, as seen in the pressure exerted on his newspaper.

The letter regretted over missed opportunities, and a sorrowful acceptance that he had “no success story to tell”.

“Sorrow will remain my last companion,” he said, wishing happiness for all beings.

Yesterday afternoon, Inspector Saleh Ahmed Pathan, in-charge of the Kalgachhia river police outpost in Narayanganj, said a body of a man was spotted floating in the river.

After recovery, Bibhuranjan's brother Chiroranjana Sarker and son Wreet Sarker identified the body.

Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Ramna Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said police were investigating the cause of the death.

Inspector Pathan said the body would be taken to Dhaka today after an autopsy at Munshiganj

General Hospital.

After confirming the identity of his brother, Chiroranjana said, “We really don't know how this could have happened. He was living a fairly normal life.”

“We don't know if this was suicide, murder, or something planned,” he said.

Wreet said, “Before leaving the house, my father bathed, and had breakfast. We knew nothing about any open letter. We only learned about it today. We also do not know if my father had any problems with anyone,” he said.

Earlier in the afternoon, Golam Faruk, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station, told The Daily Star that they were trying to find Bibhuranjan after Wreet filed a general diary with the police station around 1:00am.

Sometime after the filing of the GD, Chiroranjana wrote on Facebook that Bibhuranjan left his Siddheshwari home at 10:00am on Thursday to go to his office but left his mobile phone behind. Later, the family found out that he did not go to work. Nobody saw him the whole day and he did not return home.

They decided to file the GD after failing to find him in hospitals, parks, and other places.

Gendaria fire

FROM PAGE 12

arrived at the scene.

“Preliminary investigation suggests the fire originated from the kitchen stove,” he said.

Family sources said the victims were asleep when the blaze erupted.

Abu Shahed, officer-in-charge of Gendaria Police Station, also confirmed the incident to The Daily Star.

Crimes against Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 12

None of them have returned to their homeland.

The rebel group Arakan Army, meanwhile, took control of more than 80 percent of the Rakhine state, adding new dimension to the Rakhine crisis.

Volker Türk said, “As we near the passing of another year with no justice for the violence which started on 25 August 2017 in Myanmar, we are left to ask the question of when the enduring misery for these and ongoing crimes will end, particularly for the long-suffering Rohingya community.”

Ending impunity and ensuring the Rohingyas' rights to security, citizenship and equality are essential for breaking the cycle of violence, he said.

Since November 2023, the human rights and humanitarian situation in Rakhine have sharply deteriorated, further deepening the already life-threatening conditions faced by the Rohingyas, the UN rights chief said.

“Amidst a global funding crisis, Rohingya in both Myanmar and Bangladesh are enduring dire conditions compounded by drastic cuts to food assistance,” he said.

Türk implored the international community to step up support for the Rohingyas by increasing humanitarian funding to secure access to basic needs and essential services, and to resolutely support international accountability processes.

Candidates start reaching out

FROM PAGE 1

Muhammad Shahidullah Hall, Amar Ekushey, and Sir AF Rahman halls.

Meanwhile, three Ducus panels yesterday raised concern about the breach of electoral code of conduct.

At a press briefing, Abdul Qader, the vice-president candidate from Boishommo Birodhi Shikharthi Sangsad, said they had noticed bias on the part of the DU administration and the DUCSU election commission.

“We are still concerned about the administration's neutrality,” he said.

Qader, also convener of Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad's DU chapter, promised that he would include in his manifesto the demands to hold the Ducus election according to the academic calendar, extend the deadline for entry to female dormitories to 11:00pm from 10:00pm, and ensure one seat per student in dormitories.

He urged the authorities to shift the polling centre from Dhaka University Club to the Institute of Social Welfare and Research for the students of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib and Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree halls.

In a separate briefing, Swatantra Shikharthi Oikya

panel VP contender Umama Fatema made the same demand.

Umama, also former spokesperson for Students Against Discrimination, said they noticed that the university administration confined itself to paperwork and issuing statements.

“They should act now about the breaching of conduct before any of us complained to them.”

According to the election schedule, formal campaigning would start after August 26, when the final candidacies would be announced.

“We can now see posters and banners hanging in the halls. But the administration remains silent,” she added.

O i k k o b o d d h o Shikharthi Jote's VP candidate, Abu Shadik Kayem, said they would eliminate red tape at the Registrar Building.

“We will renovate the DU Medical Centre and address the accommodation problem in the residential halls. We will ensure that every student gets their own study table,” he said while speaking at a press briefing.

Shadik, also ex-president of Islami Chhatra Shibir's DU unit, made promises for modernising the central library, constructing cultural lounges at every hall, and upgrading the

central mosque that would also include a library.

A total of 462 candidates are vying against 28 posts in Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducus) polls while 1,108 are for 18 hall unions.

This correspondent visited five halls yesterday and found that many candidates offered Juma prayers with the resident students. After their prayers, they sought votes, and many had lunch at canteens with students.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shahriar Mithun, a GS candidate for Shahid Sergeant Zahurul Huq Hall union, said, “We have found that leaflets of a hall union general secretary candidate were distributed among students. The leaflets have the candidate's photo and the post he is vying for. We request proper supervision by the university authorities to oversee the irregularities.”

Ahmed Hosen Jony, a VP candidate for Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall union, alleged that candidates were going door-to-door to woo voters, which is a direct violation of the code of conduct.

In another development, Chief Returning Officer Mohammad Zashim Uddin, in a notice, yesterday asked the candidates to remove posters and banners immediately.

Trump says he'll fire Fed's Cook if she doesn't resign

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday said he would fire Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook if she doesn't resign, intensifying his effort to gain influence over the US central bank.

“I'll fire her if she doesn't resign,” Trump told reporters during a visit to a Washington museum focused on the White House.

Cook, the first Black woman to serve on the Fed board, said she had “no intention of being bullied to step down” after Trump on Wednesday called for her resignation on the basis of allegations about mortgages she holds in Michigan and Georgia.

Cook on Wednesday said she took any questions about her financial history seriously as a member of the Federal Reserve and was gathering accurate information to answer any legitimate questions.

Cook is among three Fed governors appointed by Joe Biden.

Trump has repeatedly criticized Fed Chair Jerome Powell, whose term as chair ends in May 2026, first over his failure to reduce benchmark interest rates and more recently over cost overruns on a renovation of the Federal Reserve building.

Xi to host Putin, Guterres at SCO summit in China

REUTERS, BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping will host Russia's Vladimir Putin, UN chief Antonio Guterres and more than 20 heads of government later this month, Beijing said yesterday, for a political and security meet aimed at cementing China's regional influence.

Leaders from a bloc spanning roughly a quarter of the globe will unveil new plans to deepen their ties when they gather for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Tianjin from August 31 to September 1, Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Bin told a news conference on the summit's preparations.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are among the invitees, Bin said. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim is also scheduled to attend the summit, ahead of hosting Trump and other leaders from Asean Nations in October.

Onion and veggie prices dip

FROM PAGE 12

in larger quantities, so I get them at a bit lower price. I urge the government to ensure a proper supply of daily essentials in the market. If this is monitored properly, prices will remain stable,” she said.

Meanwhile, after remaining high for the past two to three weeks, vegetable prices eased slightly yesterday. Bitter gourd, eggplant, pointed gourd, okra, ridge gourd, teal gourd, and yardlong beans, which were selling at Tk 80 to 120 per kilo last week, were available yesterday in different Dhaka markets for Tk 60 to

100 per kilogramme.

Faruk Hossain, who has been selling vegetables at Karwan Bazar for nearly 30 years, said from his experience that prices usually remain somewhat high during this season towards the end of the monsoon due to lower supply, and this year is no exception. However, compared to the past two weeks, the supply of vegetables has increased this week, bringing down prices by Tk 10 to 20 per kilo.

On the other hand, beef is being sold as usual at Tk 750-800 per kg, Sonali chicken at Tk 320-330,

Sonali cross chicken at Tk 280-300 per kg, and eggs at Tk 130-150 per dozen.

As always during the monsoon season, fish prices remain high. Farmed rui and katla fish weighing between one and one-and-a-half kilogrammes are selling for Tk 330-400 per kg. Various types of small indigenous fish are selling for Tk 800-1,200 per kg.

Meanwhile, the price of hilsa remains steep. Even in peak season, hilsa weighing one kilogramme is not available below Tk 2,200-2,400 per kg depending on the market.

Women in DUCSU race sparks hope

But their overall political participation in DU, JU is still low

Ten women vying for top positions in the upcoming Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) election is a welcome change for women's political participation in Bangladesh. Although women, especially students, have always been at the forefront of major revolutions, including the recent July uprising, their political leadership at the national level has long been undermined by the prevailing dynastic political culture, and most top positions have been held by men. Even the last two DUCSU elections, in 2019 and 1990, saw very few or no women contesting for top posts. And in independent Bangladesh, no woman has yet held the vice-president (VP) or general secretary (GS) position. Against that backdrop, this year's DUCSU election is significant: five women are competing for the VP post, one for GS, and four for assistant general secretary.

However, the overall number of female candidates in both DUCSU and the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union (JUCSU) polls remains low compared to male candidates, although the final lists have yet to be confirmed. So far, 402 male candidates have been cleared for 28 DUCSU posts, compared to only 60 women. Similarly, for JUCSU's 25 posts, 276 nominations have been filed, of which only 57 are women. And of them, 43 are for six reserved seats for women. What is more disappointing is that no female candidate at JUCSU is running for VP. Although registered female voters in both universities are nearly equal in number to male voters, when it comes to actual political participation, women remain sidelined. Not surprisingly, student wings of major political parties reflect their parent parties' attitude towards female representation. For instance, the panels of Jatiotabadi Chatradal, Islami Chhatra Shibir, and Islami Chhatra Andolan have not nominated any women for DUCSU's top three posts. At JUCSU, the Jatiotabadi Chatradal- and Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed slates nominated female students only for reserved seats.

While these party wings have failed to create space for women leaders, other factors also discourage female participation in campus politics. This is evident from the low number of nominations from female halls at Jahangirnagar University, leaving many posts uncontested at the female dormitories. According to a report in this daily, several female leaders from last year's mass uprising are absent from the JUCSU ballot. Many of them feel undervalued post-uprising. Cyberbullying, harassment, family restrictions, and a lack of inclusive, female-friendly campuses have also contributed to this disengagement.

Despite the obstacles, Umama Fatema, SK Tasnim Afroz Emi and their comrades in the fight for female leadership are not backing down. We applaud their resilience and hope that, if elected, they will work to fulfil their electoral promises and help build an inclusive, non-partisan, safe campus for all students.

Protect women, girls from climate crisis

Early marriage, gender-based violence rise during climate shocks

We cannot overstate the urgency of addressing the gendered impact of climate change in Bangladesh. A recent study has revealed alarming figures from climate-vulnerable districts like Khulna and Satkhira: over 60 percent of adolescent girls lack access to menstrual health products, only 2.5 percent of households have consistent access to sexual and reproductive health services, and 72 percent rely on unsafe, saline-contaminated drinking water. Beyond these gaps in basic needs, the climate crisis has also deepened gender inequalities in these areas. The same study found that 78 percent of women reported an increased risk of gender-based violence during disasters, while economic distress is fuelling child and early marriages. These trends are not only distressing but also a violation of fundamental human rights.

The study, conducted by Plan International Bangladesh, paints a grim picture of how climate emergencies intensify health, education, and security vulnerabilities. Girls are dropping out of school due to a lack of menstrual hygiene support or because they spend hours fetching water. Families, pushed to the brink by crop failures and job losses, are marrying off their daughters early or sending them into unsafe migration routes. Similar concerns were documented after Cyclone Amphan, when UN Women reported a 65 percent surge in gender-based violence, and ActionAid found that 71 percent of respondents experienced more abuse during disasters. Despite such evidence, national climate policies remain largely gender-neutral, ignoring these recurring and well-documented risks.

Therefore, the government must adopt a gender-responsive legal and policy framework to address these challenges. Current disaster management and climate laws and policies, including the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, 2009 and the Climate Change Trust Act, 2010, need urgent revision to incorporate protection for women and girls. Legislation should explicitly recognise gender-based violence, harassment, trafficking, and forced marriage as aggravated risks during displacement and disasters. Existing laws should be amended to cover climate-induced vulnerabilities, while mechanisms for victim support and speedy prosecutions must be strengthened.

On the ground, gender-sensitive infrastructure is essential. This includes safe, women-only cyclone shelters, secure water access points, and expanded menstrual hygiene management through schools and community networks. Disaster-prone areas must have access to reproductive and mental healthcare resources delivered by trained professionals, as well as social protection prioritising widows, single mothers, and women with disabilities. At the same time, investment in women led adaptation initiatives, such as desalination projects and climate-smart agriculture, can help ensure livelihoods and reduce dependency on harmful coping strategies like early marriage.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

First COVID-19 vaccine approved

On this day in 2021, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first COVID-19 vaccine. It was known as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, and initially marketed as Comirnaty.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BANGLADESH

When numbers speak of the silence



NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Aasha Mehreen Amin
is joint editor at The Daily Star.

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

Numbers always have an effect. The larger the number, the greater the impact on the human psyche. So when we are informed that 133 women have been killed by their husbands in the first seven months of 2025, it is no longer just a number—it's a punch in the stomach that leaves us sickened and reeling. Because these women were murdered in what should have been their safest place, their homes, by the very person they were told they could trust the most, their life partner.

But why do these numbers still shock us? Is it because we didn't realise the extent of this horrific crime? Or is it because deep down we have accepted a lie, that violence within marriage is a "private affair" and to an extent not that big of a deal? So deep is this normalisation that when women cry out for help, they are often told to "bear with it," for the sake of their children, for their families' "honour," for financial survival. Ultimately, that phrase—to "just bear with it"—becomes a death sentence.

On August 13 this year, 26-year-old Syeda Fahmida Keya was allegedly killed by her husband Sifat Ali. According to Keya's family, the eldest of their four children, who is 11 years old, told them how it happened. That night, Fahmida was preparing dinner when Sifat returned home. An argument began and Sifat began to hit her, apparently a usual occurrence in that household. Sifat forced her into a room and locked the door. At around 2am, Sifat called Keya's family and asked them to come home quickly, saying she was "seriously ill." He directed them first to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and then to a private hospital in Panthapath, where they found that their beloved daughter was dead. Keya's husband fled, leaving her body at the hospital.

We don't know whether the family tried to save Keya from what seems to be regular abuse, by offering to take her in with her children. Perhaps she herself, for the sake of her children, decided to "bear with it."

From the news reports, we don't know much about her in-laws. Did they turn a blind eye to their son's

violent behaviour? Or like many, did they unquestioningly side with their son?

According to statistics from Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), between January and July this year, 42 women were killed by their in-laws and 33 by their own family members. A recent report by The Daily Star states that between January and August 15 this year, the national emergency helpline 999



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

received 17,341 calls about violence against women, including 9,394 calls specifically reporting abuse by husbands.

A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) survey in 2024 revealed something equally horrifying: 70 percent of the 27,476 women surveyed said they had experienced at least one form of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional, economic or controlling behaviour—with only 64 percent never disclosing the abuse and only 7.4 percent seeking legal action.

not go down. It will rise, because the system is working exactly as it was designed to.

