



BEYOND STREAMING HOW AI IS MAKING TVs SMARTER IN BANGLADESHI HOMES

AYMAN ANIKA

For decades, television meant passive consumption. You flipped channels, adjusted the volume, and perhaps argued over the remote. But a quiet revolution is underway—one that is reimagining the screen not merely as a window to the world, but as a responsive, thinking companion. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in smart TVs is pushing both the industry and the viewing experience into an entirely new dimension.

In Bangladesh, where the television market is rapidly evolving, AI is not just a futuristic promise. It is already shaping how people watch, interact, and choose their next device.

BEYOND SMART: WHAT MAKES AN AI TV DIFFERENT

Smart TVs have been around for over a decade, defined by their internet connectivity and app-based platforms. Yet AI takes this a step further.

"Smart TVs bring connectivity and apps to your screen," says a representative from Vision, a leading local brand. "AI takes the experience to another level—it learns your preferences, adapts picture and sound automatically, and delivers personalised recommendations, making the TV feel more like a companion than simply a device."

From automatically adjusting brightness based on room lighting to suggesting shows according to your watch history, AI in TVs now enables real-time, intuitive enhancements that once seemed the stuff of science fiction.

GLOBAL GIANTS AND LOCAL LEADERS

Global, Samsung leads the smart TV segment, holding the top spot for 19 consecutive years. It is followed by Hisense and LG. In Bangladesh, Samsung continues to dominate the premium market, but brands such as Walton, Singer, and RANGS's own Ranco Google TV are securing ground among value-conscious buyers.

"Google TV and Android TV now lead with around a quarter of the global market, followed by Samsung's Tizen and LG's webOS," says Vision. "This shows just how rapidly the industry is shifting towards more intelligent, content-driven experiences."

WHAT BANGLADESHI BUYERS ARE REALLY LOOKING FOR

The average Bangladeshi buyer,

particularly outside major cities, still prioritises screen size, clarity, and affordability. However, in urban centres, the tide is turning.

"Bangladeshi consumers are highly value-conscious," says Vision. "Yet, in Dhaka and other major cities, we are seeing a growing appetite for AI-driven features such as advanced voice control and tailored recommendations. It is early days, but AI is steadily becoming a meaningful part of the purchase decision for a new generation of viewers."

Md. Rashedul Islam, Head of Business at RANGS eMART, agrees but notes a gap between tech-savvy buyers and the wider mass market. "AI features are gradually gaining attention, especially among premium and younger customers," he says. "But for many in the mass market, it still feels like a buzzword. At present, AI is considered a 'good

visuals. Azhar explains, "Our voice-controlled navigation also simplifies the user experience, which is especially important in a country where many users might not feel comfortable navigating complex menus."

One standout feature is how AI enables these TVs to eliminate manual calibration. Singer's AI can dynamically adapt to content and lighting, improving viewing without user input. Add to that a fast-switching interface, intelligent noise reduction, and OTT app integration, and the result is a TV that feels less like a machine and more like an entertainment assistant.

CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD TO AI ADOPTION

AI integration is not without its local challenges. "Developing AI for smart TVs in Bangladesh comes with hurdles," says Azhar. "Local AI expertise is still limited. Inconsistent internet speeds and power supply can also affect real-time performance. And adapting AI to work seamlessly with Bangla voice commands requires significant localisation, which demands resources."

Despite economic pressures in the broader electronics market, Singer is pushing ahead with its roadmap. "We're building a new facility focused on innovation," Azhar shares. "Our goal is to expand AI features such as predictive content suggestions and voice interactivity, while keeping it affordable for middle-income families."

WHAT'S COMING NEXT: YOUR TV, REIMAGINED

Looking forward, the industry consensus is clear: AI is not just here to stay—it is here to evolve.

"TVs will become the intelligent hubs of the home," says Vision. "They will understand natural language, curate content across multiple platforms, and seamlessly integrate with your smart home. AI will not just enhance how we watch—it will redefine what we expect from the act of watching."

Azhar echoes this belief. "We see the future of smart TV as localised and personal. From culturally relevant content recommendations to AI that adapts to the unique needs of Bangladeshi households, this is where we are headed."

In Bangladesh, the market is catching up—with both promise and practicality. For now, AI may be a luxury for some. But in a few short years, it could well become the new standard for all.

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FARHAN AZHAR
Head of Product, MDA & CE
Singer Bangladesh

LOCALISED AI, CULTURALLY RELEVANT CONTENT

The Daily Star (TDS): How do you assess AI adoption and progress in Bangladeshi smart TVs?

Farhan Azhar (FA): The smart TV market in Bangladesh is experiencing remarkable growth, driven by surging consumer demand for advanced features and internet connectivity. This growth is further fuelled by increasing internet penetration and rising middle-class purchasing power, with post-pandemic trends accelerating the shift towards smart LED TVs. However, AI adoption remains nascent compared to global markets.

As the smart TV market evolves, our competitive edge lies in localised AI—offering culturally relevant content and tailored features for Bangladeshi consumers' unique needs.

TDS: What AI-driven features and innovations does your company currently integrate into its smart TV products?

FA: Singer Smart TVs integrate AI Picture Enhancement technology, also known as AI 4K Upscaling, to automatically adjust contrast, brightness, and reduce visual noise for optimised viewing. Our models support voice control via Google Assistant and Alexa. Additionally, seamless access to streaming platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, and Prime Video is enabled through AI-

driven connectivity features. Singer also leverages AI internally for quality control during manufacturing.

TDS: How do these AI capabilities enhance user experience?

FA: Singer's AI capabilities eliminate manual calibration by dynamically optimising picture quality based on ambient lighting and content type, a feature absent in traditional TVs. Our voice-controlled navigation simplifies the user interface, which is a key advantage in a market like Bangladesh, where many users may not be comfortable with complex technical issues.

TDS: What challenges have you faced in developing and deploying AI technologies in smart TVs?

FA: Developing AI for smart TVs in Bangladesh faces hurdles such as limited local expertise in AI engineering, as specialists often lack domain-specific knowledge for consumer electronics. Infrastructure gaps, including inconsistent internet speeds and power supply, hinder real-time AI feature performance. Additionally, adapting AI to regional languages (e.g., Bangla voice processing) requires significant data localisation efforts.

TDS: What are your company's future plans regarding AI advancements in smart TVs?

FA: Singer Bangladesh is committed to expanding AI integration, with plans to introduce advanced features such as predictive content suggestions and enhanced voice interactivity in our product roadmap. A new manufacturing facility focused on innovation will accelerate the rollout of AI-powered models, targeting affordability for middle-class households.

MD. RASHEDUL ISLAM
Head of Business
RANGS eMART



SOLUTIONS FOR EVERY LIFESTYLE AND BUDGET

The Daily Star (TDS): What types of televisions are currently available in the Bangladesh market, and how do they differ?

Md. Rashedul Islam (MRI): Televisions in the market can be broadly categorised in two ways:

● **Based on features:** Smart TV and Basic TV

— Smart TVs run on operating systems (OS) with built-in internet connectivity, supporting streaming, apps, games, AI features, and smart device integration. Common OS include Android TV, Tizen, WebOS, VIDAA, and Roku. Basic TVs mainly receive channels via cable or satellite and lack internet-based features.

● **Based on display technology:** LCD TV and OLED TV — LCD TVs (including LED, NanoCell, Mini LED, QLED, and Mini QLED) use LED backlights.

OLED TVs feature self-illuminating pixels, offering superior colour performance, nearly 100% colour volume, over 1 billion shades, better viewing angles, and advanced technologies such as anti-glare and anti-reflection coatings.

TDS: Are Bangladeshi consumers actively looking for AI features in their smart TVs, or is it still more of a marketing buzzword?