By some strange coincidence, a few days ago, I was watching Budh (Awakening), a film by Prashant Ingole about three women in different corners of India. It gives a picture of what many marriages are for women: a prison and lifetime of servitude. These women are humiliated, commodified, made powerless. But in the end, each of them reaches a breaking point and starts to resist. The film's message is

tell their stories have left behind 133 broken families. We will never know the intensity of the fear they faced each day, each night, how helpless they felt or how much pain they endured before their lives were snuffed out forever. Add to that the pain of hundreds of other women living through this nightmare right now. The children who watch silently, petrified, witnessing every scream, every slap, every silence. If we could add up all these sufferings, how gut-wrenching a number would that be?

Why the reproductive autonomy of women must be ensured



Selim Jahan
is former director of the Human Development Report Office under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and lead author of the Human Development Report.

SELIM JAHAN

Bangladesh's population has been estimated to be 17.55 crore, half of whom are women. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) disclosed this estimation in July in its annual flagship publication, the State of World Population 2025. Given that the global population currently stands at 823 crore, the population of Bangladesh accounts for two percent of the global total. Furthermore, the average life expectancy of both men and women in Bangladesh is now higher than the global averages. While the global male life expectancy is 71 years, for Bangladeshi men, it is 74 years. Similarly, the female life expectancy in Bangladesh is 77 years, while its global average is 76 years. The report highlights several key demographic implications.

First, with two-thirds of the population (11.5 crore) in the 15-64 working-age bracket, Bangladesh has an opportunity to leverage a demographic dividend. However, this group must support a growing elderly population—seven percent or 1.2 crore aged 65 and over—who are living longer, which has monetary and caregiving implications, particularly for women.

Second, adolescents make up

about 20 percent or 3.3 crore people in the country. They represent a big proportion of the dependency ratio and thus are to be supported by the rest of the population. The broader youth cohort—nearly five crore—makes up 28 percent of the population. On one hand, they can reap the benefits of the demographic dividend as they can be the driving force for creativity and innovation for development. On the other hand, if these young people are not turned into human capital and productively employed, they can swell Bangladesh's current unemployment pool of 27 lakh. At present, the youth unemployment rate ranges between 10-12 percent, much higher than the overall unemployment rate in the country.

Thirdly, Bangladesh has achieved a replacement-level total fertility rate of 2.1. Despite this, challenges such as high rates of adolescent pregnancy, driven by early marriage and limited access to reproductive health education, persist.

The theme of the UNFPA's report is "The Real Family Crisis - The Pursuit of Reproductive Agency in a Changing World." It challenges the dominant narrative of "too many" or "too few births" and argues that the real crisis

is not about numbers; rather, it is a crisis of reproductive agency. However, in Bangladesh's context, both these narratives are meaningful and relevant. The total population of Bangladesh is a concern from two angles. First, given the land size of the country, its population density is the highest among countries with a population of over 10 million. Over the past 50 years, the population of Bangladesh has more than doubled, but the country's land area has remained the same.

The issue of reproductive agency is also important. People, especially women and young people in Bangladesh, are unable to realise their reproductive intentions due to systematic, economic and social barriers. About 77 percent of women in the country are unable to make their own decisions about childbearing, significantly higher than the global average of 63 percent. Similarly, only 23 percent of Bangladeshi women have been able to achieve their desired number of children, while the global average is 37 percent. These numbers reflect the absence of reproductive autonomy of Bangladeshi women, which is due to a series of factors ranging from economic dependency, lack of education and healthcare, social pressure and above all, patriarchy.

Unintended pregnancies are widespread in Bangladesh, and the reasons are varied. About 11 percent of the Bangladeshi women cannot make independent decisions on contraception, 16 percent have been pressured to have a child against their will, and 15 percent were pressured to use contraception, even when they

wanted a child. Another 10 percent were unable to access essential healthcare services, while one in every three women stated that they were unable to refuse sexual intercourse. As a result, 33 percent of women in the country experienced unintended pregnancies. Social and gender norms continue to pressure girls into early marriage and motherhood. All these contribute to the unpaid care work burden, gender-based violence and further deterioration of women's reproductive autonomy. On the other hand, economic hardship, high healthcare costs, and unaffordable childcare, lack of paid parental leave, force many families to delay and even forego parenthood.

Enhancing the reproductive autonomy of Bangladeshi women will have to be supported with essential reproductive health services, a robust midwifery workforce, and a steady supply of medicines and contraceptives. It would also require comprehensive sex education, affordable housing, affordable child care and paid paternal leave. All these would need more public resources devoted to the health sector. The current allocation of 0.7 percent of GDP and two percent of the national budget to health expenditures is simply unacceptable, not only by the global standard, but also by the regional standard. They must be raised to at least five percent of GDP and 15 percent of the national budget. Let us ensure that reproductive decisions in Bangladesh are supported, and not judged and let every person in the country plan their life with choice, freedom, safety and dignity.

The anatomy of a suicide note



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

A recent news from Rajshahi brought tears to our eyes. A family of four died to avoid the trap of debt and pain of hunger. It was a case of filicide where the father confessed to the killing of the other three members of his family. Such deaths are not uncommon in a country that is in denial about the significant segment of its population living in extreme poverty. The policy of reducing poverty to zero is a horse that exists in the book of the authorities but not in the stable of practice, as a Bangla proverb puts it. The transformation of four individuals to four zeros, therefore, is a case study that needs close scrutiny. I will attempt a close reading of the short note, written by a father who had just killed his children and wife.

The opening declaration sets the fatal decision as inevitable, “Tonight, the four of us will leave this world. We will never see each other again. *Khoda hafiz.*” Then the author positions himself and takes responsibility for his action, “I am Minarul, and what I write below is entirely my own.” He excludes the possibility of any external blame by stating, “I put it down because tonight, the four of us will die. No one is to be held responsible for our deaths. I write this letter because the police will otherwise accuse someone falsely and extort money.”

Minarul knew how, in a country like

a flattened affect. The sequential description of killings suggests that he had already killed three members of his family before killing himself. The atrocity is justified as an act of necessity.

In the next part, he leaves some instructions about his last rite, “The elder son of our father, along with his family, must not come to see our bodies or attend our funerals. Our father must not spend any money on the shrouds that will cover our bodies... From, Minarul. *Assalam Alaikum.*”

By not naming the relationship that he has with his brother, it suggests that he felt betrayed by him and his family. The social exclusion of banning his father and elder brother from the funerals asserts some control over his action even after his death. The closings, which include religious courtesies, create an impression of a ritualistic farewell.

The suicide note reads like a testament and shows careful cognitive planning rather than any impulsivity. He names himself three times in the course of the note, which indicates that he is fixated on his authorial identity and mindful about misattribution. The attempt at clarity by the authors is common in suicide notes. But what is uncommon is the blunt repetition and directness of verbs. He asserts responsibility for his sequential homicide by

over language by using imperatives to assert himself one last time. The statements that his elder brother “must not come” and that his father “must not pay for shrouds” hint at a displacement of anger. We can understand that there are unresolved conflicts within the family. While Minarul has absolved society, he does not extend the same reprieve to his immediate family members.

From a psychological point of view, the repeated emphasis on death as predetermined signifies helplessness conditioned by hunger, debt, and social stigma, which zeroes in on a

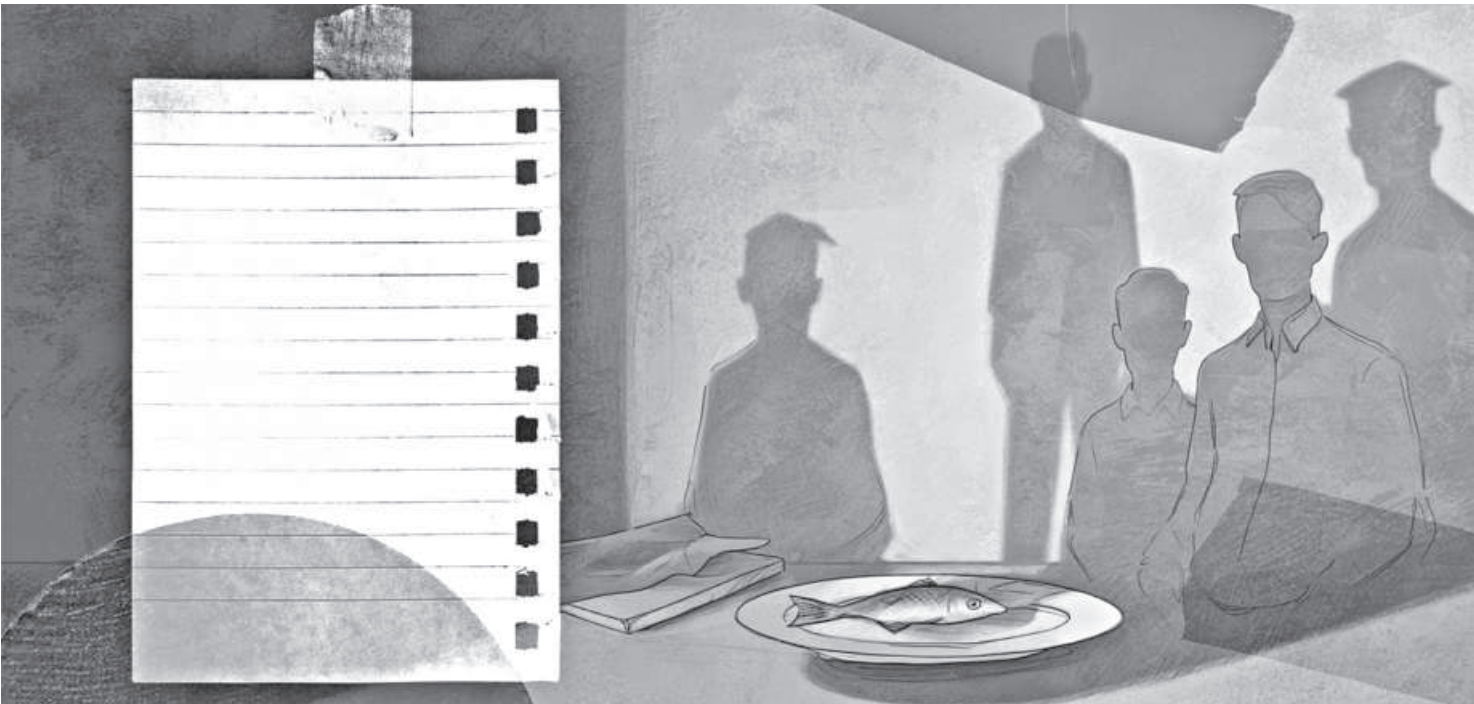
along with the note.

The filicide is paternalistic in tone, as Minarul behaved like a provider who turned into an executioner. He could have simply died by suicide himself. But instead of abandoning his family members to uncertainty, he decided to kill his dependents, too, to release them from suffering. This behaviour exemplifies a twisted interpretation of “care,” which aligns with the concept of altruistic filicide.

Minarul attempted to conform to social decorum and dignity by using religious courtesies like “*Khoda hafiz*” and “*Assalam*

or instructional, fatalistic or resigned, and accusatory or indirect. For instance, Minarul owns up to his action and clarifies responsibility (e.g. “No one is to be blamed”). He provides practical instructions (e.g. “Our father must not pay for the shrouds”). It is fatalistic when he writes, “Four of us will leave the world tonight.” He has already resigned and given up hope. And the indirect anger directed at his elder brother and the police exemplifies the third type of suicide note.

Teach numerous realistic texts from various cultures that address hunger as a driving



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

When Minarul killed his loved ones, he expressed concern about the police potentially taking advantage of the situation. The result is a deep-seated paranoia and mistrust against institutions that we all share as his fellow citizens.

ours, narratives can be twisted and how law enforcement agencies can use someone else’s misery as an opportunity to make money. He then provides a chronological account of the killings. The calm and composed voice reflects a kind of emotional numbing that produces

repeatedly stating, “I killed...” This suggests possible dissociative detachment or a forensic awareness of how the events will be reconstructed. The language is direct and not conditional. Minarul presents his action with certainty and finality. He maintains control

sense of no escape. When Minarul killed his loved ones, he expressed concern about the police potentially taking advantage of the situation. The result is a deep-seated paranoia and mistrust against institutions that we all share as his fellow citizens. Now that this act of suicide is linked to debt, we can also highlight the systemic neglect and the lack of social support that leads individuals to self-annihilation.

One report suggests the daughter, Mithila, was only two years old. She craved fish. Her grandmother brought a dish of fish and found the door closed from inside. When neighbours broke in, they found the bodies of the victims

alaikum.” The irony lies in the fact that he violated one of the major religious injunctions: suicide. The religious courtesy is a psychological relief that cloaks despair and seeks spiritual solace.

There are quite a few markers that make this note seem genuine. They include personal identifiers, explicit sequencing, emotional leakage (distrust, bitterness), and distrust for authority (i.e. police). In the note, Minarul emerges as a perpetrator experiencing acute psychological distress characterised by fatalism, a desire for control, and feelings of resentment. There are also overlapping themes that are common to suicide notes: explanatory

force for death. Manik Bandyopadhyay, Emile Zola, Victor Hugo, Toni Morrison, and John Steinbeck are a few such names. In class, we glorify death and pain and critically appreciate their aesthetic dimensions. The explanatory-instructional-fatalistic typology shaped by hunger, debt, and systemic distrust is a matter of linguistic investigation that my students undertake for their grades. We write essays on how deprivation corrodes familial bonds and can present death as mercy. There are times when we need to question why one turned the other three into zeroes. Minarul killed because he cared. But who killed Minarul? Is he a villain or a victim?

To create an inclusive society, we must change our mindset



Laila Khondkar
is an international development worker.

LAILA KHONDKAR

I was recently a guest speaker at a course for health workers at a private university. The session focused on non-discriminatory behaviour in the workplace. From the very beginning, many participants shared personal stories: how they faced derogatory comments about their skin colour, height and/or weight during childhood and adolescence, and how such experiences led to emotional distress and a loss of self-confidence. Several participants mentioned that even in adulthood, they continue to encounter such behaviour within families, social circles, and workplaces. This is the reality for many in our society. Remarks about people from religious minorities, indigenous communities, and those with mental health conditions are also often made casually and insensitively.

Are we even aware that our jokes or comments may be hurting others? Asking intrusive questions about someone’s marital

status or children as soon as we meet them is still a part of our social conversations. Misogynistic jokes are rampant in social media groups, mirroring the attitude prevalent in real life.

The state has a responsibility to eliminate discrimination through laws and policies. Many organisations also attempt to guide their employees through codes of conduct that define what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. These are all important steps. But they are not enough to create an inclusive society. Discrimination will persist unless the social attitude changes. Institutional and state frameworks typically consider race, gender, ethnicity, and disability. But human diversity includes many other dimensions.

Let us imagine this scenario: you are interviewing candidates for a job. One applicant replies with a regional accent. Would you consider them as qualified as someone

who speaks in standard pronunciation, or would bias creep in? There are countless such situations where biased assumptions lead to exclusion.

Chotoder Chhobi, a film directed by Kaushik Ganguly, revolves around a group of people with dwarfism, some of whom work in a circus. Like everyone else, they experience joy and sorrow in their everyday lives. They are doing just fine. But the problem lies elsewhere. Wherever they go, people look at them with a patronising gaze, which makes

person joins, the game cannot begin, even if that person is not particularly skilled. Their presence itself is a gift. It enables connection, collaboration, and meaningful experiences. Just like our presence, our differences are fundamental to who we are.