MRI: AI in TVs is gradually gaining attention in Bangladesh, particularly among young, tech-savvy, and premium buyers. Consumers are interested in AI because it provides sharper pictures (AI upscaling), clearer sound (AI audio optimisation), easier control (voice assistants), personalised recommendations, and enhanced gaming performance through powerful AI processors & engines.

Globally, AI-powered TVs are becoming more popular and increasingly becoming a key factor in

consumer decision making, especially in developed markets where buyers actively compare AI features before purchase. This global trend is also influencing Bangladeshi premium buyers, who are starting to see AI features as an important reason to upgrade.

TDS: What factors make RANGS eMART a preferred choice for purchasing televisions?

MRI: RANGS eMART takes pride in offering one of the widest and most diverse ranges of televisions in Bangladesh. Featuring world renowned brands such as Samsung, LG, and Toshiba, along with our very own Rancon Google TV, we ensure that every

In Bangladesh, among the global brands, Samsung holds the No. 1 position, with Haier in 2nd place, but Toshiba and LG are now aggressively gaining market share.

customer finds the perfect option to suit their lifestyle and budget.

At every RANGS eMART showroom, experienced product consultants are available to demonstrate features, provide expert guidance, and help customers understand which technologies best match their needs. With the opportunity to explore and compare over 50 different TV models, ranging from 32 inches to 100 inches, customers can make confident and informed choices. RANGS eMART offers genuine brands with official warranties, free delivery and installation, plus EMI facilities of up to 36 months across 36 banks.

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MD. NURUL AFSER
Deputy Managing Director
Konka Smart LED TV

A NEW ERA OF HOME ENTERTAINMENT BEGINS

The Daily Star (TDS): How do you assess AI adoption and progress in Bangladeshi smart TVs?

Md. Nurul Afser (MNA): The smart TV market in Bangladesh is growing rapidly, with increasing consumer awareness. The popularity of YouTube, Netflix, IPTV, and local OTT platforms has accelerated smart TV adoption. AI-driven features such as voice control, content recommendation, and image upscaling are being embraced by consumers. However, challenges remain in rural areas due to limited internet access and lower awareness levels.

Konka Android Voice Control TV integrates global-standard innovations, including 4K, True Colour, Dolby Sound, HDR10, Android 11.0 OS, Google Assistant, Chromecast, 2GB RAM, 16GB storage.

TDS: What AI-driven features and innovations does your company currently integrate into its smart TV products?

MNA: Konka smart TVs are currently integrated with several AI-powered features, including AI-based picture optimisation, which automatically adjusts brightness and contrast; AI-based sound systems, which fine-tune audio depending on content (films, sports, music); and voice assistant integration, which

supports both Bangla and English voice commands. Our content recommendation engine suggests shows and videos based on user preferences, while AI-based upscaling converts low-resolution content into high-quality visuals.

TDS: How do these AI capabilities enhance user experience?

MNA: AI capabilities differentiate smart TVs from traditional models by learning user preferences to offer personalised content recommendations, optimising picture and sound quality for each viewing situation, automating tasks such as brightness adjustment, and improving accessibility through enhanced voice control and captioning.

TDS: What challenges have you faced in developing and deploying AI technologies in smart TVs?

MNA: Network limitations remain a challenge—many users still lack access to high-speed internet. Developing advanced Bangla voice recognition and localised content recommendations is also complex. Integrating advanced AI features into smart TVs increases costs, which can be a barrier for many Bangladeshi consumers.

TDS: What are your company's future plans regarding AI advancements in smart TVs?

MNA: Konka plans to introduce more advanced AI features in the near future, such as multi-language natural voice recognition (including Bangla and regional dialects), smarter content curation, tailored recommendations for local OTT and e-learning platforms, and home IoT integration, using the TV as a hub to control smart home devices. We are also developing AI-driven parental controls and health features.



R N PAUL
Managing Director
RFL Group

AI-POWERED SMART TVs WILL CONTINUE TO GROW

The Daily Star (TDS): How do you assess AI adoption and progress in Bangladeshi smart TVs?

R N Paul (RNP): The current state of AI in smart TVs is very promising. Globally, features such as voice assistants, content recommendations, and picture and sound optimisation are advancing rapidly. At VISION TV, we already provide all Google and AI features available in the region.

In Bangladesh, adoption is still at an early stage compared to developed markets, but momentum is growing. As internet infrastructure improves, local content expands, and awareness increases, AI-powered smart TVs will become more integrated into daily life, reshaping how households consume entertainment.

TDS: What AI-driven features does your company integrate into its products?

RNP: Our VISION TVs are equipped with a range of AI features. These include voice control via Google Assistant, personalised content recommendations based on viewing habits, and localised suggestions tailored to Bangladeshi audiences. AI also enhances HDR picture quality and introduces Auto Volume Control to ensure consistent sound.

Beyond this, our TVs integrate with smart home devices, support multiple user profiles, and offer AI-powered interface navigation for faster access to apps and content. Google TV's Ambient Mode uses AI to create personalised dynamic displays, while upscaling improves lower-resolution content in real time. These capabilities transform the TV into an intelligent entertainment hub rather than a passive device.

TDS: What challenges do you face in AI adoption?

RNP: Affordability remains a key barrier, as Bangladeshi consumers are price-sensitive. Limited internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas, also hampers the full potential of AI-powered features. Localisation—especially developing seamless Bangla voice commands—requires significant resources. Hardware limitations, power efficiency, and data privacy are other challenges we must address.

Personalisation, intelligent voice assistants, and integration with other smart devices will become essential for consumers accustomed to seamless smart home experiences.

TDS: What are your future plans for AI in smart TVs?

RNP: We see the TV becoming the central hub for all home appliances—refrigerators, air conditioners, security systems, even daily routine management. TVs will evolve into life companions, capable of intelligent decision-making. At VISION TV, we aim to keep pace with global developments while delivering affordable, technologically advanced products.



RITESH RANJAN
Head of Business
Transcom Electronics

AI TO RESHAPE LIFESTYLES WITH TECHNOLOGY

The Daily Star (TDS): How do you assess AI adoption and progress in Bangladeshi smart TVs?

Ritesh Ranjan (RR): The adoption of AI in smart televisions in Bangladesh is still in its early yet promising stage. Urban customers, especially in Dhaka, Chattogram, and other metropolitan cities, are becoming increasingly aware of how AI features can enrich their viewing experience—whether through voice assistants, smart recommendations, or adaptive picture and sound settings. At Transcom Digital, we see a steady shift where customers are not just buying TVs for screen size or resolution, but for the intelligent experiences they deliver.

TDS: What AI-driven features and innovations does your company currently integrate into its smart TV products?

RR: We are proud to offer some of the most advanced AI-driven innovations through our partner brands and in-house models. Key features include:

- AI Upscaling: Enhancing lower-resolution content to near 4K or 8K quality using machine learning.
- Voice Assistance: Integration of Google Assistant, Alexa, and Bixby for hands-free navigation and smart home control.
- Content Recommendation Engines: Personalised recommendations based on viewing history and preferences.

TDS: How do these AI capabilities enhance user experience?

RR: The difference is both experiential and functional. Traditional TVs were primarily passive screens, whereas AI-enabled smart TVs act as interactive companions. For example, instead of endlessly scrolling, viewers now receive curated recommendations that save time and reflect their preferences.

Adaptive picture and sound deliver the best possible experience in any environment, making viewing more immersive. This transformation makes television more than entertainment—it becomes a

personalised, intelligent lifestyle solution.

TDS: What challenges have you faced in developing and deploying AI technologies in smart TVs?

RR: The biggest challenge is consumer awareness and education. Many customers do not yet fully understand the value of AI features. For example, when they see "AI Upscaling" or "Adaptive Picture", they often need in-store demonstrations to realise the benefits.