Diversity is what makes human society beautiful and strong. If everyone were the same in terms of their identities and lifestyles, then society would be monotonous. Still, when someone lives differently than we do, we hesitate to accept them, as if they are

Diversity is what makes human society beautiful and strong. If everyone were the same in terms of their identities and lifestyles, then society would be monotonous. Still, when someone lives differently than we do, we hesitate to accept them, as if they are doing something ‘wrong.’

them uncomfortable. There is a societal standard for what is considered “normal,” and anyone who doesn’t meet it is often seen as “abnormal.” This mindset was challenged by Judith Snow, who spent her life advocating for a more inclusive society. She argued that “presence is a fundamental contribution we make to society.” For example, imagine you’re organising a team game that requires seven players. You have six. Until the seventh

doing something “wrong.” Paul Dolan, who has long studied happiness, explores this in his book *Happy Ever After*. He critiques the social narrative that ties happiness to education, career success, health, marriage, and having children. While this formula may work for some, it does not apply to everyone. There are many ways to live a meaningful and joyous life. In trying to appear happy in the eyes of others, many lead deeply unhappy

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Enjoy the library
- 5 Blinds piece
- 9 TV’s “Uncle Miltie”
- 10 Car quartet
- 12 Be of use
- 13 Early Mexican
- 14 Reserved money
- 16 Can. neighbor
- 17 “- we there yet?”
- 18 Trial
- 20 Reduce
- 22 “Clumsy me!”
- 23 Routine
- 25 Asian language
- 28 Charge criminally
- 32 London theater

area

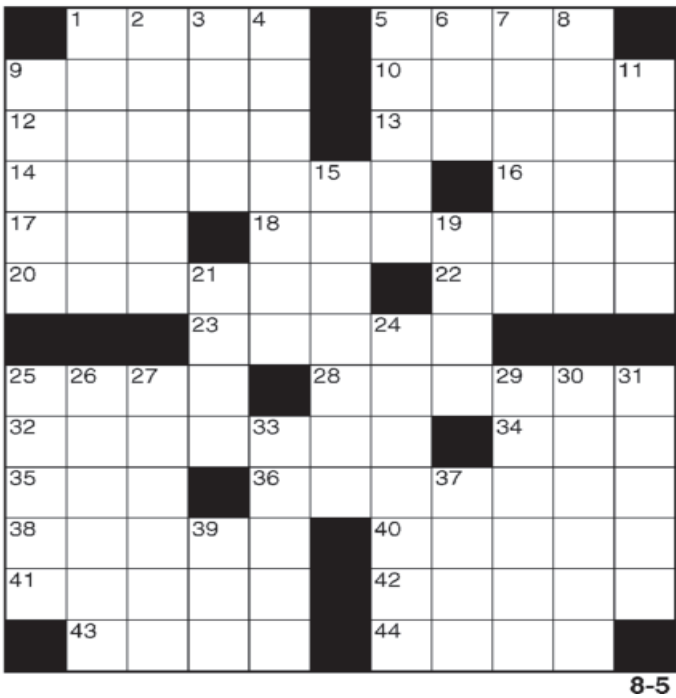
- 34 “- TURN”
- 35 Consume
- 36 Ring carrier
- 38 Dodge
- 40 Give a speech
- 41 Hamper
- 42 External
- 43 Budget item
- 44 Call for

DOWN

- 1 Historic rider
- 2 Wipes off
- 3 Stepped down
- 4 Edits out
- 5 Antlered animals
- 6 Designer Claiborne

7 Music’s Toscanini

- 8 Prepares to drive
- 9 Insipid
- 11 Looks over
- 15 Bona fide
- 19 Related
- 21 Hearts, e.g.
- 24 Et cetera
- 25 Jacket material
- 26 Physician
- 27 Keen
- 29 Prison resident
- 30 Like some aspirin
- 31 Radio dial
- 33 Reviewer Roger
- 37 Faithful
- 39 Bear’s lair



YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



“My father was a theatre actor, but he never had the opportunity to pursue acting and became a journalist instead,” shares Pranto. “I believe that his unfulfilled dream was passed down to me, and I was meant to carry it forward.” In recent years, few rising actors have been more determined to prove their range than Abid Bin Parvez Pranto. From TVCs to short films and eventually fiction, he has steadily marked himself as an actor intent on versatility.

MAISHA TASNIM SRESHTHA

The young actor first appeared in commercials, including Grameenphone, KFC, bKash, and eventually as the face of Duroto Bicycle. At that time, even he admits he wasn't chomping at the bit to jump straight into heavy roles. “Ads gave me a chance to face the camera, to learn, but I knew I couldn't stay there forever.”

That test came with *Lift Together* and *Ek Guccho Kodom*, romantic shorts under Closeup's *Kache Ashar Golpo* series. They gave him warmth from audiences, but they also pushed him beyond being a passing screen face.

The real transformation, however, came with his debut fiction *Khalid*, directed by Taneem Rahman Angshu. Though only a cameo, Pranto pushed himself with method acting; fasting for a full day before a crucial scene. “If I weren't hungry, the scream wouldn't have carried that raw edge,” he says, recalling writhing from the physical strain. “But it paid off. Sometimes you have to push your body far if you don't want the scene to fall flat.”

For a young actor, this embrace of method acting is rare. “It boggles my mind that many newcomers still treat small parts as a throwaway,” Pranto says. “Even a short scene can change people's impression of you.” “I experimented so much that sometimes audiences couldn't recognise me from one TVC to the next. If I had sunglasses in one, then in the next I'd show up with long hair; different looks, same person,” he recalls.

That experimentation later fed into his short film *Ek Guccho Kodom*, starring opposite Parsha Mahjabeen Purnee. “TVCs and short films give you the shortest amount of time, but you still have to change into different expressions. In long dramas, you get time to settle into emotions, but here you play against the clock,” he explains.

Alongside acting, Pranto has also tapped into his creativity behind the camera. With his group Mafia Entertainment Original, he has directed a number of independent projects,

including the hip-hop music video *Ganjam – Guerrillaz of Dhaka*, a tribute to Deshi MCs that brought together young musicians and producer Aziz Badhon. He has even worked as an associate director on the short film *24 August (Blood of Love)* on YouTube. These projects may not have had the spotlight of television dramas, but for Pranto they were opportunities to experiment with filmmaking, teamwork, and direction. Still, he is clear that acting remains his main focus, directing is more of a creative playground than a serious career move.

Beyond romance and thrillers, Pranto's admiration for Shakib Khan, his idol, has also steered him toward action. Inspired by the Dhallywood superstar, Pranto has begun training in mixed martial arts to add physical credibility to his craft. “When I say I want to do action, I want my body to know it too,” he explains. “Shakib *bhai* is my inspiration, but I want to build my own style of versatility. I don't want to be boxed in.”

For now, Pranto stays grounded, often talking about how much he has learned on set. He says it's the directors who keep guiding him to find the subtleties in a character. “Every director I've worked with has shown me another angle; how to carry myself, how to switch into expressions.” That guidance, he adds, is slowly helping him create a signature look of his own.

Pranto now has his eyes set on what's next. He is currently working on NTV's upcoming drama *Delete History*, and *Mayamoyee*, Vicky Zahed's *Khowabnama* airing on YouTube, and will return in the Angshu directorial *Khalid 2*, which begins shooting later this year.

Pocket full of dreams for PRANTO



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



First Draft - The Songwriters' Collective
August 23 | 5:30pm onwards
Shala, Aloki



Play: 'Dilnawaz'
August 26-27 | 7pm onwards
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Play: 'Closet Land'
August 29 | 4pm & 7pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

1-MINUTE REVIEW

‘THE FANTASTIC FOUR: FIRST STEPS’ delivers heartfelt storytelling with retro flair

Marvel finally lands a substantiated *Fantastic Four* first movie. After decades of misfires — from Roger Corman's shelved version to Fox's corny 2000s attempts and the grim 2015 reboot — *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* breathes new life into Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's iconic team.

The film, directed with retro-futurist flair by Matt Shakman, cleverly skips the tired origin setup, instead dropping us into a vibrant 1960s world where the heroes are already beloved.

Pedro Pascal and Vanessa Kirby ground the story with heart as Reed and Sue, whose pregnancy adds touching stakes, while Joseph Quinn's fiery Johnny and Ebon Moss-Bachrach's soulful Ben round out the family dynamic.

The film balances dazzling spectacle — Galactus and a reimagined Silver Surfer arrive in jaw-dropping style — with warmth and humor reminiscent of *The Incredibles*.

It is bright with playful designs and structures,



while Giacchino's score elevates the adventure, and the focus on relationships keeps it relatable. Amusing, heartfelt, and refreshingly straightforward, *First Steps* marks a wholesome and exciting new chapter for Marvel's First Family.



WHAT'S PLAYING

‘What You Want’ BY CORTIS

Just days after its debut, BigHit Music's newest group, Cortis, stormed into the K-pop conversation with the single *What You Want*. It mixes fuzzy 60s-inspired psychedelic guitar with raw boom-bap beats, a sound that feels both nostalgic and cutting-edge.

For the label that launched BTS and TXT, this is the first boy group in six years. Its five members—Martin, James, Juhoon, Seonghyeon, and Keonho—are not just idols; they're songwriters, choreographers, and even co-directors of their music video.

As for their statement? It's in the name: Cortis (Color Outside the Lines) and that's exactly what they're doing.

STYLE STATEMENT

TASNIA FARIN

At the grand opening of a clothing brand in Chattogram, Tasnia Farin brought effortless glamour to the spotlight. Draped in a pink saree adorned with sequins and intricate embroidery, she struck the perfect balance of tradition and modern polish. Her choice of dazzling jewels amplified the look with regal intensity, while her luminous makeup and sleek hairstyling embodied the artistry of the saree and the eternal allure of classic femininity.



TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Night always comes



Amazon Prime
Butterfly



Hoichoi
Birangana



Hulu
The Twisted Tale of Amanda Knox



HBO Max
Peacemaker



Dhobaura— M’singh road in a sorry state



MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

The 30-kilometre stretch from Mymensingh’s Dhobaura to Tarakanda has become almost unusable, causing immense suffering for thousands of people who travel on the road.

The 45 kilometre Mymensingh-Dhobaura road, passing through Tarakanda and Phulpur, is the only road connecting the area, particularly for Dhobaura residents. But numerous potholes along the route have made journeys risky, costly, and time-consuming.

Md Abul Hossain, a local journalist, said with no alternate route to reach Mymensingh city, commuters are forced to risk their lives daily. A journey that previously took an hour now requires over two hours, he added.

The plight of patients referred to Mymensingh for better treatment from Dhobaura Upazila Health Complex is particularly severe. Patients and their attendants not only face life-threatening risks during the trip but also pay double fares due to the poor condition of the road, he said.

The broken road has also increased the cost of transporting agricultural products. “We produce different kinds of vegetables and crops, but the carrying cost has gone up sharply due to the state

of the road,” said Md Liakat Ali, a farmer of Kalsinsur village.

Arif Hossain, a pick-up driver, echoed him.

Khokon Pahloan, proprietor of Pahlon Enterprise at Dhobaura Bazar, said, “We have to pay extra fare and spend additional hours transporting goods, and the problem has worsened this year.”

Md Shafiqul Islam Mondal, LGED upazila engineer in Dhobaura, said the 30 kilometre road passes through three upazilas — Dhobaura, Phulpur, and Tarakanda. The nine-kilometre portion in Dhobaura is comparatively in good condition, he claimed.

Salman Rahman Rasel, LGED executive engineer in Mymensingh, said repair work has already been initiated.

Admitting the poor state of the road, he said the department does not receive the required funds every season, which has contributed to its current condition. A proposal for massive repair work has been submitted, and the work could start by November this year, he added.

Md Uzzal Hosen, Dhobaura UNO, said the issue has been raised in the district coordination meeting. LGED engineers have been contacted and assured that the road will be repaired soon to alleviate the ongoing sufferings of the people.

Healthcare reform begins, service yet to improve

FROM PAGE 1

unwanted public attention after the Anti-Corruption Commission launched an investigation into allegations against the health adviser’s two former personal officers — Muhammad Tuhin Farabi and Mahmudul Hasan.

The duo allegedly abused their positions and engaged in extortion, tender manipulation, and various corrupt practices to unlawfully amass wealth.

When asked, Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum said, “We haven’t received any specific allegations against the two. We cannot carry out a probe based on vague allegations. That’s why no action was taken against them.”

They left the ministry after completing their tasks, she said, adding that the two were involved in the management of medical care for July victims.

“This has not tarnished my reputation,” she told The Daily Star on August 17 at her Secretariat office.

Referring to criticism that she was seldom seen on the ground over the past year, the health adviser said, “I make field visits whenever necessary. I do that to get an idea of the real situation. But if I go somewhere with fanfare, I won’t get the actual picture.”

TREATMENT OF JULY VICTIMS

Providing proper treatment to those injured during the uprising was the health administration’s foremost priority. However, it faced allegations of mismanagement and deficiencies in medical care for them.

Ministry officials said a list of 13,811 people injured during the uprising was prepared, and health service providers across

the country did their best to serve them. Doctors were brought in from seven countries for their treatment, and 78 of the injured were sent abroad for better care. Of the wounded, 7,363 were given health cards for free lifelong treatment at government hospitals.

Despite these efforts, many of the July victims admitted to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation, and the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of treatment and rehabilitation. They staged demonstrations on several occasions.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE CONTINUES

The new administration’s resolve to bring positive changes was put to the test when it moved to replace top officials at health agencies, hospitals, medical universities and colleges. Many of the posts were held by individuals affiliated with Awami League, with the previous administration mired in allegations of corruption.

The health ministry faced its first major challenge when it appointed Prof Robed Amin as acting director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) on August 18 last year. Amin previously served as a DGHS director during the AL government’s tenure.

Amin was unable to assume office for over a month amid protests from pro-BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami doctors, forcing the authorities to withdraw his appointment.

Sources said most top posts in health organisations are currently held by doctors with links

to the two political parties.

Talking to this correspondent, Nurjahan Begum said they had searched for non-partisan individuals to fill vacant posts at health agencies, institutions and hospitals, but got only a few suitable candidates.

“We then gave emphasis on finding honest and skilled individuals... We did not make appointments considering political affiliations,” she added.

SUSPENSION OF SECTORAL PROGRAMMES

The interim government scrapped the proposed Fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP) and decided to absorb the sectoral programmes into regular ones to improve coordination and strengthen infrastructure.

Since 1998, the health ministry implemented four HPNSPs to provide various health services.

The ministry decided to take two projects forward to complete the unfinished tasks of the Fourth HPNSP and continue the supply of medicines and other emergency items. However, the projects have not yet been approved, disrupting the supply of medicines, officials said.

For example, five types of medicines for diabetes and hypertension are provided at 430 hospitals, mostly at the upazila level, but their supply has been seeing disruptions, they added.

STEPS TAKEN SO FAR

The 12-member Health Sector Reform Commission, led by National Professor AK Azad Khan, submitted its report to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on May 5, recommending a sweeping overhaul

of health service management.

Early this month, the health ministry moved to implement some of its short-term recommendations after facing criticism from health experts and campaigners over delay in initiating reforms.

It decided to promote 7,000 doctors, including 6,000 in supernumerary positions for the first time in the sector, as many have been “deprived of promotion for long”.

The ministry has already initiated a process to appoint 3,000 doctors through a special BCS and appointed 3,512 senior nurses to mitigate the manpower crisis.

Meanwhile, the ministry lowered the prices of coronary stents from three US companies by Tk 3,000 to Tk 88,000 each, providing much-needed relief to heart patients. The revised rates will come into effect on October 1.

Also, Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL), the state-owned pharmaceutical manufacturer, announced reducing prices of 33 essential medicines.

Steps have also been taken to reduce prices of cancer drugs.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Be-nazir Ahmed, a health expert and former director of disease control at DGHS, said Bangladesh has performed reasonably well in preventive healthcare through various sectoral programmes over the last few decades.

However, the interim administration halted these programmes and failed to devise a transitional plan to continue the services provided under the schemes, severely impacting preventive healthcare, he said.

Giving an example, Be-nazir said the death rate from rabies fell by 90 percent due to one such programme. With the programme now halted, this hard-earned achievement is at risk of reversal.

Health services have also been affected but the impact is less visible because the private sector provides 80 percent of these services, he said.

However, poor people who rely on government support have been severely affected, as they are not receiving medicines provided under these programmes.

Apart from internal challenges, the suspension of USAID funding also hit the country’s health services, he said.

“We hoped that the interim government would make health services more pro-people, but the sector did not receive priority. Its actions have created a vacuum, and we risk falling behind in some disease control efforts,” he added.

Prof Syed Abdul Hamid of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University said that given the circumstances, it was difficult for the health administration to bring about major changes in the sector, but it has initiated some reforms.

After a long time, steps have been taken to update the essential drug lists and regulate their prices, he said.

“Some processes have been launched, and some alternatives have been put forward, but their implementation has yet to begin. This is why the changes are not visible at the service level.”

However, there has been a lack of proactiveness among health ministry officials, he added.

Delayed diagnosis putting children at greater risk

FROM PAGE 3

“He had a fever for 13 days and was receiving treatment at home. We admitted him to the hospital on Thursday when his health declined,” said his mother, Rubi Begum, a resident of Sipahibagh.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), at least 4,026 children aged 0–10 have been hospitalised with dengue this year, while 10 children of the same age group have died out of 110 total deaths so far. In the past 24 hours, 173 dengue patients were hospitalised, raising the total cases to 27,955.

Dr HM Nazmul Hsain, associate professor at

Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, said many parents are showing negligence this year by not testing their children soon after fever begins.

“Children are often brought to the hospital only when their condition turns critical,” he said.

He explained that dengue symptoms appear differently in children.

“For adults, symptoms usually begin with sudden fever, body pain, and eye pain. But in children, it often starts with nausea and coughing. Infants may cry excessively, refuse breastfeeding, or appear unusually tired.”

Dr Hsain warned that

dengue reaches the critical stage faster in children.

“For adults, it may take 48 hours to become critical, but in children, it can take just 24 hours. That’s why we strongly recommend hospitalisation as quickly as possible.”

He also said children are more prone to developing dengue shock syndrome, which is highly dangerous.

Urging guardians to be more cautious, he added, “The risk of infection is high at schools and coaching centres. Most schools don’t provide full-sleeve uniforms, but these are essential during dengue season. Children’s legs should also be protected with long socks and shoes.”

Ensure justice for Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 3

shortages, forced conscription, and abuses by both the junta and the Arakan Army.

The rights groups warned that conditions are worsening in Cox’s Bazar, where over one million Rohingya refugees are facing abductions, sexual violence, shrinking aid, and deteriorating health and education services.

“Impunity remains pervasive,” the statement said, noting that while the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are pursuing cases against Myanmar, no concrete accountability has been achieved.

It pointed out that the ICC prosecutor’s request for an arrest warrant against Myanmar

Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing in November 2024 is still pending.

The groups urged the United Nations Security Council to refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC and called on UN member states to use universal jurisdiction to prosecute perpetrators of atrocities, as seen in Argentina.

They also raised concerns over the upcoming UN High-level Conference on the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar, scheduled for September 30 in New York.

R o h i n g y a representation is lacking. Survivors, women, youth, and Rohingya-led civil society must be at the forefront of discussions about their future,” the statement said.



PHOTO: STAR

The signatories further urged host countries, including Bangladesh, to protect the rights of Rohingya refugees, ensuring access to education and livelihoods and safeguarding against forced returns to Myanmar.

“We stand united in our

call for an end to impunity, the right of the Rohingya to live in safety and dignity, full recognition of the Rohingya as citizens of Myanmar, and the inclusion of their voices in shaping the country’s future,” the statement concluded.

The 58 organisations

included Amnesty International, Fortify Rights, Human Rights Watch, Burma Campaign UK, European Rohingya Council, Odhikar, Refugees International, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, and numerous Rohingya-led networks.

3,909 students awarded

FROM PAGE 4

“Welcome” awards, 1,108 earned “Appreciation” awards, 615 were given “Congratulations” awards, and 86 students received the prestigious “Best Reader” award.

Actor Khairul Alam Sabuj delivered the welcome

speech at the programme. He congratulated the awardees, saying that truth and cultural values are the greatest sources of inspiration in life’s journey.

Mountaineer MA Muhit, Shamim Al Mamun, former secretary and current member of the National Election Enquiry Commission; Khulna

Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate Mohammad Saiful Islam; Bishwo Shahitto Kendro trustee and management consultant Khalid Hasan; and Gramceenphone’s Regional Head for Khulna Bushra Mehreen also attended the event.

River land filled up

FROM PAGE 4

Ahidul Islam of Chanchra Dakshinpara.

Another resident, Firoz Ahmed of Bhaturia Narayanpur village, said, “In many places there are complaints of encroaching to build structures or cultivate fish. But here the entire river has been filled. We do not understand how river land becomes private property.”

Bangladesh Environment Movement (BAPA) Jashore Board Executive Engineer Palash Kumar Banerjee said there is no way river land can become private property. “Appropriate legal action will be taken after investigating the issue of river filling and encroachment,” he added.

The phone number on the land sale signboard belongs to Nur Islam Nuru, a former peon of the Jashore registry office. He told reporters the land is privately owned by Jamal, Kamal and Munna of the area, and that he was

selling on their behalf.

Kamal and Munna also claimed they had proper documents and were selling land they legally owned.

Jashore Sadar Sub-Register Amena Begum confirmed that they received a complaint. “Investigation is underway. Action will be taken against those involved after the investigation is completed,” she said.

Water Development Board Executive Engineer Palash Kumar Banerjee said there is no way river land can become private property. “Appropriate legal action will be taken after investigating the issue of river filling and encroachment,” he added.

PRAYER
TIMING

AUGUST 23

Fazr

Zohr

Asr

Maghrib

Esha

AZAN 4-25

12-45

4-45

6-38

8-00

JAMAAT 5-00

1-15

5-00

6-41

8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

পরিচালক ও অধ্যাপক এর দপ্তর

জাতীয় চক্ষু বিজ্ঞান ইনস্টিটিউট ও হাসপাতাল

শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২০৭

তারিখ: ২১ আগস্ট ২০২৫ইং

স্মারক নং.- এনএইওএফএইচ/এমএসআর/২০২৫-২৬/২৮৬৮

এমএসআর দরপত্রের সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জাতীয় চক্ষু বিজ্ঞান ইনস্টিটিউট ও হাসপাতালের ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের স্মারক নং-এই ও এফ এইচ/এমএসআর/২০২৫-২০২৬/২৮০৮, তারিখ: ১৮ আগস্ট ২০২৫ খ্রি. মোতারসেক উদ্ভূত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি ১৯/০৮/২০২৫ ইং তারিখে প্রকাশিত হয়। বাংলাদেশ শ্রাবালিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট অথরিটি কর্তৃক জারীকৃত বিজ্ঞপ্তি অনুসারে প্রকাশিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি ১৯ নং ডকুমেন্টের দরপত্র দলিল (সিডিউল) স্থা সংশোধন করা হয়েছে।

কালের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	এস নং	বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে সিডিউল মূল্য(অফেরত ঘোষা)	সংশোধিত মূল্য (অফেরত ঘোষা)
ঔষধপত্র (সার্বিক/উইজ, দর, ঠিকানা উপকরণসহ)	এস নং-০১	এসপ "০১" এর জন্য ২০০০/- (দুই হাজার)	এসপ "০১" এর জন্য ৪০০০/- (চার হাজার)
এমএসআর খরচপত্র সাইট	এস নং-০২	এসপ "০২" এর জন্য ২০০০/- (দুই হাজার)	এসপ "০২" এর জন্য ৪০০০/- (চার হাজার)
পাথ, ব্যাডেজ ও ক্রাফ	এস নং-০৩	এসপ "০৩" এর জন্য ২০০০/- (দুই হাজার)	এসপ "০৩" এর জন্য ২৫০০/- (দুই হাজার পাঁচশত)
লিফেন	এস নং-০৪	এসপ "০৪" এর জন্য ২০০০/- (দুই হাজার)	এসপ "০৪" এর জন্য ১০০০/- (এক হাজার)
কেমিক্যাল বি-এসেন্ট (এস-রে ডিউ ইনজি পেশোরাহ)	এস নং-০৫	এসপ "০৫" এর জন্য ২০০০/- (দুই হাজার)	এসপ "০৫" এর জন্য ২৫০০/- (দুই হাজার পাঁচশত)

সংশোধিত খ্রি পরিচালক প্রকাশিত এমএসআর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি ১৯ নং ডকুমেন্ট অনুসারে চালানো মধ্যমে করা সিন্তে হবে। পরিচালক প্রকাশিত এমএসআর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি অন্যান্য সকল অংশ অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

(অধ্যাপক ডাঃ হাফিজ আহমেদ চৌধুরী)

পরিচালক

GD-1847



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

FICTION

Showtime

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Trigger warning: self harm, sexual and physical abuse

“For a hundred million, Omar, are you ready?” said the host, with his everlasting grin.

Omar didn’t know if he was. The past two hours had been excruciating, and he already knew the question he was going to face for a hundred million bucks. Before signing the contract, he was certain that he wouldn’t hesitate.

Omar had registered for the gameshow Lucid Verdict a few months back. Just in its first season, the show had broken all the TRP charts. The audience hadn’t seen a game show this intriguing ever before.

The show was based on a machine that could extract a certain memory from the contestant’s brain and verify whether that lucid memory was based on true events or was merely a fabrication. Dr Sandeep Chatterjee, the man behind the machine, was a psychiatrist by profession. He came up with the idea when he realised that many of his patients had willingly suppressed certain traumatising memories of their past, and their brains had automatically registered them as nightmares. In an attempt to protect themselves from the past, the brain had found a way to lie to itself. Dr Sandeep coined this phenomenon REM-Reality Conversion, or RRC.

Others had fabricated memories out of nightmares—the opposite of RRC. These patients had been through the same nightmare so often that they couldn’t separate it from the real world. It was a psychological state where the nightmare became so vivid and frequent that it was misremembered as real. Dr Sandeep termed it Persistent Nightmare Internalisation Disorder (PNID).

When Dr Sandeep fully grasped the actual number of patients with RRC and PNID, he came up with the idea of the machine. And with it, the idea of monetising it. What better than a game show out of it?

The initial contestants were chosen from Dr Sandeep’s personal patients, those with enough distress to fill an entire episode. But after a few episodes, people began applying from all over the country. Turns out, a lot of people were willing to face their fears if you threw a bundle of cash at them. The participants were put through an initial audition where a psychiatrist assessed whether they had enough trauma to milk an entire episode out of them.

The show was an instant sensation among younger audiences. Apparently, people loved watching a miserable man get his memories stripped bare in front of live television. “Addictive, fun, and rewatchable” is how *The Dhaka Times* described the show after its first season.

Omar knew he was the perfect contestant the first time he saw the show. He had never been to therapy—nor could he afford it—which meant he had a lot of psychological injuries left unattended. Growing up, he never thought he would make it to 34, and he had been contemplating ending it before he hit 35. But this gameshow changed his plans. He wanted a few answers before he ended it all. And perhaps, make some money in the process.

Money didn’t mean much to Omar. He had no grand plans that needed funding. But his parents did. For the past 34 years, all he’d heard was his parents complaining about never having enough of it. For the past eight years, those complaints had been targeted at him. His salary as a medical representative wasn’t enough to support a family of four—nor enough for anyone to consider giving their daughter to him in marriage.

When he registered for Lucid Verdict, Omar went to the audition with a smirk, knowing he was the perfect cash cow for these pathological exploiters. He had a vault of nightmares trapped in his grey matter, and he had lived all

these years too afraid to face them. But now, with death pre-planned, he had nothing to fear. Even if all of his nightmares turned out to be real, he had nothing to lose. He was a dead man playing the game.

His first lucid memory was of being choked in a bucket of water by a kid at school. Omar was almost sure that it was a fact and not a nightmare because he had feared swimming ever since.

The second was watching his cousin’s body hanging from the ceiling of their house in Chandpur. Omar wasn’t entirely sure about that one either, but it turned out to be true. *Huh, that explains why Amma was always quiet about Ashfaq bhai*, Omar thought. He still remembered Ashfaq bhai picking him up as a child and hanging him upside down by his legs. Omar called it ‘The Rollercoaster’. Sad that Omar had been unknowingly planning for the same fate as Ashfaq bhai.

Another memory, of his father beating up his mother, actually turned out to be a nightmare. Omar’s father looked awfully ashamed that his son would dream of such a thing.

As the game progressed, the questions dug

there in the dark. And the next day, your aunts were gone.”

“No. Stop!” Omar screamed.

“This is just how your brain registered it, Omar,” said the host. “I’m just reading out the transcript we received scanning your brain. It’s just a simple question—nightmare or reality?”

Seeing Omar tremble, the host continued gently, “Omar, you can always choose to quit. The machine will make you forget about this memory permanently and bury it back in the deepest core of your brain, where you can never find it again.”

“I want to quit, right now,” said Omar as he got down from the chair.

Before the host could stop him, his father shouted from the audience, “Omar! Don’t quit! Answer the question, son!”

Omar looked at his parents in disbelief. They knew. He could tell. His brain didn’t make it up. Oh, how badly Omar wished his brain had made it all up.

As the show cut to commercial break, Omar walked up to his parents. His mother grabbed his hands.

“Omar, answer it. It’s just a question, son. We know how much you’ve been through



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

deeper into his brain—into places he hadn’t explored in a long time. Sexual perversions, self-harming thoughts, deepest insecurities, and hidden embarrassments—the machine made it extremely difficult for Omar to continue. *Dead man walking, Omar*, he whispered to himself, pushing forward to the final question.

“I must say, Omar, you’re perhaps the most confident contestant we’ve had this season,” said the host. “But this last question is bound to challenge you. Remember, if you fail to answer or choose to walk away, you’ll lose all the money you’ve earned.”

Omar smiled and looked at the computer screen, ready for the final battle. The machine had already gone through all of his memories, even the darkest one he could think of. Nothing could stop him.

Or so he thought.

As the last question popped up on the screen, his heart stopped.