Secondly, price sensitivity in Bangladesh is high. AI-enabled models come at a premium, and while we are bridging the affordability gap, convincing price-conscious buyers remains a hurdle.

In the coming years, smart TVs will serve as the hub of connected living—and Transcom Digital remains committed to empowering every consumer with AI's possibilities.

TDS: What future plans does your company have regarding AI advancements in smart TVs?

RR: At Transcom Digital, our goal is to make AI-enabled televisions a mainstream choice in Bangladesh. Our roadmap includes:

- Expanding Accessibility: Introducing AI features in mid-range and entry-level models, particularly through our own Transtec brand, which delivers "Global Technology at Local Price."
- Enhanced Ecosystem Integration: Strengthening connectivity between smart TVs and other IoT devices, enabling complete smart home solutions.

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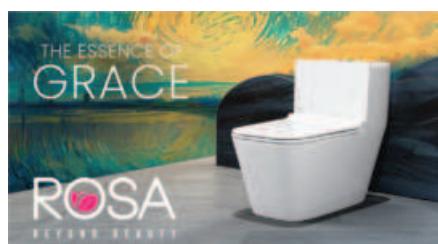
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B4



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P4



Aid to Gaza still 'drop in the ocean': WFP

P5



Kiron discloses mega plan for women's football

P11

Rohingyas may go hungry after November: WFP

Calls made for immediate funds

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MOKAMMEL SHUVO from Cox's Bazar

Food assistance for over 1.2 million Rohingyas in Bangladesh will end after November 30 unless urgent funds are secured, the World Food Programme has warned.

"We have enough money until November 30. On December 1, the situation will be zero -- no food for 1.2 million people. To maintain the minimum ration, we urgently require funds," WFP Bangladesh Country Director Domenico Scalpelli told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We need around \$173 million for the next 12 months," he said during a high-level delegation's visit to Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee camps, warning that any further cut from the current \$12 per person per month would be devastating.

"If we drop it to \$6, malnutrition rates will rise, and children will die. Already the malnutrition rate is very high," Scalpelli cautioned, appealing to traditional donors as well as Gulf states, ASEAN, and OIC countries for immediate help.

Currently, each person's \$12 (around Tk 1,500) food basket includes 13kg of rice for Tk 650, one litre of vegetable oil for Tk 180, half a kilogram of salt for Tk 19, 200g of red chilies for Tk 23.40, five eggs for Tk 53, 400g of onion for Tk 26, 500g of lentils for Tk 47.60, 1kg of sugar for Tk 109, 510g of tilapia fish for Tk 113, 1kg of potato for Tk 14.70, 1kg of chicken for Tk 172, and 1kg of hog plum for Tk 39.

If the ration is cut to \$6 (around Tk 730), the probable food basket would include only 80g of rice for Tk 400, 1.33kg of red lentils for Tk 127, 1 litre of soybean oil for Tk 180, 300g of salt for Tk 10, and 100g of red chilies for Tk 12, according to WFP estimates.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Food items, which a Rohingya gets every month for \$12, are on display at a refugee camp.

PHOTO: JAMIL KHAN

- WFP needs \$173m for the next 12 months to maintain minimum ration
- Each refugee now gets \$12 worth of food per month
- Rohingyas say \$12 is inadequate
- WFP says reducing ration to \$6 would trigger malnutrition, child deaths
- Bangladesh officials warn of chaos, famine at camps if food aid stops

Polls boycott can exclude parties from future politics

Says Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any party has the right to skip a national election, but those who do so with excuses risk being sidelined from future politics, said BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed.



"Demanding PR (proportional representation) or a Constituent Assembly is a political tactic, and these statements are aimed at stirring up the field. The election mood is present in the country, and whoever speaks against it will be minus," he told reporters at his Gulshan home yesterday.

Salahuddin said the polls would be held in early February, a week before Ramadan as the government

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Families leave Gaza City after night of bombardment

34 more Palestinians killed

REUTERS, Cairo

More Palestinian families left Gaza City on Tuesday after a night of Israeli shelling on its outskirts, as Israelis launched a day of nationwide protests calling for hostages to be released and the war in Gaza to end.

Residents said Israeli aerial and tank shelling continued throughout the night and early on Tuesday in the eastern Gaza City suburbs of Sabra, Shejaiya, and Tuffah, as well as in Jabalia town to the north, destroying roads and houses.

"Earthquakes, we call it, they want to scare people to leave their homes," said Ismail, 40, a Gaza City resident.

The Israeli military has said its forces are operating in the area to locate weapons and destroy tunnels used by militants. Despite widespread protests at home and international condemnation, Israel is preparing to launch a new offensive in Gaza City, in what it describes

- Bombing and shelling continue around Gaza City
- Israelis launch day of protests against the war
- Netanyahu calls Monday's hospital strikes a 'tragic mishap'

as Hamas' last bastion.

Israeli strikes at Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday killed at least 20 people, including journalists working for Reuters, the Associated Press, Al Jazeera and others.

At least 34 people were killed in Israeli strikes in the enclave overnight and on

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

BUSINESS

Tax corruption hinders business growth: CPD

Corruption among tax officials has emerged as the single biggest barrier to business growth, according to a survey by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). More than 72 percent of firms, or three out of four, said bribery and harassment from taxmen were major obstacles to expansion. Another 82 percent said current tax rates were unfair.

STORY ON B1

Cyberbullying, smear campaigns cast shadow over Jucsu polls

Female, indigenous candidates targeted

SAKIB AHMED

Cyberbullying and smear campaigns targeting candidates, particularly women, have emerged as a disturbing trend ahead of the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union elections.

This has raised concerns about inclusivity and the safety of female participants as the university is preparing for the JUCSU polls scheduled for September 11, the first in 33 years.

At least 15 Facebook pages and groups have become hyperactive in recent weeks in the absence of clear university guidelines on online campaigning.

Pages such as JU Update, JU Family, JU Insiders, Jucsu News, JU Sarcasm, and JU Crush & Confession have been accused of running smear campaigns.

Candidates from Bangladesh Ganotantrik Chhatra Sangsad, Chhatra Dal, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Sanskritik Jote, and Islami Chhatra Shibir alleged they were facing coordinated online harassment.

Several candidates claimed that accounts running the pages were linked

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2



On the first day of official campaigning for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) elections, Chhatra Dal's vice-president candidate Abidul Islam Khan and the left-leaning Protirodh Porshod's general secretary nominee Meghmallar Basu greet each other with smiles and a handshake. The photo was taken in front of the university's Senate building yesterday.

DUCSU POLLS Campaigning starts with rallies, tributes

Candidates allege violations of election code

DU CORRESPONDENT

Campaigning for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union kicked off yesterday with vibrant rallies, tributes, and outreach efforts by major panels and independents across Dhaka University.

However, several candidates accused one another of breaching the election code of conduct.

Chief returning officer Prof Mohammad Zashim Uddin yesterday said they would keep army personnel as a strike force on election day.

He said 471 students were set to run for 28 posts in Ducsu after a total of 28 withdrew their nominations. Nominations of 10 others were rejected.

Candidates and panels started their campaigns on campus yesterday morning, the first day for electioneering, according to the schedule.

Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed Oikkobodh Shikkharthi Jote began its campaign on the central library premises. Its VP nominee Abu Shadiq Kayem claimed that its campaign boards at the Fine Arts Faculty had been vandalised.

"We demand immediate punitive action against those involved," he said.

During a press briefing on Monday, Chhatra Dal-backed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

RUCSU POLLS Deadline for nomination paper collection extended

Potential delays in holding election spark protests

NUR AHSAN MRIDUL

The Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (Rucusu) election is set to be delayed as the deadline for collecting nomination forms has been extended till August 31. The last day was yesterday.

It means that the polls will not be held on September 15 as announced earlier.

The decision has sparked fresh protests on campus. Students gathered yesterday evening and marched through several streets, demanding that the polls be held as per the schedule.

Chief Election Commissioner Prof F Nazrul Islam said the extension to nomination collection deadline was required because he has taken charge recently, and it takes more time to complete dope tests of candidates and meet various demands of students.

He added that a new date for voting would be announced later.

In the first three days, 168 students collected nominations for 23 central posts. Seven applied for vice-president, five for general secretary, and seven for assistant general secretary. Nineteen students submitted nominations for five Senate seats. At the half level, 363 forms were collected for union posts.

Prof Nazrul also announced that polling centres will be shifted from residential halls to academic buildings. A cyber cell will be set up to monitor activities. Photos will be attached to the voter list. First-year students, admitted after the election schedule was announced, will not be eligible to vote.

Salahuddin Ammar, a former coordinator of RU unit of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), told The Daily Star that the administration's explanation was not convincing. He said the election had already been rescheduled three times and it seemed that the authorities were working to benefit one group.

Shah Poran Likhon, a candidate for assistant general secretary, said past governments had delayed elections to favour certain organisations, and the same thing was happening now.

Mostakur Rahman Zahid, vice-president candidate and Islami Chhatra Shibir's Rucusu unit president, called the decision irrational.

Former SAD coordinator Tasin Khan warned that students would announce tougher programmes if the authorities failed to ensure transparency.

Rucusu CEC Prof Nazrul denied the allegation of making decisions to favour anyone. "These steps are only to ensure a fair and transparent election. I believe students will get their answers once the election is held."

Asked about the new date for voting, he said, "We will hold a meeting tomorrow [today]. The decision will come after that."

Rohingyas may go hungry after November: WFP

FROM PAGE 1

Scalpelli stressed that continued support is essential as the Rohingyas cannot simply stop eating after November. "They want to return home, but until safe and voluntary repatriation is possible, they must be able to eat every day."

A Rohingya man at a food distribution centre said the support is already too little. Requesting anonymity, he said, "Families survive on this little amount by cutting meals and going into debt. If this falls further, malnutrition will rise and unrest will grow inside the camps."

BANGLADESH CAN'T SHOULDER ALONE

Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Azad Majumder, who briefed the media during the visit, said nearly 100 delegates, including diplomats, UN officials, and NGO representatives, toured hospitals and distribution centres.

"What they have seen is that support for the Rohingya is shrinking by the day. WFP has informed them that if no new funding arrives, food assistance will stop after November. That means potential chaos in the camps, even famine," he said.

Azad also said the current ration is already inadequate and if it is reduced



Palestinians flee their homes in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighbourhood on August 26, 2025. Israel's defence minister on June 20, approved a military plan for the conquest of Gaza City, authorising the call-up of about 60,000 reservists, piling pressure on Hamas as mediators push for a ceasefire.

PHOTO: AFP

1 in 4 people lack access to safe drinking water: UN

AFP, Geneva

More than two billion people worldwide still lack access to safely-managed drinking water, the United Nations said Tuesday, warning that progress towards universal coverage was moving nowhere near quickly enough.

The UN's health and children's agencies said a full one in four people globally were without access to safely-managed drinking water last year, with over 100 million people remaining reliant on drinking surface water -- for example from rivers, ponds and canals.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF said lagging water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services were leaving billions at greater risk of disease.

They said in a joint study that the world remains far off track to reach a target of achieving universal coverage of such services by 2030.

Instead, that goal "is increasingly out of reach", they warned.

"Water, sanitation and hygiene are not privileges: they are basic human rights," said the WHO's environment chief Ruediger Krech.



"We must accelerate action, especially for the most marginalised communities."

The report looked at five levels of drinking water services.

Safely managed, the highest, is defined as drinking water accessible on the premises, available when needed and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination.

The four levels below are basic (improved water taking less than 30 minutes to access), limited (improved, but taking longer), unimproved (for example, from an unprotected well or spring), and surface water.

DRINKING OF SURFACE WATER DECLINES

Since 2015, 961 million people have gained access to safely-managed drinking water, with coverage rising from 68 percent to 74 percent, the report said.

Of the 2.1 billion people last year still lacking safely managed drinking water services, 106 million used surface water -- a decrease of 61 million over the past decade.

The number of countries that have eliminated the use of surface water for drinking meanwhile increased from 142 in 2015 to 154 in 2024, the study said.

In 2024, 89 countries had universal access to at least basic drinking water, of which 31 had universal access to safely managed services.

The 28 countries where more than one in four people still lacked basic services were largely concentrated in Africa.

GOALS SLIPPING FROM REACH

As for sanitation, 1.2 billion people have gained access to safely managed sanitation services since 2015, with coverage rising from 48 percent to 58 percent, the study found.

These are defined as improved facilities that are not shared with other households, and where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or removed and treated off-site.

The number of people practising open defecation has decreased by 429 million to 354 million 2024, or to four percent of the global population.

Since 2015, 1.6 billion people have gained access to basic hygiene services -- a hand washing facility with soap and water at home -- with coverage increasing from 66 percent to 80 percent, the study found.

"When children lack access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene, their health, education, and futures are put at risk," warned Cecilia Scharp, UNICEF's director for WASH.

"These inequalities are especially stark for girls, who often bear the burden of water collection and face additional barriers during menstruation."

"At the current pace, the promise of safe water and sanitation for every child is slipping further from reach."

Man held over rape of girl with disability

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police have arrested a man on charges of raping a teenage girl with intellectual disability in Bandarban's Larna upazila on Sunday.

Md Imran, 27, was arrested on Monday after the victim's father filed a case in connection with the incident earlier in the day, according to Sub-Inspector Ahmed Morshed, officer-in-charge of the Aziznagar police outpost.

"The accused was brought to the police outpost," he said.

Quoting locals, police said the victim was alone at home at the time of the incident. Her father was away for work at the time, and her mother was away at a Chittagong hospital for the delivery of a baby of the victim's elder sister. Finding her alone at home he raped the girl.

The matter came to light the following day after the victim confided the matter to a neighbour. As the news of the incident spread through the community, locals and an union parishad member detained the perpetrator and handed him over to police.

"I learned about the rape yesterday [Monday] evening. Some of us, with the help of local residents, detained the suspect, Imran, and handed him over to police," the UP member said.

Acting officer-in-charge of Larna Police Station Tofazzal Hossain said, "The victim will be sent to a Bandarban hospital for medical examination today [yesterday]. Following completion of legal procedures, the accused will be presented before the court," he added.

Man sentenced to death for raping, killing child

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday sentenced a man to death for raping and murdering a six-year-old girl in Moheshkhali upazila in 2022.

Judge Mohammad Osman Gani of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 delivered the verdict in presence of the convict, Md Soleman, of Chakmarkul area in Teknaf's Whykong union, confirmed Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain.

According to court records, on November 30, 2022, after returning from school, the victim, a class-1 student, was playing in the yard of her home when Soleman lured her to his house with snacks and raped her.

When the child lost consciousness, he placed her inside a suitcase and took her to the Koriyaria embankment in Ujantia union of Pekua upazila.

After opening the suitcase, he found the girl dead and buried the body. Later that night, he phoned the victim's family, claiming she had been kidnapped and demanded Tk 5,00,000 ransom. The family filed a general diary with police, and Soleman was arrested on December 3, according to case details.

State prosecutor Mir Mosharraf Hossain Titu said, "For such a heinous crime, the only real punishment can be the death penalty."

"This verdict will send a message to society that anyone committing such brutal crimes -- rape, murder, and abduction -- will face this kind of punishment," the prosecutor said.

The victim's father expressed satisfaction with the ruling.

Families leave Gaza City

FROM PAGE 1

Tuesday, local health authorities said, including 18 people around Gaza City.

Around half of the enclave's two million people currently live in Gaza City, with several thousand already moved westward, pouring into the heart of the city and along the coast.