“Omar, something happened when you were six,” said the host, his voice heavy with implication. “Your aunts visited that Eid. Your house was too small for all the guests, and you had to share the same bed as your cousin, Ashfaq.”

“Stop,” Omar said—though not out loud.

“Something happened the night after Eid, Omar,” continued the host. “Ashfaq was making you do something. You didn’t know what it meant. And suddenly, you heard bash on the locked door. Your parents came barging in. You were taken away to another room. Your mother was sobbing, wailing, as you stood

mentally. Just 10 more minutes and it’ll settle our lives forever.”

“Amma,” cried Omar, “I’ll find a new job. I’ll make it up to you. Please make me forget, Amma. Just this once, I beg you.”

“How can you be so selfish!” his father shouted. “You’re a dead man walking anyway. Can’t you give us something in life before you leave us forever?”

With bloodshot eyes, Omar stared at his father, flinching in fury.

“We know about your plan, Omar,” said his father. “We found your note—the one you’ve been writing for over a month now.”

Omar stood there as the commercial break ended and the crew brought him back on stage. He saw his mother trying to say something to him, but he couldn’t hear her. Back on stage, Omar couldn’t hear the host or the audience. When the question popped back up on the screen, he answered:

“Reality.”

The crowd burst into a loud scream. He had won the hundred million.

Omar waited two months after that—hoping, praying that his parents would confront him about the note. They didn’t.

He never finished writing it.

Omar’s contemplation came true. The night before his 35th birthday, Omar made sure he never made it to 35.

Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti is a writer and an engineering graduate. Reach him at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com.

POETRY

The whirring

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

“What will come out of all this?”
The day starts with the devil flying overhead,
the whirring of its wings piercing the light,
Burning my ears;
A sky not so still,
Look out for the death coming out of the black
clouds
The heat thickens,
The blood irrigation sickens the soil
The farmers’ plants grow over his body as the ants
take shelter
In the holes of his torso carved out by the metal
shards
What are we now, if not the person we see in still
water?
What do you see in the floating redness? Beyond
the murk?
Anger?
Hatred?
Fear.
My hands won’t even move when the tap water
scalds it
My eyes aren’t fixed anywhere in this fluctuating
blur
My foot is over a flower I’ve planted. What will
come out of all of this? This night that ends with
the clockwork of a disposable pillow,
And the restless turning of the diseased for a
change of temperature Something to quicken the
way the wheel in my mind spins
Something to forget the way the night swallows
our sweat
Someone gets muffled when the owls take flight
in silence
When the world eats another cold body. The night
ends
Eventually, but this turbulence is constant. So
constant.
I’m looking straight at the blooming sun
From the corner of my house, all while I feel a
monster
Outside my door. I’m looking at the light that
brightens a prison.
Something faint, yet warm. Resilient. Brave.
Something that catches onto me and tells me to
believe
Something to lie to, lies that await to emerge
from the next dawn, uncountable in number,
Undefeatable
Something,
Anything,
That makes us feel safer in our body than we are.

Shaikh Sabik Kamal exists. Ask him stuff at wolvesandwalls77@gmail.com.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

Silence, our witness

NUBISHA RABYA TOPOTE

This cracked, restless earth beneath our feet—
granules of memory grinding,
pulling us down, step by step,
until the skin of the world splits open,
and we bleed into its soil—
not as strangers, but as something waiting.
When the bones turn brittle, and names fade like
smoke,
maybe then we’ll grasp
that this dirt was all we ever owned—
no other universe, no second chances.
But by then, silence will be the only witness,
and understanding will come as dust—
too late to hold,
too late to speak.

Nubisha Rabya Topote, a class 10 student at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, is a budding poet who finds inspiration in every opportunity to write. Find more of her work @nubishawrites.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

As the game progressed, the questions dug deeper into his brain—into places he hadn’t explored in a long time. Sexual perversions, self-harming thoughts, deepest insecurities, and hidden embarrassments—the machine made it extremely difficult for Omar to continue.



Imranur wins on return, Sumaiya edges Shirin

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER

Imranur Rahman and Sumaiya Dewan once again emerged as the country's fastest man and woman respectively on an eventful first day of the three-day 17th Summer Athletics Championship, which also witnessed two new national records yesterday.

Fit again Imranur of Bangladesh Navy, who returned to the track for the first time since his participation in last year's the Paris Olympics, clocked 10.64 seconds in men's 100 metres sprint to finish ahead of second-placed Md Abdul Motalab of Bangladesh Army (10.86s) while holder Mohammad Ismail won bronze (10.88s) at the National Stadium in Dhaka.

The women's 100m sprint ended in a photo finish, with Sumaiya beating 16-time champion Shirin Akhter by just 0.02 seconds.

Sumaiya clocked 12.19 seconds and Shirin took 12.21 seconds. Behind the two Bangladesh Navy athletes, Bangladesh Army's Sharifa Khatun (12.41s) finished



third.

Some drama ensued after the race however, as Shirin demanded to see the snap of the photo finish, and the commotion delayed the official result announcement by over an hour.

Imranur was far from his best in the meet, as the UK-based athlete finished way below his national record timing of

10.11 seconds. But he was satisfied after claiming his fifth fastest title in his return to domestic competition after over a year.

"This is my comeback race. All I wanted to do is finish the race healthy. I wasn't too concerned about the timing. It's about the victory and just finishing healthy," said Imranur, thanking his new outfit – Bangladesh Navy – for how they

supported his rehabilitation process.

"Of course, there are many events ahead, Islamic games and South Asian games. So, I'm going to take it step by step. I'm going to go back into training, focus on a lot of missed training that I've had over the last six or seven months... Of course, our main focus is to get the gold in South Asian games," said Imranur.

Sumaiya, who was the country's fastest woman in 2021, had to toil hard for four years to regain the title.

"This time I was quite optimistic about winning gold because I worked hard and tried to overcome my shortcomings in finishing," said Sumaiya before thanking her team, coach and her family members.

At the Army Stadium in Banani, Abdul Alim of Bangladesh Army set a national record in discus throw, clearing 46.94 metres to break the previous record of 44.98m, which belonged to Azharul Islam.

Bangladesh Army's Jannat Begum, whose gender identity has caused some controversy, also set a national record in shotput, clearing 13.91 metres. The previous best was 13.52m from Jakia Akhter.

U-17s' hopes of SAFF title take a blow

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered a 2-0 defeat against India in the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship in Thimphu on Friday, leaving their hopes of completing the circle of winning every age-group title in the balance.

The champions of under-16 event last year conceded conceded the opening goal in the 14th minute, goalkeeper Yearzan Begun failing to stop Pearl Fernandes' left-footed shot despite getting her hands to the ball.

Yearzan had come in for Meghla Roy, who had a rather unconvincing outfit against Bhutan, whom Bangladesh had beaten 3-1 in their opening match.

India continued their domination after the break and doubled the lead in the 76th minute when substitute Bonfilia Shullai volleyed home Alisha Lyngdoh's corner.

With one win from two games, Mahbubur Rahman Litu's charges sit second on the table with three points while favourites India are top of the four-team table with six points and a positive goal-difference of nine.

Nepal, too, have three points following their 2-1



win against Bhutan last night but have an inferior goal-difference to Bangladesh's while Bhutan are yet to open their account.

Litu criticised the team for their lacklustre display. "I think the whole team didn't play well today. The midfield and defence couldn't play proper football. We made some mistakes," Litu told media after the match.

"We will scrutinise these mistakes in the practice sessions and Insha'Allah we will bounce back strongly in the next match," the coach added.

SA HUMBLE HOSTS AUSTRALIA

Matthew Breetzke slammed a superb 88 and speedster Lungi Ngidi claimed five wickets as South Africa crushed Australia by 84 runs to win the second ODI and the three-match series 2-0 in Mackay on Friday. Breetzke's 78-ball knock and another 87-ball 74 from Tristan Stubbs helped the Proteas to 277 all out in 49.1 overs before Ngidi's five for 42 saw the visitors bundle out Australia for 193 in 37.4 overs.

» Only once previously have Australia been bundled out for under 200 in four consecutive ODIs at home, dating back to 2009.

» Australia have just one win in their last eight completed ODIs.

» Breetzke became only the second batter to go past 50 in each of his first four ODI innings -- after India's Navjot Singh Sidhu, who did that during the 1987 World Cup.

» South Africa have now won eight of the last 10 bilateral ODI series against Australia, including each of the last five. They have won 17 of the last 21 completed head-to-head ODIs.



PHOTO: AFP

Napoli start Scudetto defence with striker shortage

AGENCIES

Napoli's Serie A title defence begins under a cloud as striker Romelu Lukaku has been ruled out indefinitely ahead of Saturday's opener at Sassuolo.

The 32-year-old sustained a serious thigh injury in a friendly against Olympiacos and may need surgery, the club confirmed Monday. With reports suggesting Lukaku could be sidelined until November, coach Antonio Conte faces a striker shortage. Lorenzo Lucca appears the only option to lead the line and benefit from the creativity of Kevin De Bruyne and Scott McTominay.

Even if Conte's side flop on Saturday, titles are never won or lost on the opening day -- Napoli lost 3-0 at Hellas Verona last season but went on to claim the Scudetto.

Inter Milan also begin a new era on Monday as Cristian Chivu replaces Simone Inzaghi, who



departed after four years. Despite the coaching change, Inter retain much of last season's squad, which reached the Champions League final and finished Serie A runners-up. Chivu has pledged to give youth opportunities, yet veterans such as goalkeeper Yann Sommer and strikers Marcus Thuram and Lautaro Martinez will lead, with Francesco Pio Esposito waiting in the wings.

Inter could further strengthen if Atalanta's Ademola Lookman completes his transfer, giving

Chivu one of the league's most potent attacks. His challenge will be moulding that talent into consistent goals.

At AC Milan, Massimiliano Allegri's second stint has begun steadily. Their 2-0 Coppa Italia win over Bari showed the strength of a midfield featuring Christian Pulisic, Luka Modric, Ardon Jashari, and Youssouf Fofana. With no injury concerns, Allegri's success hinges on how he shapes that unit both defensively and offensively. Saturday's clash with promoted Cremonese will test the system.

Juventus, meanwhile, turn to Igor Tudor, known for his aggressive style, to restore discipline and ambition. His first test comes Sunday at home against Parma. With uncertainty over Dusan Vlahovic and Douglas Luiz, Tudor may rely on Jonathan David, backed by young talents Kenan Yildiz and Francisco Conceicao.

Join a Legacy of Excellence Career Opportunity as Head of Procurement Division at Jamuna Bank PLC.



Jamuna Bank PLC, one of the Bangladesh's leading private commercial Banks, is seeking a visionary and highly accomplished professional to serve as Head of Procurement Division—a pivotal leadership role responsible for overseeing all purchasing activities, including IT equipment, machineries, furniture and other essential items required for the Bank's operations across all Divisions and Branches. This strategic role demands strong expertise in procurement management, vendor negotiations, contract administration, compliance with regulatory requirements and driving cost-effective purchasing decisions while ensuring quality and timely delivery.

Key Responsibilities

- Lead the Procurement Division and establish an efficient, transparent and compliant procurement framework for the Bank.
- Formulate and implement Bank-wide procurement policies, strategies and standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Manage the procurement of IT equipment, machinery, furniture, office supplies and all other goods and services required by the Bank.
- Develop and maintain vendor panels, evaluate supplier performance and ensure competitive bidding processes.
- Negotiate high-value contracts, ensuring cost optimization, quality assurance and risk mitigation.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable rules, regulations and internal control policies.
- Advise the Managing Director & CEO and the Board of Directors on procurement strategies, supplier partnerships and contract governance.
- Drive automation and digitalization in procurement processes to improve efficiency and transparency.
- Foster ethical procurement practices and a culture of accountability and integrity.

Educational & Professional Qualifications

- Master's degree in Supply Chain Management, Finance, Engineering or a related field from a reputed institution (no third division/class in any examination).
- Professional certifications in Procurement or Supply Chain Management (e.g., CPSM, CIPS, CSCP, PMP, Lean Six Sigma) are highly desirable.
- Strong knowledge of local and international procurement regulations, banking sector compliance requirements and vendor management best practices.

Experience Requirements

- Minimum 15 years of progressive experience in procurement, supply chain or related functions, including at least 5 years in a senior leadership role.
- Proven track record of managing high-value procurement in banking, financial institutions or large corporates.
- Hands-on experience in vendor negotiations, contract management and procurement automation.
- Demonstrated ability to build and lead a centralized procurement function.

Compensation & Benefits

- Comprehensive benefits package as per Bank policy.

Application Procedure

- Interested candidates are requested to apply with their CV to career@jamunabank.com.bd clearly mentioning the subject line i.e. "Head of Procurement" along with a recent passport-sized photograph (maximum 30 KB) by 30 August, 2025.
- Age Limit: 50 years (may be relaxed for exceptionally qualified candidates).
- Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for the next stage of the recruitment process.



4 of family killed as covered van overturns onto car in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Four members of a family were killed yesterday afternoon when a container-laden lorry overturned onto their private car on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Cumilla's Paduar Bazar Bishwa Road area.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Omar Ali, 80; his wife Nurjahan Begum, 70; and their sons Abul Hashem, 52, and Abul Kashem, 47. They hailed from Hossainpur in Barura upazila of Cumilla.

Two firefighting units rushed to the spot and carried out a rescue operation, which ended around 1:50pm, said Mir Mohammad Maruf, station officer of Cumilla Sadar South Fire Station.

The accident occurred around 12:30pm when the lorry lost control, overturned, and crushed the private car before hitting a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, said Anisur Rahman, sub-inspector of Mainamati Crossing Highway Police Station.

He added that the accident took place when the private car was taking

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Hazera Khatun, 78, mother of BNP leader Sajedul Islam Sumon, who has been missing since 2013, grabs the hand of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, *not in frame*, and burst into tears. Fakhru was about to get on stage at an event of Mayer Daak, a platform of the families of the forcibly disappeared, in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Sohan, Saif return as Bangladesh name Asia Cup squad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wicketkeeper-batter Nurul Hasan Sohan and top-order batter Saif Hassan on Friday were included in Bangladesh's squad for the upcoming Asia Cup, set to be played in the UAE from September 9-28.

The 16-member squad, announced by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), will also represent the Tigers in the three-match T20I home series against the Netherlands, to be played in Sylhet as a tune-up to the Asia Cup, from August 30 to September 3.

Sohan is currently leading the Bangladesh 'A' side, also involving Saif, in the Top End T20 Series in Australia. They will join the Tigers, who are currently in Sylhet for an ongoing practice camp, after their last game in Australia against Adelaide Strikers Academy today.

Sohan earned a place in the squad after almost three years, his last appearance for Bangladesh coming during the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia.

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SQUAD
Liton Das (Captain), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain Emon, Saif Hassan, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Nasum Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Sakib, Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Mohammad Saifuddin

Nasa finds a new moon around Uranus

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa's Webb telescope has found a new moon around Uranus.

The tiny object is only about 10 kilometres wide and is the 29th addition to the family of moons around the planet.

Scientists think it was able to hide for so long not only because of its small size but also its relative faintness. That meant it could lay undiscovered during other observations, such as Voyager 2, which flew past the planet around 40 years ago.