Others have ventured further south to central Gaza and the coastal area of Al-Muwais near Khan Younis.

Monday's attack on Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis killed cameraman Hossam al-Masri, a Reuters contractor, near a live broadcasting position operated by Reuters.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel deeply regretted

what he called a "tragic mishap," but the Israeli military has yet to provide details of the incident.

ISRAELI DAY OF DISRUPTION

Israeli protesters blocked roads in Tel Aviv and elsewhere in the country, holding up pictures of hostages still held in Gaza and calling for the war to end.

A rally planned outside Israel's defence headquarters later on Tuesday is expected to draw thousands of people.

"For 690 days, the government has been waging a war without a clear objective," said Einav Zangauer, mother of Israeli hostage Matan Zangauer, in a statement with other hostage families who launched the

so-called Day of Disruption.

"How will the hostages, the living and the fallen, be returned? Who will govern Gaza the day after? How do we rebuild our country?" she said.

The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led gunmen burst into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and taking 251 hostages.

Israel's military offensive against Hamas has since killed at least 62,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to the Gaza health ministry, plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis and internally displaced nearly its entire population.

Campaigning starts with rallies

FROM PAGE 1

panel VP candidate Abidul Islam Khan said, "A journalist is competing in the AF Rahman Hall Union election, and he is blackmailing students who are supporting the Chhatra Dal-backed candidate there."

The journalist in question, Ashiqu Haque Rifat, an independent, lodged a complaint against Abidul with the chief returning officer.

Ashiqu said Abidul was deliberately spreading lies.

Aparajeyo-71 and Oddomm-24 panel called for the disqualification of Shibir-backed candidates from the election. The panel's general secretary nominee, Anamul Hasan Onoy, said allowing Shibir candidates to contest would go against the values of Bangladesh's independence struggle.

"The defeated forces of '71 and '24 -- Shibir and Chhatra League -- must be disqualified," he said.

Meanwhile, Meghmaller Bosu, who is vying for the general secretary post from the Protirodh Porshod,

said many candidates were breaching the code of conduct and that the administration was not taking any step against them despite being notified.

"We can walk away if we believe the election is a scam," said Bosu at a press briefing.

Swatantra Shikkharthi Oikya panel launched its campaign by placing wreaths at the Jagannath Hall memorial. Its VP candidate, Umama Fatema, said, "Ducus polls should be held regularly ... it is the administration's responsibility to ensure that. Our campaign will not disrupt the daily activities of students."

The Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad-backed panel began with an outreach programme around 4:30pm.

Alongside these panels, several independents also hit the campaign trail, setting the stage for a competitive election across Dhaka University.

A DU press release after a meeting

between the returning officer and candidates, said three-tier security system would be in place on election day.

It said the strike force would be at seven entrances of Dhaka University. "If necessary, the army will enter the campus and take control of the polling centres until the results are announced."

Meghmaller Bosu said, "The police no longer have any credibility. As a result, it may be necessary to deploy the army... Our apprehension is that voters can be intimidated by this, which could reduce turnout."

Abdul Qader, vying for vice president post from Boishomma Biroddhi Shikkharthi Oikya, said, "They have made a decision on the matter without any discussion with us at all. Perhaps they might have some ulterior motives."

Tanvir Barai Hamim, general secretary nominee from JCD-backed panel, said, "It [deployment of the army] will instill fear among students...."

Polls boycott can exclude parties

FROM PAGE 1
has assured. There is no doubt about it.

"But one or two parties are trying to create confusion... this may be their strategy. In order to maintain the national unity against fascism, we hope for a fair election. This election will be a historic event in political history."

BNP has found some aspects of the July Charter unreasonable, he said.

We expect that the election will be held within the time announced by this current government, there is no scope for thinking otherwise."

Responding to a query, the BNP leader said there is no chance of forging an alliance with Jamaat.

"Discussions are ongoing with some Islamist parties, there may be an alliance with them, but nothing is final yet."

"This government has been formed with everyone's consensus ...

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Open your
Account
from anywhereAdopt data
protection
measures

Demands ARTICLE 19

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As the interim government moves toward finalising a Data Protection Ordinance, rights organisation ARTICLE 19 has called for the proposed framework to be firmly rooted in international human rights law and constitutional safeguards.

In a statement yesterday, it warned that poorly drafted provisions could weaken privacy rights and centralise excessive power in the hands of the government.

The UK-based rights body welcomed the government's initiative to introduce a comprehensive data protection regime but stressed that the ordinance must balance security, innovation, and fundamental freedoms.

"The protection of personal data is essential to safeguard human rights, foster an open and inclusive digital ecosystem, and enable innovation and economic growth in Bangladesh," it said.

Civil society groups have previously voiced concerns that certain provisions under consideration could allow arbitrary surveillance, restrict cross-border

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

HEAT INITIATIVE

UGC to ink deals
for 151 sub-
projects with
universities

BREAKDOWN

- » 9 pandemic-related projects
- » 40 projects focus on teaching-learning infrastructure
- » 102 advanced research projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) will sign agreements with public and private universities today for 151 sub-projects under the Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation (HEAT) initiative.

The signing ceremony will be held at the Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital's Agargaon, UGC officials announced at a press briefing yesterday at the commission's auditorium.

At the welcome speech, UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz said the selection process was conducted with "100 percent transparency".

Responding to allegations of nepotism or political favouritism, Prof Faiz said the commission took all necessary measures

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BNP suspends
Fazlur Rahman
for 3 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



BNP has suspended its chairperson's son's adviser, Fazlur Rahman, from all party posts, including his primary membership, for three months.

According to a letter issued by the party yesterday, Fazlur was warned to exercise caution in his remarks on television talk shows and social media so that the country's dignity, the party's policies, and people's religious sentiments are not undermined.

A BNP source confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

The letter noted that, given Fazlur Rahman's role as a freedom fighter in the Liberation War, the party refrained from imposing

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

PATHAO AND SHOMVOB
Bangladeshi
startups earn spot
on Forbes Asia list

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshi startups Pathao and Shomvob have been named in the prestigious Forbes Asia "100 to Watch" list for 2025, marking a significant recognition for the country's burgeoning technology ecosystem on the regional stage.

This year's list includes companies from 16 countries and territories, with India leading with 18 entries, followed by Singapore and Japan with 14 each. Bangladesh's representation, though modest, signals its gradual ascent in the regional startup landscape.

Pathao is a multi-service platform offering ride-hailing, food delivery, logistics, e-commerce, and fintech solutions.

"The company says its app has been downloaded more than 6 million times and it has fulfilled more than 70 million trips and orders across Bangladesh and Nepal," according to Forbes.

Founded in 2015, Pathao was listed under the

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7



PERPETRATORS

- Most were known - relatives, neighbours, classmates, boyfriends
- Children were often abused in their own homes, neighbouring houses
- Gang rape by strangers - 42%
- Harassment by teachers - 24%
- Young offenders rising:
 - 28% of rapists aged 11-30
 - 24% of gang rapists aged 16-25
 - 50% of cyber offenders aged 16-30

VICTIMS BY AGE

- Girls in grades 1-5 were victims of rape the most last year
- High school girls most subjected to sexual violence
- Majority victims across all forms of violence under 18
- University students frequent victims of rape, gang rape, cybercrime
- Women from all walks of life fall victim to sexual violence

CASE TRENDS

RAPE CASES

- 364 in 2024
- 354 in Jan-Jun 2025 (nearly same as whole of 2024)

GANG RAPES

148 (2024) - 106 (first half of 2025)

MURDER AFTER RAPE

112 (2024) - 127 (first half of 2025)

SEXUAL ABUSE & HARASSMENT

224 (2024) - 320 (first half of 2025)

DOWRY-RELATED VIOLENCE

68 (2024) - 96 (first half of 2025)

Perpetrators ranged in age from adolescents to men over 60, with young people heavily represented among accused rapists.

Twenty-eight percent of accused rapists were between 11 and 30, with the highest proportion aged 21-25.

A significant share of gang rapists (24 percent) were aged 16-25, while 17 percent of harassers and half of cyber offenders fell within the 16-30 age range.

The report also highlighted risks in both public and private spaces.

Children were often abused in their own homes or neighbouring houses, showing that presumed safe spaces can be dangerous.

Besides, a high number of rape incidents occurred at the hands of classmates or boyfriends, indicating that trusted social circles can pose a significant danger.

Public transport and interactions with drivers exposed women and girls to harassment and violence during commutes, while politically and socially influential individuals often misused their power to commit sexual abuse, reinforcing systemic vulnerabilities.

Meanwhile, the report observed a positive trend that more rape cases are being filed than in the past, with very few incidents remaining unreported.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Covered with advert and political posters, this community-built Shaheed Minar in the capital's Dayaganj area lies in a dilapidated state. Locals said the tribute to the Language Movement martyrs deserves more respect. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Formulate
'Journalist
Protection Act'

Action plan by MRDI, IMS seeks
stronger press freedom safeguards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal reform is essential to ensure journalists can work without fear of censorship, harassment, or arbitrary detention, said speakers at the launch event of a strategic action plan yesterday.

The Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) and International Media Support (IMS) launched the "Strategic Action Plan on Advocacy for Media Reform in Bangladesh", which proposes enacting a "Journalist Protection Act" and repealing criminal defamation laws. The launch event was held at The Daily Star Centre.

According to the plan, the proposed law would serve as an umbrella for safeguarding journalists against threats, attacks, surveillance, misuse of legal tools, and other physical, digital, and psychological risks.

It would also address exploitation by employers, including denial of formal contracts, identity documents, fair wages, and benefits.

Repealing defamation laws would strengthen press freedom, enabling journalists to report independently and without fear, the plan added.

Moderating the event, MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman said a legal framework is needed, as journalists

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

PURBACHAL PLOT SCAM

7 witnesses testify
against Hasina,
family in 3 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven prosecution witnesses yesterday testified in three cases filed against 23 people, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her daughter Saima Wazed Putul and son Sajeeb Wazed Joy over irregularities in plot allocation in Purbachal New Town.

The witnesses are Dhiraj Chandra Barman, Sourav Das, Mahbubur Rahman, Ashim Shil, Ullas Chowdhury, Akter Jahan and Shofiqul Islam.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

BNP and Jamaat
lawyers urge SC to
reinstate CG system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counsels for BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday pleaded before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to turn down its verdict that scrapped the non-party caretaker government system, saying that this system ensured democracy in the country through holding free and fair elections.

The 2011 Appellate Division verdict that cancelled the non-party caretaker government

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Two Australian cops shot dead in Victoria State

AFP, Sydney

A gunman opened fire on police Tuesday at a rural Australian property in a "horrific" confrontation that killed two officers and wounded a third.

Police launched a major hunt for the man, who fled into the bush after the shooting in the town of Porepunkah in northeast Victoria, senior officers said.

"The suspect for this horrific event is still at large," Victoria state police chief commissioner Mike Bush said.

"We know that the person is heavily armed. We know that they are dangerous," he told a news conference.

Bush said the outburst of gunfire, which occurred "over minutes", killed a 59-year-old detective and a 35-year-old senior constable.

"They were met by the offender and they were murdered in cold blood," he said.

Another detective was wounded.

"He has been shot and is currently in surgery being treated. His injuries are not life threatening."

Ten police had descended on the property in the morning to execute a search warrant when the gunfire broke out, Bush said.

"He was heavily armed and he was able to escape into the bush," the police chief said.

FLOOD WARNING Pakistan evacuates 150,000 people India warns it plans to release excess water from dam

REUTERS, Lahore

Pakistan evacuated at least 150,000 people in areas along three rivers in its agricultural heartland under threat of flooding after neighbouring India warned it plans to release excess water from a dam, officials said on Tuesday.

The arch-rivals have been ravaged by intense rain and flooding in recent weeks. The release of excess water threatens to further inundate part of Pakistan's Punjab province, which serves as the country's breadbasket and accounts for a large part of its food supply.

The nuclear-armed nations have been in a tense stand-off since a brief conflict in May, their worst fighting in decades, and any flooding blamed on New Delhi could inflame ties.

Pakistani officials said they received a surprise warning from India on Monday that it intends to release water from the rapidly filling Madhopur Dam, on its side of Punjab province.

India routinely releases water from its dams when they get too full, with the excess flowing into Pakistan.

An Indian government source said they had not mentioned a specific dam but the intense rain led them to share a second warning with Pakistan through diplomatic channels. Asked if more warnings could be issued as rain continues, he said it was possible.

New Delhi had said on Sunday that it warned Pakistan that large volumes of water would flow into its waterways due to the heavy rainfall.

Three rivers -- Ravi, Sutlej and Chenab -- flow into Pakistan from Indian territory. Those rivers are seeing medium to high flooding, Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority said on Tuesday.

Mazhar Hussain, a Pakistani disaster management official, said India will release a controlled amount of water from dams in the coming days. Hundreds of villages situated on the embankment of the three rivers have been evacuated, he said.

AGRICULTURAL HEARTLAND

Pakistan's northwest has been hammered by intense floods, accounting for half of the 799 people killed this monsoon season.

Trump wants to meet N Korea's Kim this year

REUTERS, Washington/Seoul

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday he wanted to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this year and was open to further trade talks with South Korea even as he lobbed new criticisms at the visiting Asian ally.

"I'd like to meet him this year," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office as he welcomed South Korea's new president, Lee Jae Myung, to the White House for the first time. "I look forward to meeting with Kim Jong Un in the appropriate future."

Despite clinching a trade deal in July that spared South Korean exports harsher U.S. tariffs, the two sides continue to wrangle over nuclear energy, military spending, and details of a deal that included \$350 billion in promised South Korean investments in the United States.

After meeting with Trump, Lee attended a business forum with senior U.S. officials and CEOs of South Korean and U.S. companies.

To coincide with the visit, South Korea's flag carrier, Korean Air 003490. KS, announced an order for 103 Boeing B787 aircraft, the largest order in the airline's history.



Migrants wade through the sea in an attempt to board an inflatable dinghy leaving the coast of northern France to cross the English Channel to reach Britain, from the beach of Petit-Fort-Philippe in Gravelines, near Calais, France, August 25, 2025.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Aid to Gaza still 'drop in the ocean': WFP

AFP, New Delhi

The World Food Programme warned Tuesday that the aid Israel is allowing to enter Gaza remains a "drop in the ocean", days after famine was formally declared in the war-torn Palestinian territory.

The United Nations declared a famine in Gaza on Friday, blaming the "systematic obstruction" of aid by Israel during its nearly two-year war with the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Carl Skau, WFP's chief operating officer, said that over the past two weeks, there has been a "slight pickup" in aid entering, averaging around 100 trucks per day.

"That's still a drop in the ocean when we're talking about assisting some 2.1 million people," Skau told AFP during a visit to New Delhi.

"We need a completely different level of assistance to be able to turn this trajectory of famine around."

The Rome-based Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Initiative (IPC) said famine was affecting 500,000 people in Gaza.

It defines famine as when 20 percent of households face extreme food shortages, more than 30 percent of children under five are acutely malnourished, and there is an excess mortality threshold of at least two in 10,000 people a day.

Skau painted a grim picture of Gaza.

"The levels of desperation are so high that people keep grabbing the food off our trucks," the former Swedish diplomat said.

"And when we're not able to do proper orderly distributions, we're

not sure that we're reaching the most vulnerable -- the women and the children furthest out in the camps," he said.