There could many other of the objects lying in wait around the planet, still undiscovered, researchers suggest.

"No other planet has as many small inner moons as Uranus, and their complex inter-relationships with the rings hint at a chaotic history that blurs the boundary between a ring system and a system of moons," said Matthew Tiscareno of the SETI Institute, a member of the research team, in a statement.

"Moreover, the new moon is smaller and much fainter than the smallest of the previously known inner moons, making it likely that even more complexity remains to be discovered."

All of the moons around Uranus are named after characters from Shakespeare and Alexandra Pope. The new one is part of a system that orbits inside the largest moons Miranda, Ariel, Umbriel, Titania, and Oberon, for instance.

Crimes against Rohingyas continue with impunity

Volker Türk says Myanmar's military, Arakan Army to blame

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk has said both the military and the Arakan Army have committed and continue to commit serious atrocities against the Rohingyas with impunity.

This is "flagrant violation of international law, including the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice," he said in a statement in Geneva yesterday.

The statement comes ahead of eighth anniversary of the Rohingya influx when about 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Since 2023 when the military and Arakan Army conflicts flared up in Rakhine, about two lakh more fled to Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



Onion and veggie prices dip, fish stay costly

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of locally grown onions have started to fall in Dhaka, as Bangladesh has resumed importing the kitchen staple from India after a long break.

Meanwhile, vegetable prices have slightly eased after a sharp rise over the past two to three weeks. However, the high prices of fish, meat, and eggs remain unchanged.

Visits to several markets in the capital over the past two days, including Karwan Bazar, Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur, and Mirpur-11, along with traders' accounts, reflect this trend.



Last week, the price of local onions in the capital's markets ranged between Tk 80 and Tk 90 per kilogramme. As of yesterday, the price had fallen to Tk 70-80 per kilogramme, depending on the market.

Notably, the price of local onions started to rise a couple of weeks ago after being sold at Tk 50-60 per kilogramme last month.

Sajib Sheikh, a wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, told The Daily Star yesterday night that onions imported from India arrived in the market last Monday. As a result, traders and farmers

have started releasing their stock of local onions, which mainly led to a drop of Tk 6-7 per kilogramme in the wholesale price of local onions.

Yesterday, the wholesale price of local onions stood at Tk 64-72 per kg, down from Tk 70-77 per kg last week. Indian onions are being sold wholesale at Tk 68-69 per kg, while the retail price of Indian onions was Tk 75-80 per kg.

Marjina Begum, a resident of Banani who shops for onions, garlic, potatoes, and other essentials at Karwan Bazar every Friday, said compared to last week, prices seemed a bit lower

Last week, the price of local onions in Dhaka's markets ranged between Tk 80 and Tk 90 per kilogramme. As of yesterday, the price had fallen to Tk 70-80 per kilo, depending on the market.

this week. "But there is no reason to feel relieved, because prices can go up anytime," she said. "I don't understand the market. Many times, you see prices go down by Tk 5, and the following week they shoot up by Tk 10," she added.

Homemaker Pinky Begum, a resident of Green Road, said she found onions, potatoes, and garlic were selling at Tk 80, 25, and 170 per kilo, respectively, in her area yesterday. She then went to Karwan Bazar and bought the same products at Tk 70, 18, and 140 per kilo.

"When I come to Karwan Bazar, I usually buy

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6

'MISUSE OF STATE FUNDS' Sri Lanka's former president arrested

REUTERS, Colombo

Former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who led the country during a devastating 2019-2024 economic crisis, was arrested and appeared in court yesterday over allegations he misused state funds while in office, police said.

Wickremesinghe, 76, who lost power in a 2024 election, had been investigated over a visit he made to London to attend his wife's graduation ceremony, local media reported.

Police confirmed his arrest for alleged misuse of public funds.

"Former President Ranil Wickremesinghe has been arrested and produced in court. We are awaiting the court directive to decide what further steps need to be taken," a police spokesperson said.

Wickremesinghe's office did not respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

An ally from his United National Party (UNP) proclaimed his innocence and suggested the case

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Ranil Wickremesinghe



Sacks full of plastic materials await recycling at a yard in Showari Ghat in Old Dhaka. While recycling helps get rid of some plastic from the environment, the yard being in the middle of a residential area causes many locals to suffer. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Bibhuranjan Sarker (1954-2025)

A life in print ends in tragedy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the body of veteran journalist Bibhuranjan Sarker from the Meghna river in Munshiganj.

The 71-year-old left home saying he was going to his office a day earlier and had been missing since then.

Bibhuranjan, a senior assistant editor at Bangla daily Ajker Patrika, around 9:15am on Thursday emailed an article to bdnews24.com. The online news publisher said that in the footnote, he wrote, "You may publish this as my last piece of writing in life."

Bdnews24 published the article, titled "Khola Chithi" (Open Letter), yesterday afternoon.

The letter reflected on his life, struggles, and disappointments over five decades in journalism.

He wrote that throughout his career, he stood for truth, justice,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Gendaria fire claims son's life; parents critically hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A house fire in Dhaka's Gendaria early yesterday killed a 28-year-old man, while his parents remain in critical condition with severe burn injuries.

The deceased, Mezbah Uddin, succumbed to his injuries around 1:00pm while undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, said Dr Sultan Mahmud of the institute.

He had suffered burns to 100 percent of his body, the physician said.

Mezbah's father, Moslem Uddin, 65, and mother, Salma Begum, 50, are battling for their lives with burns on 90 percent and 55 percent of their bodies, respectively.

The fire broke out around 2:00am in an apartment on the second floor of the building.

According to Hasan Ali, station officer of Sutrapur Fire Station, neighbours rushed the three victims to the hospital before firefighters

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PHOTOS: RAJIB RAIHAN, PRABIR DAS, PALASH KHAN

OF BOOKSTORES & reading clubs

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

Reading for pure enjoyment, for relaxation, for the suspense and thrill of the plot is an experience we have practically forgotten. Getting back to the pages of an unread novel, lying by your bedside for months, is indeed a great thing.

Recently, I visited a bookstore (about which I will elaborate later) and saw a man in his fifties reading a novel, a woman of the same age group reading while sipping coffee right next to him, teenagers browsing through Bangla classics -- everyone engrossed in a fictional world, where the characters were solely for their pleasure.

It was truly an encouraging moment for me. Middle age is a tough phase of life, when all sorts of responsibilities, relationship liabilities, and work-related frustrations tire you out. And in this dog eat dog kind of societal pressure, life is nothing short of a ruthless and competitive survival game. We miss out on the undemanding happiness of life, such as reading a novel.

COME BACK TO BOOKS, INSTEAD!
Our book-reading habit has been replaced by scrolling through half-baked

knowledge of what's going on around me. Instead, I rely on these misinformed posts and statuses to keep me updated with current affairs. Unfortunately, ignorant people like me thrive in the World Wide Web's virtual world that is faux in any actual realm.

I was brought back to my senses by a Zen practitioner, whose mindfulness showed me my tethered ties with the factual, physical world. Thus, my visit to this wonderful bookstore called Batighor, in Eskaton, where I realised Dhaka was reading -- especially older men and women of my age group, and after office hours at that.

It is such a brilliant way to unwind and give yourself some me-time. Taking a break should not be only eating out with friends. Reading or being in a bookstore is a better choice to enjoy leisure, wouldn't you agree?

NONFICTION AND FICTION
I think there is a stronger pull towards nonfiction, then classic fiction and new fiction. In these politically charged times, staying updated on world affairs is the natural demand of current times.

Niladri Ghosh, manager, Marketing and Communication at Batighor, informs that the demography of people



director of The University Press Limited (UPL), expresses that people favour nonfiction to make sense of complex issues. The diverse range of nonfiction -- from biographies and memoirs to science and nature writing, self-help, and career development -- allows readers to gain a deeper appreciation for

case, one of the most discussed and important cases in the history of Bangladesh, provided an outline of what the relationship of the judiciary with the government and public administration should be. The book is a Bangla translation of the judgment. It reached the book fair on the last leg of the fair,

sales patterns to determine the top ten books or give us any idea about what people are reading," she says.

According to Mahrukh, bookstore displays and presentations -- or window dressings -- are very important. "A well-displayed book attracts good sales, but in our bookstores, the imported foreign books are put on proper display while our Bangla publications are neglected. It may be something to do with financial profit implications. A publisher is not involved in direct sales; it is done by the bookstores, so we do not know whether the readers are collecting it or not. We can just say about individual book sales through reprint orders," she explains.

"Top ten sales lists or top ten bestsellers' lists are not justified in my opinion. I feel that an author's family or friend can buy 50 copies of his book. That spikes up the sales but does not give an actual picture of it being a market hit or not," adds Niladri.

Bookstores cater to the needs of the customers, and having a proper bookstore or reading café in every residential community is very important.

Exploring diverse narratives and viewpoints, cultures, historical periods, and social issues shapes your intellectual and personal development. Our thoughts, perspectives, and ultimately ourselves are influenced by books and reading materials we engage with.

A PRINTED BOOK ANYTIME, PLEASE!

Dhaka has a handful of bookstores where you can enjoy reading; however, the city misses a structured book club, even though such clubs exist in an informal and personal setting. So, bookstores are what readers rely on.

I love to see schoolchildren in uniforms browsing through books in a bookstore; it lifts my positive energy. In this time when children are immersed in electronic and digital content, it is a reassurance that the core "porua janogoshiti", or reader demographic -- starting from early teen years till the end of their university days -- still opt for the physical act of holding a book.

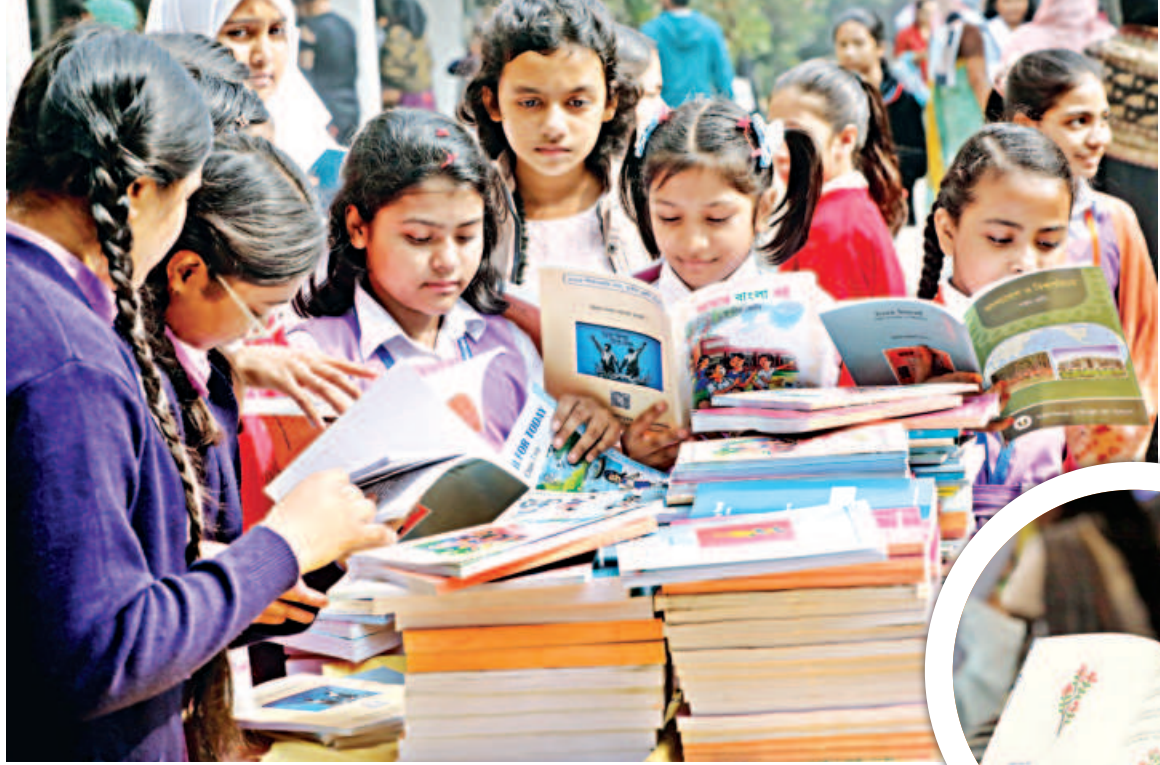
A book in your hand has a psychological impact; the feel and smell of the paper, the act of turning pages, and the graphics can all contribute to a more immersive reading experience.

"A physical book can create a stronger emotional connection and improve memory retention compared to reading on a screen, where the temptation of infinite scrolling and distractions is hard to resist. In my understanding, there is an obvious shift in attitude, exposure, demands, and in reader's attention span.

"We had the leisure to read because we did not have this much access to information. Besides, today's kid has no pastime habits because they have an immense amount of performance pressure," she explains.

Books were an essential part of our upbringing. It is said that the characteristics of a reading audience have changed due to device use and e-books, but the act of holding a book and reading is therapeutic.

And, as the saying goes, you are what you read.



the world around them.

UPL specialises in books, journals, academic, history, biography, poetry, juvenile fiction, and more.

"From our experience, I can say that a well-written nonfiction book with compelling narratives and thought-provoking ideas can be just as engaging as any fiction. Our publication on the Masdar Hossain

and it was in reprint within a month and a half after the fair ended. It just shows how much nonfiction interests people," Mahrukh explains.

"Books like Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798), Muldhara 71 by Moidul Hasan on the Liberation War and Language Movement, and Baby's development in the first 1000 days by Selina Husna Banu are always in reprint. They have steady sales throughout the year. Sadly, there is no proper data on

opinions that armchair intellectuals post on their social media handles or listening to them babble nonsensical stories about our present realities.

In my opinion, the world wide web can be a den of misinformation and disinformation. Anyone can challenge your understanding of any socio-political issue, cultural trend, or historical event with their hypothetical version of the subject and influence you to believe it as the truth.

Social media content cannot be regarded as truly informed reading. I, too, am one of those people with impulsive opinions on pressing issues, be they political or social. I have zero

visiting their store is from 35 to 70 years, along with teenagers and school children. Adults read nonfiction mostly, while teenagers opt for popular bestsellers and fiction.

"Reading nonfiction has gained momentum for a while now, simply because people want to learn, expand their knowledge, and gain insights into the world around them -- mostly to understand, through the experiences and expertise of others, different perspectives on politics, wars, and current affairs," says Niladri.

Aligning with Ghosh's observation, Mahrukh Mohiuddin, managing





Where have all the squirrels gone?

An orange-bellied Himalayan squirrel leaps between trees in Rangamati's Kaptai National Park. Found across Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and China, this arboreal rodent is herbivorous and known for its agility. Its dark or reddish-brown fur contrasts with its striking orange belly, making it one of the region's most colourful squirrels. Usually solitary except in breeding season, its numbers are dwindling due to deforestation. The IUCN lists the species as "Near Threatened."