"And they're the ones we really need to reach now, if we want to avoid a full-scale catastrophe."

STARVATION PHASE

But Skau also warned that Gaza was only one of many global crises, with multiple famine zones emerging simultaneously as donor funding collapses.

» UN declared famine in Gaza, blames Israel's obstruction of aid

» 100 trucks enter daily for 2.1 million people

» Food is being seized from trucks out of desperation

Some 320 million people globally are now acutely food insecure -- nearly triple the figure from five years ago. At the same time, WFP funding has dropped by 40 percent compared with last year.

"Right now, we're seeing a number of crises that, at any other time in history, would have gotten the headlines and been the top issue discussed," he said.

That includes Sudan, where 25 million people are "acutely food insecure", including 10 million in what Skau called "the starvation phase".

"It's the largest hunger and

humanitarian crisis that we probably have seen in decades -- since the end of the 1980s with the Ethiopia famine," he said.

"We have 10 spots in Sudan where famine has been confirmed. It's a disaster of unimaginable magnitude."

He detailed how a UN aid convoy in June tried to break the siege by paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of Sudan's city of El Fasher in Darfur, only for the truck convoy to be hit by a deadly drone attack.

Neighbouring South Sudan is also struggling, he said, suggesting "there might well be a third confirmation of a famine".

"That will be unprecedented", he said, citing "extremely expensive" operations in the young nation's Upper Nile state, where, with few roads, aid must be delivered by helicopters or airdrops.

"This is maybe the number one crisis where you have on one hand staggering needs and, frankly, no resources available", he said.

At the same time, traditional donors have cut aid.

US President Donald Trump slashed foreign aid after taking office, dealing a heavy blow to humanitarian operations worldwide.

"We are in a funding crunch, and the challenge here is that the needs keep going up", Skau said.

While conflict is the "main driver" of rising hunger levels, other causes include "extreme weather events due to climate change" and the economic shock of trade wars.

"Our worry is that we are now cutting from the hungry to give to the starving," he said.

China-Russia ties 'most stable' in turbulent world Says Xi Jinping

AFP, Beijing

President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday that China's ties with Russia are the "most stable, mature and strategically significant" among major world powers, state media reported.

During a meeting with Vyacheslav Volodin, chairman of Russia's Duma, or lower house of parliament, Xi hailed the countries' relationship as being a "stable source of world peace", Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said.

"The two sides should... work together to safeguard the security and development interests of both countries, unite the Global South, uphold true multilateralism, and promote the international order towards greater fairness and justice," Xi told Volodin in Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People.

Former socialist allies with a history of tempestuous ties, relations between Beijing and Moscow have deepened since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

China has never denounced the war nor called for Moscow to withdraw its troops, and many of Ukraine's allies believe that Beijing has provided support to its vast northern neighbour.

ANIMAL MISTREATMENT Ambani son's wildlife centre faces probe

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court has ordered an investigation into a wildlife rescue centre run by the philanthropic arm of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's group, although it said the evidence did not support allegations of unlawful animal acquisitions and mistreatment.

Vantara is a marque project of the Reliance Foundation and the Ambani family. Located in western Gujarat state and led by the billionaire's son, Anant Ambani, it has rescued and treated thousands of animals, and built the largest elephant hospital. It was also one of the venues for Anant's pre-wedding celebrations last year, with the global celebrities who attended advised to don "jungle fever" outfits when visiting Vantara.

The Supreme Court late on Monday ordered an inquiry as it ruled on public interest litigations that referred to complaints by non-profit and wildlife groups alleging mistreatment of animals at Vantara and questioning how the animals ended up at the rescue centre. They also alleged the Central Zoo Authority, the regulatory agency, failed in its duties.

In a written order, the court said although there was no evidence to support the allegations, an independent investigation was needed because the petitions alleged authorities were unwilling to discharge their duties.

"We consider it appropriate in the ends of justice to call for an independent factual appraisal," the court said in its order.

SCO SUMMIT Xi to welcome Putin, Modi next week

REUTERS, Beijing

President Xi Jinping will gather more than 20 world leaders at a regional security forum in China next week in a powerful show of Global South solidarity in the age of Donald Trump while also helping sanctions-hit Russia pull off another diplomatic coup.

Aside from Russian President Vladimir Putin, leaders from Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia have been invited to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, to be held in the northern port city of Tianjin from August 31 to September 1.

The summit will feature Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first visit to China in more than seven years as the two neighbours work on further defusing tensions roiled by deadly border clashes in 2020.

Modi last shared the same stage with Xi and Putin at last year's BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, even as Western leaders turned their backs on the Russian leader amid the war in Ukraine. Russian embassy officials in New Delhi last week said Moscow hopes trilateral talks with China and India will take place soon.



Palestinians extend empty pots in front of a charity kitchen to receive cooked rice, in Gaza City on August 23, 2025. The United Nations officially declared a famine in Gaza on August 22, blaming "systematic obstruction" of aid by Israel during more than 22 months of war, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu swiftly dismissing the findings.

PHOTO: AFP

Rohingya crisis needs greater solidarity

Yunus's seven-point proposal deserves attention

It is encouraging to see the Rohingya crisis getting renewed attention following a three-day conference in Cox's Bazar that brought together global stakeholders and Rohingya representatives in part to prepare inputs for a high-level conference scheduled at the UN Headquarters next month. A salient feature of this event was a seven-point proposal forwarded by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, which needs to be acknowledged for capturing the major talking points of this evolving crisis. For too long, the crisis has been met with either indifference or a passive, short-term approach. Yunus rightly reminds the world that the Rohingya people's "umbilical" bond with their homeland cannot be severed, and that their safe and dignified return must remain at the core of any solution.

His first proposal—creating a "practical roadmap" for repatriation—underscores this point, for without such a plan the crisis risks being trapped in perpetual rhetoric. His second proposal highlights the need for sustained international aid, with major funding gaps emerging in the Joint Response Plan for 2025-26, especially after US cuts. The third and fourth points relate to the cessation of violence in Rakhine, allowing internally displaced persons to safely return home, and the creation of a platform for dialogue among Myanmar's ethnic groups to ease tensions.

Equally important is his fifth point stressing greater involvement from ASEAN, neighbouring countries, and the international community in fostering peace and tackling cross-border crimes that destabilise the region. In this regard, he particularly mentions the ASEAN five-point consensus. In his sixth proposal, Yunus called on regional and global actors to stand firmly against ethnic cleansing and calibrate their relations with the Myanmar government, Arakan Army, and other armed groups accordingly. Finally, he placed justice and accountability at the heart of the solution, urging stronger international commitment to ongoing processes at the ICJ, ICC, and other forums. These seven pillars collectively outline a path towards both immediate relief and long-term resolution.

Going forward, we expect to see greater efforts on these fronts, especially from China which has the leverage to influence happenings in Myanmar and press for dialogue under ASEAN's five-point consensus. The fact is, as long as conflicts continue in Rakhine, the journey to desired outcomes, especially Rohingya refugees' repatriation, is unlikely to gain momentum. Even today, discriminatory policies like the 1982 Citizenship Law deny them basic rights. As Khalilur Rahman, the national security adviser and high representative for the Rohingya issue, has reiterated at the Cox's Bazar conference, Bangladesh submitted lists for approximately eight lakh Rohingya to Myanmar, which confirmed over 1,80,000 as eligible for return. But unless those root causes are addressed, not only will their return remain elusive but new challenges will complicate things further. Since early 2024, 1,50,000 more Rohingya have already arrived in Bangladesh following the surge in conflicts in Myanmar.

Bangladesh has done all it could so far, opening its borders to the refugees and carrying a burden far beyond its capacity. The refugees themselves have repeatedly voiced their yearning to go home. Regional and global leaders now must step up to ensure that this crisis is not allowed to be dragged on indefinitely.