PHOTO: NOBEL CHAKMA



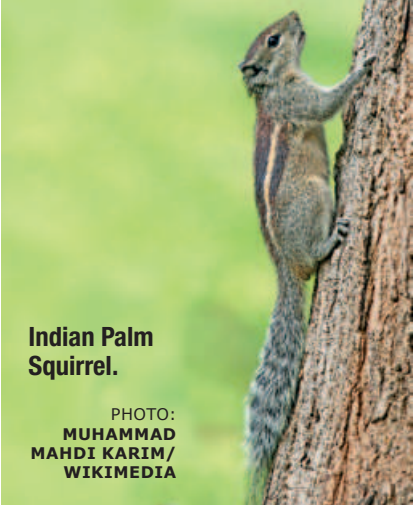
Squirrels are sensitive indicators of ecosystem health. If they're declining, it signals that something has gone wrong at the very foundation.

AFRINA MOMOTAJ

Once, the rooftops, orchards, and gardens of Bangladesh stirred with the restless energy of squirrels. They darted through mango and jackfruit trees, their striped bodies flickering like quicksilver among the leaves. Children watched in delight as they leapt from branch to branch, while elders placed offerings of rice in clay pots for their tiny guests.

The Indian palm squirrel (*Funambulus palmarum*), with its three pale stripes and plume-like tail, was more than just a familiar sight. It was a gardener of the wild—scattering seeds, carrying pollen, and sounding alarm calls that rippled through the village fauna. Yet, slowly and silently, these bright-eyed creatures are slipping away. Their absence is not loud or sudden, but like the fading of a season, it unsettles the balance of nature itself.

"Squirrels are sensitive indicators of ecosystem health. If they're declining, it signals that something has gone wrong at the very foundation," laments



Indian Palm Squirrel.

PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MAHDI KARIM / WIKIMEDIA

Dr Tareque Hasan, Wildlife Ecologist at Dhaka University.

Why are the squirrels disappearing?

1. Choking on pollution

Pesticides sprayed on crops and gardens do more than kill pests—they poison food chains. Squirrels, who nibble on

fruits, seeds, and even bark, often ingest these toxins directly or accumulate them over time. Meanwhile, air pollution from vehicles and brick kilns has been linked to respiratory stress in small mammals.

2. Loss of trees, loss of homes

Squirrels nest in tree hollows, dense foliage, and even thatched roofs. But with urbanisation and deforestation speeding up across Bangladesh, their habitats are disappearing. Fruit trees are cut down to make room for concrete. Old trees are replaced with fast-growing, non-native species that lack suitable nesting spaces. The few remaining trees are often isolated, pruned, or sprayed with chemicals, making them inhospitable to wildlife.

3. Noise and human disturbance

Construction noise, fireworks, loudspeakers, and unregulated tourism in natural spaces all take a toll. Squirrels are skittish by nature—when stress becomes chronic, their reproductive rates drop, and young fail to survive. Even something as innocent

as a curious child chasing a squirrel up a tree can disrupt its feeding or nesting cycle if repeated often enough.

4. Predation and road Accidents

With shrinking green spaces, squirrels are forced to forage on the ground, putting them in the path of feral cats, dogs, and speeding vehicles. Roadkill incidents involving squirrels are quietly increasing across urban fringes.

What can we do—before it's too late?

Individuals

- Plant native trees like jackfruit, mango, banyan, and coconut, species that squirrels prefer.
- Avoid harmful chemicals in your garden. Use natural pesticides or permaculture methods.
- Leave food: Rice grains, fruit peels, or nuts can help squirrels thrive in safe spots.
- Teach children to observe—not chase or catch—wildlife.

Communities & policymakers

- Create urban green corridors with squirrel-friendly trees.

- Include small mammal conservation in biodiversity and forestry policies.
- Install eco-bridges or canopy ropes over roads in squirrel-dense zones.
- Launch public awareness campaigns using schools and media.

A future without squirrels?

Can you imagine a forest without rustling leaves? A morning without tiny feet scampering across your roof? A tree without a nest tucked inside its arms?

The squirrel is not just a symbol of nature—it is a thread in its fabric. If we let that thread break, we risk unraveling the entire tapestry.

So, the next time you see a squirrel, take a moment. Watch it. Protect it. Celebrate it.

Because if we don't, one day our children may ask, "Where have all the squirrels gone?"

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

How Dhaka's rickshaw pullers bear a hidden health toll

YSTIAQUE AHMED

At dawn, when Dhaka is just beginning to stir, thousands of rickshaw pullers set off on their daily grind. Their cycle rickshaws ferry millions across the capital each day, keeping the city moving. Yet these human engines of Dhaka's transportation system endure a punishing existence: inhaling toxic air, labouring under searing heat, and driving their bodies to exhaustion. Behind their contribution to urban life lies a silent health crisis that goes largely unseen, unheard, and unaddressed.

From rural roots to urban struggle

Most rickshaw pullers are rural migrants, drawn to Dhaka by poverty, displacement, or the hope of a better life. With little education or training, rickshaw pulling becomes one of the few options for survival. According to Ariful Islam Nadim, General Secretary of the Rickshaw, Van, Easy Bike Labourer Union, the city is home to nearly one million

Poisoned air

Dhaka consistently ranks among the most polluted cities in the world. For rickshaw pullers, who spend 10–12 hours a day exposed to traffic fumes, the risks are severe.

Dr Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder, of Stamford University's Department of Environmental Science, describes them as "among the top two or three most vulnerable groups in Dhaka." He notes that migration to the city results in health deterioration by 77 percent, and with age, rickshaw pullers lose up to 50 percent of their lung capacity.

Body in strain

Rickshaw pulling is physically gruelling. Prolonged exertion under extreme heat leaves pullers at risk of dehydration, heatstroke, and musculoskeletal disorders. A 2021 survey by Prime Asia University, led by Dr Rumana Rashid, found that nearly half of rickshaw pullers suffered from joint pain, 46 percent from headaches, and over 40 percent from fever.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS / THE DAILY STAR

the Rickshaw, Van, Easy Bike Labourer Union recalls, "Before July of last year, our members were under constant attack, lawsuits, and extortion by political leaders. These problems are returning, and we are powerless to resist. The government must bring these workers under regulation."

Searching for solutions

Despite the bleakness, there are glimmers of hope.

The Labour Reform Commission, meanwhile, is pushing to extend labour protections to the informal sector, while union leaders continue to demand formal recognition. "Without legal coverage, rickshaw pullers will remain trapped in exploitation," stresses Nasim.

Dr Kamruzzaman suggests creating dedicated lanes for non-motorised vehicles to reduce occupational hazards. He stresses the need for licensing, training, and health support systems. "Policies are meaningless without implementation," he warns.

Dr Rashid recalls a low-cost nutritional innovation developed during her tenure at the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research: a powdered vegetable mix designed for labourers like rickshaw pullers and garment workers. Though the project stalled, she urges the food industry to revisit such ideas to improve workers' diets.

An invisible crisis

Rickshaw pullers embody resilience. They power Dhaka's daily life, yet remain invisible in its policy landscape. Their labour builds the city's mobility, but their bodies and health are left to crumble.

Dhaka's air poisons their lungs. Heat batters their strength. Poverty robs them nutrition. And the state denies them protection.

If Bangladesh is serious about inclusive development, it cannot afford to overlook this silent health emergency. Recognising rickshaw pullers as workers, extending legal coverage, ensuring access to healthcare, and investing in nutrition are not acts of charity—they are matters of justice.

Ystiaque Ahmed works at The Daily Star.

Only 38 percent manage to drink more than three litres of water daily, and access to clean water remains a privilege rather than a right.



auto-rickshaw and 60,000–80,000 paddle rickshaw pullers.

Their battle is not only against Dhaka's chaotic traffic but also against broken bodies, empty stomachs, and a system that refuses to acknowledge them.

Only 38 percent manage to drink more than three litres of water daily, and access to clean water remains a privilege rather than a right.

Dr Rashid adds: As they age, they cannot work the same hours, so the family loses

even the bare minimum security. Out of desperation, they return to the streets, and the cycle of suffering continues.

Unable to cope with relentless physical strain, many turn to tobacco, alcohol, or other stimulants—short-term escapes from long-term misery.

Poverty and Malnutrition

Malnutrition and poverty form a vicious trap. Rickshaw pullers often subsist on rice with vegetables or curry, with eggs a couple of times a week and meat perhaps once.

Take the story of 75-year-old Md Shiraj, who has been pulling rickshaws for 35 years around Motijheel. Earning Tk 500–600 a day, he eats twice daily and suffers from untreated abdominal disease. Yet, he continues to pedal, compelled by duty to provide for his family.

Surveys confirm that their dietary habits remain dominated by rice, with little nutritional diversity. Spending long hours on the streets, many fall back on cheap junk food, further compromising their health. Excluded from formal healthcare, they often rely on pharmacies, while preventable diseases—

diarrhoea, hepatitis, and other infections—spread unchecked.

Trapped by exploitation

Beyond health, economic exploitation further weakens rickshaw pullers' lives. Many rent their vehicles from garages under exploitative terms. "The garage rental system is one-sided," says AKM Nasim, Country Director of the Labour Law Institute and member of the Labour Reform Commission. "The rates are fixed by garage owners, and pullers have no say. If they cannot pay, they lose their rickshaw."

Abandoned by the system

Perhaps the most brutal aspect of this crisis is the absence of protection. Rickshaw pullers fall outside Bangladesh's 2006 Labour Law, which covers only the formal sector. As Nasim points out, "Like 85 percent of informal workers, rickshaw pullers have no legal safeguards. Policymakers ignore them because their economic contribution is undervalued and they lack political representation."

Even their unions face repression. Nadim of

“BANGLADESH’S GREATEST ASSET IS ITS PEOPLE; its greatest failure is not investing in them”

In conversation with Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman—eminent social thinker, researcher, and Executive Chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), as well as a former Adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh—who shares his insights on the colonial legacies of governance, the dynamics of Bangladesh’s economic transformation, and the challenges of building human resources. The discussion draws on themes from his recently published book, *Orthoniti, Shason O Khamota* (Economy, Governance and Power).

The Daily Star (TDS): You argue that Bangladesh’s governance still carries the colonial legacy of ‘executive despotism’, where real power lies in the authority to punish. Could you elaborate on this?

Hossain Zillur Rahman (HZR): What I often stress is that despite reforms, the core issue lies in the sociology of administration. Our default tendency is executive despotism, centralising power in the executive. The authority to punish outweighs policy making, as police and magistracy embody state power. Colonial rule entrenched this pattern, and it persists despite constitutional or institutional changes. Before British rule, the Mughal Empire expanded by granting local rulers a degree of autonomy. Rather than displacing existing power structures, the Mughals positioned themselves as overlords while allowing local governance to continue largely unchanged. They delegated responsibilities—such as tax collection, policing and administration of justice—to zamindars. Only in cases of serious injustice could subjects appeal



Hossain Zillur Rahman

directly to the emperor. This approach ensured that local governance structures remained intact under Mughal rule. But the British, while initially considering a Mughal-style overlordship, particularly under Warren Hastings, changed course. They did not want local rulers to retain all three pillars of authority: tax collection, judicial power, and policing. So, they let the zamindars collect taxes but stripped them of judicial and police powers. They introduced separate judicial systems. Even before that, they restricted zamindars from having their own law enforcement agents. Instead, in 1792, they established the *daroga* system—the first institutional pillar of British imperial power. The daroga (police officer) became a tool of the colonial state. The British took a sociological approach to staffing the police. They appointed police officers from lower social classes—not the elite or zamindar class—to avoid creating rivals for zamindars within their own social strata. This had two effects: first, these lower-class officers had an inferiority complex in front of the zamindars, and second, they were given a sense of state-backed authority. They were told: “Even if you are from a lower class, you are now part of state power.” Gradually, this led to a shift: the police no longer acted as subordinates to the zamindars. Over time, the daroga stopped being obedient to the local elite and aligned instead with the colonial state. This is how a colonial state systematically built its loyal institutions and left behind a structure that, even today, remains largely unchanged. Similarly, they reduced the *Kazi*, who used to be a judge, to just a marriage registrar. In other words, the British separated economic, judicial, and policing powers, but for their own benefit, they kept judicial and police powers combined under the office of the magistrate. From then on, the judicial structure was such that the district judge and magistrate had combined authority, but especially the criminal part remained very tightly under



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Employment-friendly strategies must take centre stage. Expanding opportunities requires strong human resources, a supportive business environment, and coherent policy frameworks—not vague rhetoric. Investing in people today ensures a future where the country’s youth can contribute productively to society and the economy.

administrative control. Civil matters, however, were treated differently. Over time, the sessions judge position was created. In 1860, further structuring occurred. But what is most interesting is that the criminal powers remained consolidated and close to administration. On the other hand, civil matters were arranged in such a way that justice became a drawn-out, unpredictable process, riddled with corruption. These outcomes were deliberately built into the system. Essentially, the colonial system did two things. Firstly, it granted judges broad discretionary powers in criminal cases, enabling the police and criminal justice system to align with the interests of the colonial state. Secondly, in civil cases, it allowed similar discretionary authority, giving judges the freedom to interpret rules as they saw fit—sometimes ruling that “this is missing,” and at other times concluding that “this is acceptable.” There was an attempt in the 1850s to formalise judicial knowledge as a guiding factor. But through the CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code), all space for judicial innovation was closed off. In the colonial system, only what was written was allowed.

In summary, criminal powers were kept tightly controlled by the administration, while civil powers were made ineffective, lengthy, and costly, with corruption often as an inevitable by-product—where grand words about justice were abundant but true justice was hard to achieve. And the costs? Always guaranteed. The results? Uncertain. I describe it like this—certainty of expense, uncertainty of results. Unfortunately, despite the ending of colonial rule, this particular legacy continues with a vengeance even in post-July Bangladesh. The hard truth is that we still cannot break that basic model, even after the so-called separation of the judiciary following the much-referenced Masdar Hossain case. Even now, look at this whole magistracy structure. Why are positions like the chief metropolitan magistrate still so powerful? It is the same old model.

TDS: How do you see Bangladesh’s economic journey, and what future do you foresee amid the uncertainty?

HZR: There were many aspects to the transformation of the economy. Previously, it consisted of poorly linked series of local economies, but now the Bangladesh economy has become an integrated national economy, with the process particularly accelerating from the late 1980s. That is one major shift. We are also now increasingly connected to the global economy.

After this transition to an integrated national economy, new enablers emerged. For example, the feeder roads from villages to cities played a huge role.

Microcredit reached places it had never reached before, and people started using it to build livelihoods on different bases. The rise of remittances also depended on feeder roads—without those roads, remittances would not have been possible, because people could not easily get to those places. Their connections abroad helped this process. Primary education also played a role. At least a minimum level of literacy was achieved. And health improvements, such as the reduction in child mortality thanks to oral saline solutions, reduced women’s reproductive burden. Earlier a woman might have had seven children, now it is around three or four, sometimes two or three. This freed up time for women, allowing them to engage in economic activities supported by microloans.



However, despite these positive changes, we remain stuck in a particular phase—we are still operating within a low-wage economic model. Key growth sectors like the ready-made garments industry continue to rely on cheap labour as their primary competitive advantage. The same applies to remittance earnings, which are also driven by low-skilled, low-paid migrant work. As a result, our overall competitiveness is tied to inexpensive labour, preventing us from transitioning to the next phases of development.

TDS: What role have people’s resilience and initiative played in Bangladesh’s progress, and how far can this take the country?

HZR: Up to this point, much of the progress has come from the initiative and entrepreneurship of ordinary people. When we talk about change in a country, it often involves grassroots efforts.

Two major events profoundly shaped the collective mindset of the people, but in different directions. The

1971 War of Independence, though rooted in struggle, instilled a deep sense of hope and possibility. In contrast, the 1974 famine exposed the state’s incapacity to protect its citizens, triggering a significant shift in public consciousness. People began to realise that they had to take charge of their own futures and rely on themselves. Where once it was common to believe that fate was pre-written, that belief gradually faded. The new understanding was clear: only through their own effort and hard work could they shape their destinies.

That was a big shift. But this only takes you so far. For further progress, a proper state mechanism and environment are needed. For example, we need quality education, and the current environment of deteriorating law and order cannot take us forward. For these, an effective and enabling state is necessary.

TDS: How do you assess the impact of the shift from an overwhelmingly rural society to rapid urban expansion on the pace and nature of social change in Bangladesh?

HZR: There are a few points here. Transformation has happened, and I believe the time has come for new research—what I call the “new rural.” Earlier, we just had villages; now we have this new rural. This new rural is very important. The villages have partly taken on the characteristics of towns. The people living there have demands similar to urban residents. The types of entertainment are also like those in towns. Community centres have spread widely even in villages.

What does this new rural mean? What is its strength? We need to study its needs. At the same time, when we talk about cities, cities themselves have become multi-layered. Dhaka has a central urban core, but its outskirts and suburbs have taken on different characters. The idea of district towns (mofussil) has also changed; the old notion of mofussil is no longer the same.

Plus, our transportation system has undergone massive changes. Even remote villages now have bus services. Especially in transport, huge changes have created a new reality where village and town have merged in a different way.

Because of this, we need to rethink ideas of economic development. Earlier, we often equated villages with agriculture and towns with industry—backward village, forward town. But now bigger changes are visible, especially in the service sector. The service sector is actually bringing new agricultural possibilities, which need to be explored.

Overall, we must understand Bangladesh as a single country with both new Rural and new urban realities. We must also reconsider agriculture, because agriculture is now a potential driver of future growth. Yet, we still view agriculture as a backward sector

without a future. But there are many ways to build futures here.

The service sector is also vast and multi-layered, ranging from low-level services to very high-quality services. While we do some exports, our domestic market is also huge. Supporting this market properly is essential and necessary.

At the same time, our main resource is human resources. Countries like South Korea have invested heavily in human resources and have become high-income nations. Unfortunately, we do not invest adequately in human resources.

Regrettably, our discussions go around projects endlessly. Any ministry you visit, they have skill development projects. NGOs have them too. But ultimately, we have not been able to establish human resource development as a transformational agenda.

TDS: The Covid-19 pandemic reversed many hard-won gains—pushing millions back into poverty, increasing child marriage, and raising dropout rates. Why did these achievements prove so fragile?

HZR: We have not undertaken genuine institutional reform. What we have achieved are sectoral changes, but these have been superficial and fragile, failing to deliver lasting transformation. Crucially, deeper reforms—such as investing in human resources and restructuring the institutional environment—remain unaddressed. We have also failed to rebuild the vital relationship between the bureaucracy and public service.

As a result, even during this post-July interim government, bureaucratic rule has intensified. Instead of declining as expected after the mass uprising, bureaucratic dominance has doubled within a year. This is a paradox. We have discussed the idea of change politically, but have failed to place institutional reform at the core of that discussion.

TDS: Why do you consider the growth-centric development model to be too narrow to bring meaningful change for the masses?

HZR: Growth-centred thinking will always persist, as it resonates with people’s aspirations for progress and prosperity. Yet, over the past fifteen years of Hasina’s rule, two fatal flaws have marked the growth narrative: it has not been employment-friendly, and it has not been equity-friendly—it has failed to advance poverty alleviation.

What we need is growth, certainly, but we must move beyond debates over whether it is 6% or 10%. The real challenge lies in identifying new drivers of growth. Agriculture, IT, services, and the pharmaceutical industry all hold significant potential, and these opportunities deserve urgent focus. However, bureaucratic mechanisms alone will not deliver this shift; it requires broad dialogue and partnership with the private sector, with particular attention given to agriculture and other emerging sectors.

We have to prioritise employment-friendly strategies and expand opportunities. The foundations for this must be strong human resources, a supportive business environment, and coherent policy frameworks—not vague rhetoric. Such policies need to be crafted with efficiency and purpose. Crucially, we continue to neglect decentralisation, focusing narrowly on large groups while sidelining the SME sector.

Ultimately, the question is one of power. Under autocratic rule, the so-called ‘iron triangle’ of development emerged, where economic opportunities were politically cornered to serve a narrow, loyal elite. Breaking this iron triangle is essential. Democratisation is the only way forward: competition must be opened, merit must be evaluated fairly, and institutional capacities must be strengthened. Only then can we dismantle the unethical patronage networks that suffocate progress. The iron triangle must be uprooted—and I believe the time has come to say so unequivocally.

The interview was taken by Priyama Paul.

Democratisation is the way forward: open competition, fair merit, and stronger institutions are essential to dismantle patronage networks that suffocate progress.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



The life cycles of HOUSEHOLD BRANDS

“As a rule, a brand endures only when it is both cherished by consumers and profitable for its producers,” said Asif Iqbal, visiting faculty at the Institute of Business Administration. It must deliver value to consumers while remaining commercially viable. Customer loyalty alone cannot sustain a brand.

MD ABU TALHA SARKER & SUKANTA HALDER

“Boro Apur Biye, Cosco Saban Diye. Cosco Saban Valo Na, Boro Apur Biye Holo Na.”

If you grew up in Bangladesh before the early 2000s, chances are this jingle still echoes in your memory even if you never used Cosco soap.

For decades, Cosco was more than a soap. It was a cultural reference point, a crown jewel of Commander Soap Company Limited. The soap was so popular that jingles appeared glorifying its status – no ceremony, even a wedding, could proceed without it.

Cosco’s story, and those of its peers, belong to a pre-internet Bangladesh, when globalisation had yet to reshape consumer choices. A few brands ruled with near-monopolistic influence, defining lifestyles and leaving cultural imprints that linger even today.

In those days, shopping was simple but deeply symbolic.

Gani Bekari’s Bela biscuit was dipped in every cup of tea. “Wheel” became shorthand for detergent. Salt meant Mollah or ACI. Condensed milk meant Danish, powdered milk meant Dano. Coconut oils had their loyal followings: Gandharaj scented afternoons, while Parachute and Jui carved their niches.

Soaps carried personality: Palmrose, Jani, Lux, Rexona, Cosco, Aromatic Halal, Harmony, Sandalina, Tibet 570, Chaka. Stationery too carried weight: the Econo or EconoDX ballpoint was for daily use; Red Leaf was saved for exams.

For many, these products are inseparable from personal memory.

Sixty-seven-year-old Noorjahan Begum recalls how fragrance once defined social identity.

“Jani soap’s scent was enchanting, costing Tk 25 in the 1970s,” she said. “When I used those soaps, women around me would admire them, and many longed to have the same,” said Begum.

Palmrose soaps were considered luxuries, while fragrant oils like Lokkhi Bilash or Tibet Kodur Tel marked elegance. Sarees such as Pakija, Mala Print, or Indian Organdi carried similar symbolic weight.

Many of the names survive today only as nostalgia.

Cosco, the first locally made transparent glycerine soap, rose in the 1970s when foreign brands were scarce and local demand was high. Its longevity and clarity set it apart; its glycerine content even won doctors’ endorsements for sensitive skin.

By the 1980s, it had become ubiquitous in homes, restaurants, and weddings.

“After 1995, as domestic and international brands gained stronger footholds, demand for Cosco soap



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

and ever-changing,” said Intisar Ahmed, professor of marketing at the University of Dhaka.

Explaining the pen giant’s fall, he said, “Econo pens retained the same design and colour for decades without innovation.

“By contrast, Matador, originally a toothbrush manufacturer, entered the market with ergonomic grips, smoother bodies, and leak-proof caps. It anticipated consumer needs where older players did not,” said Ahmed.

The story of Econo mirrors Cosco’s: popularity is never permanent without adaptation, branding, marketing and revitalisation.

ADAPT, OR DIE

As Ahmed observed, “Markets never remain static. Failure to adapt can be costly.”

Aromatic Beauty Soap lost relevance, too slow to diversify. By contrast, Unilever segmented its brands carefully – Lux for urban consumers, Lifebuoy for rural households, Dove for higher-income buyers.



WHY SOME BRANDS LIVE ON

- They change with the times & keep making money
- New ideas keep them fresh
- They know their customers well
- Expanding into new areas keeps them safe
- Old traditions are renewed for each generation
- A clear purpose wins trust
- Strong ads, bold campaigns leave a mark
- They keep talking in ways people understand

WHY MANY FADE AWAY

- They fail to change
- Profits run out
- They rely too much on loyalty
- They resist new ideas
- Products go out of date
- Customers feel ignored
- They lean too heavily on their past
- They lose balance between product and promotion



started to decline,” a senior Commander Soap Company official told The Daily Star recently. “The owners did not place enough emphasis on marketing or distribution.”

Packaging stayed dated, advertising lagged, and younger consumers turned to fresher, flashier options. By the 2000s, Cosco’s visibility declined, though the company insists it is slowly regaining ground.

For another example, take Econo/EconoDX, once the most common ballpoint pen in every stationery shop, which is really hard to find.

“The ballpoint market is dynamic

Local companies such as Kohinoor Chemicals have made efforts to modernise in recent years. Even heritage products like Rooh Afza face pressure to innovate.

Selim H Rahman, chairman of furniture giant HATIL, sees a generational element to decline. “Many businesses peak under one generation but falter under the next, often due to family conflict or lack of clear direction.”

“Innovation is essential. Companies that don’t adapt or improve fall behind, while new competitors keep entering the market with fresh ideas. Without

innovation, brands lose their place,” he added.

THE GIANTS OF TODAY

Fast forward to the 2020s, and Bangladesh’s consumer landscape looks utterly different. Today’s markets are oligopolistic, segmented, and heavily influenced by global brands.

Unilever Bangladesh dominates soaps with Lifebuoy, Lux, and Dove, alongside rivals such as Square’s Meril, Kohinoor’s Tibet and Sandalina.

In haircare, Sunsilk, Clear, Revive and Himalaya compete, while Glow & Lovely remains entrenched in skincare. Shamima Akhter, director of corporate affairs at Unilever Bangladesh, points to the company’s longevity: “We have several iconic brands in our portfolio, including Lux, Lifebuoy, Wheel, Sunsilk, Vim, Glow & Lovely, Surf Excel, Closeup and Horlicks, which have inspired generations.”

Local players are no less ambitious. Square Toiletries Limited (STL), a subsidiary of Square Group, has built over 20 brands spanning health, hygiene, oral care, baby care, and fabric care.

Its flagship, Meril, now valued at Tk 1,000 crore, dominates categories from baby shampoo to petroleum jelly.

In sanitary napkins, Senora leads. Kool Shaving Foam, Jui Oil, Chaka Washing Powder, and Sepnil Handwash further reinforce its reach.

“A brand cannot be built overnight,” said Jesmin Zaman, STL’s head of marketing. “Quality always comes first; if there is any risk, a product is never launched.”

Kohinoor Chemical Company (Bangladesh) Limited, maker of Tibet and Sandalina, likewise leans on heritage while investing in modernisation.

“Our heritage is our strength. “That is why we say with pride: The oldest is the best,” said Golam Kibria Sarkar, KCCL’s vice-president for brand. With distribution in over 550,000 outlets,

the company has ensured Tibet remains one of Bangladesh’s oldest yet trusted soap brands.

In recent years, Kohinoor has modernised through a comprehensive BMRE programme supported by European expertise, transforming into an innovation-driven enterprise.

Keya Cosmetics continues to rely on its flagship soap, supplemented by detergents and personal care products.

Almasud Kamal, senior manager at the company, noted, “We have maintained uncompromising quality from the outset, while offering competitive prices. Our products are also attractively packaged, ensuring both visual appeal and convenience.”

WHAT MAKES A BRAND LAST

“As a rule, a brand endures only when it is both cherished by consumers and profitable for its producers,” said Asif Iqbal, visiting faculty at the Institute of Business Administration. “It must deliver value to consumers while remaining commercially viable. Customer loyalty alone cannot sustain a brand.”

Iqbal stresses that adaptability is key.

Drawing from his experience at American Express, Unilever Bangladesh, Shwapno, and Meghna Group of Industries, he said, “While many still prefer bar soaps like Lux, future trends may favour liquid formulations. Traditional soaps risk vanishing unless they adapt.”

Others highlight marketing itself.

“Brands need periodic revitalisation to remain relevant,” said Syed Alamgir, a veteran of the sector who has worked at multiple retail conglomerates.

“At times, companies spend several crores just to reduce the price of a product by one taka. Those unwilling to invest in revitalisation eventually fade,” he noted.

Unilever’s marketing strategy has been immensely successful when it comes to soap bars. From Marilyn Monroe’s dressing room to rural

Bangladeshi bathing ponds, LUX transformed soap into stardust. Bangladeshi women first treasured imported bars for special occasions until local production began in 1962. But now, no more.

Born in 1894 to combat cholera, Lifebuoy’s medicinal scent became Bangladesh’s aroma of safety through innovative advertisements. During floods, helicopters dropped these red bars alongside food relief.

Weakness in strategy, quality control, or management hastens the decline. Alamgir cites Halal Soap, which disappeared after its owners failed to invest in rebranding.

Marketing veteran Mahbub Baset of IFAD adds that Bangladesh has seen few iconic campaigns in recent decades.

Popular jingles like “Diner Seshe, Rongin Deshe, Tumi Ami r Danish”, “Eka Eka Khete Chaw, Dorja Bondho Kore Khaw”, “Jole Vasa Padma Ami, Sudhui Pelam Cholo Na” created identities for brands.

“When I was in school, Bata’s ‘Hati Hati Paye Paye’ became a legacy. In the 1990s, campaigns by Mount Shampoo, Gramenphone, Danish Condensed Milk or Philips all shaped consumer imagination. Today, such campaigns are rare.”

Globally, Baset observed, brands like Nokia lost to Apple and Samsung due to a lack of innovation.

Yet innovation need not be flashy. Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director at Pran-RFL, points to the group’s origins in solving everyday problems. “RFL began with tube-wells to address unsafe drinking water. Products that solve real problems endure.”

Pran applied the same philosophy to food processing, reducing waste of seasonal crops like mangoes and tomatoes. Today, Pran-RFL spans 41 brands across consumer goods, electronics, furniture, and food.

“Our purpose-driven approach ensures trust across generations,” Kamal said.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

It’s hard to imagine that any product from any particular brand will become a part of your life in this era of global consumption. Name any product, there will be dozens, if not hundreds, of brands producing it – be it your evening tea and cookies, hair oil or soaps.

The rise and fall of the brands remind us that popularity is fragile. In the slow-consumption era of the 1970s and 80s, familiarity was enough to guarantee loyalty. But today, with global competition, shifting lifestyles, and rapid technological change, survival requires relentless reinvention.

Asif Iqbal summed it up best: “Brands that embrace innovation survive, while those that resist change fade away.”

And perhaps that is the enduring lesson. Yesterday’s giants were more than products; they were culture. Today’s giants, too, must remember that to remain relevant in tomorrow’s Bangladesh.