Rising poverty needs proper responses

PPRC study raises concerns about ongoing efforts

We cannot overstate the seriousness of the latest findings on poverty and indebtedness in Bangladesh. According to a study by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), the national poverty rate now stands at nearly 28 percent—up from 18.7 percent in 2022. Extreme poverty, too, has risen from 5.6 percent to 9.35 percent during the same period. These figures highlight widening economic distress in the country, especially for low-income households, with their growing dependence on debt flagged as a major vulnerability. Average household debt in mid-2025 was Tk 189,033—45 percent higher than the average household savings of Tk 130,728. For the poorest 10 percent, debt stands at Tk 62,767, more than three times their savings. In stark contrast, the richest 10 percent maintain far higher savings than debts, reinforcing the inequality gap.

As per the PPRC study, borrowing is largely being used for essentials, such as food, healthcare, and basic survival, not asset building. Nearly one third of debt is spent on household consumption, followed by medical expenses and housing repairs. Over half of the surveyed households reported at least one chronically ill member, underlining how healthcare costs are pushing families deeper into a debt trap.

To address this situation, we need a people-centred approach to development that prioritises their well-being, equity, and inclusivity. Five areas of growing vulnerability were identified in the PPRC report: debt burden, food insecurity, chronic illness, non-sanitary latrine use, and poverty in female-headed households. These challenges demand immediate policy attention and targeted interventions. While some macroeconomic reforms are currently underway, these are not enough. The government must continue to focus on reducing food prices and improving the supply chain to ease inflationary pressures, which hurt the poor disproportionately. At the same time, we need a comprehensive social protection framework that includes affordable healthcare, debt-relief mechanisms, and sustainable financial assistance for the most vulnerable.

Creating more jobs is also critical. Without sufficient employment opportunities, rising poverty and debt burden will only worsen. Business-friendly policies, political neutrality in trade, and proper regulatory reforms are necessary to restore confidence in the economy and attract both domestic and foreign investment. Bangladesh has only five years left to meet its SDG targets. Allowing poverty and inequality to deepen further will clearly derail progress. Our policymakers, therefore, must act urgently to not just stabilise the macroeconomy but also to protect citizens from the cycle of debt and deprivation.

EDITORIAL

Resetting the republic: Caretaker, 15th Amendment, and July Charter



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KHAN KHALID ADNAN

In December 2024, the High Court ruled that the portion of the 15th Amendment that abolished the non-party caretaker government (NCG) was unconstitutional, thereby restoring both the caretaker framework and the referendum mechanism. It published its full reasoning in July. The verdict declared that repealing Article 58A of the constitution (NCG provision) "destroyed the basic structure of [democracy]," struck those repeal sections as void with prospective effect, and revived Article 142's referendum safeguard. That holding sits atop a mountain of record evidence in the judgment itself, which traces how parliament passed the 15th Amendment on June 30, 2011, even as the Appellate Division's short order (May 10, 2011) had allowed two more elections under the caretaker system. Yet, the High Court also declined to void the entire amendment for procedural flaws, limiting its remedy to the parts that injured the constitution's basic features. In practical terms, the legal situation today is this: the NCG's abolition has been judicially undone, referendums are back, and finality awaits the Appellate Division's review.

The implications of this legal development for election-time governance are profound. First, the door is legally open to hold the next parliamentary election under a constitutionally grounded caretaker—a demand born of hard experience with elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024 that were widely criticised or boycotted. The EU Election Expert Mission, EU institutions, and the United States all flagged the 2024 polls as lacking full participation and credibility; those assessments now echo inside the judgment itself. Second, the restoration of referendums raises the bar for any future attempt to dismantle election-time neutrality: the people must now be asked directly. And third, by grounding its remedy in Bangladesh's basic structure jurisprudence, the court has signalled that "free and fair elections" are not merely policy choices but part of the constitutional architecture.

If the law has moved, politics is sprinting to keep up. Last week, the National Consensus Commission (NCC) circulated the final draft of its "July National Charter 2025" among political parties. The charter can be seen as a sprawling blueprint to translate major reform proposals and expectations into operating rules: term limits for the prime minister, a bicameral legislature, an independent appointments architecture—and, crucially, a process to select a

chief adviser for the caretaker by a multi-party committee that can draw in senior judges and use ranked-choice voting if consensus fails. Yet, the caretaker question remains exquisitely sensitive. Major parties diverge not on whether to restore an NCG, but on who gets decisive voice on adviser selection when initial options stall. The NCC's own account shows a spectrum: one consolidated proposal for a 13-member cross-party selection panel; a BNP package that keeps parliament central and excludes the judiciary; Jamaat options that re-empower the chief justice; and newer entrants pressing for vote-share-based formulas. After extensive discussions, the NCC's July

the ruling party to influence the outcome.

These differences are not academic. They go to the heart of our election-engineering pathology since 2011. After the Appellate Division's 13th Amendment case (*Abdul Mannan Khan vs. Government of Bangladesh*) prospectively invalidated the caretaker but permitted the next two elections under it, parliament moved ahead of the full judgment and erased the NCG entirely. The results—boycotts, disputed administrations, and eventually the student-led July-August 2024 uprising—are now part of the judicial record and contemporary reporting alike.

So, what would it take to get out of this toxic loop and run a genuinely free and fair election? I suggest following three steps immediately. First, lock in a neutral and workable caretaker design with "fail-safes" that do not return discretion to whoever holds a parliamentary majority. The NCC's ranked-choice fallback with limited judicial representation is worth keeping because it reduces single-party vetoes;

its full reasoning. The NCC has delivered a final draft and parties have engaged, but dissent notes—especially on who ultimately decides the chief adviser—could still turn a reform into a new instrument of partisan control. Meanwhile, the interim administration faces pressure to go to the polls even as it confronts violence, party registration controversies, and public fatigue. In this context, the July Charter could serve as a bridge, but only if it becomes legally enforceable and aligned with the court's rulings: its caretaker provisions should be embedded through a constitutional amendment, to be applied when an elected parliament is in session, backed by a legally binding framework (including a referendum where necessary), with implementing laws enacted and institutions activated immediately rather than waiting until after an election.

An enduring lesson runs through our jurisprudence and our streets alike. The Appellate Division's short order in 2011 was a compromise with necessity; it did not license permanent partisan control of elections. The 15th



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Charter outlined a detailed procedure for selecting the chief adviser through a five-member committee consisting of: (i) the prime minister, (ii) the leader of the opposition, (iii) the speaker, (iv) the deputy speaker representing the opposition, and (v) a representative from the second-largest opposition party in parliament. If the committee fails to decide following this process, two judicial members—one from the Appellate Division and one from the High Court Division—would be added. However, the "notes of dissent" indicate that the BNP opposed including senior judges and adopting ranked choice backups, instead advocating parliamentary intervention—an approach critics caution could enable

the parliamentary-override model should be rejected for the same reason. Second, implement the election-integrity basics before polling day: an empowered, consensus-appointed Election Commission; enforceable codes for police and administration; public dashboards on results and complaints; and expedited adjudication of election offences. These are not abstract ideals—they track what recent expert missions and observers have urged. Third, legislate a binding timeline. One weakness of the July Charter draft is the absence of an execution calendar; without dates, reform is a moving target.

How far is the reality? To be frank, we are midway. The court has cleared the constitutional obstacles and published

Amendment's caretaker repeal—and the politics built upon it—taught us how quickly public trust erodes when that control returns. The High Court has now reset the constitutional baseline. The July Charter can translate that reset into practice, but only if parties accept constraints on themselves. If they will not, the court's restoration of the referendum gives the electorate a tool to insist. That is the cleanest way out of election engineering: a neutral caretaker chosen by rules no party can rig, an election run by institutions no prime minister can capture, and a timetable no government can move. Anything less risks repeating the last decade under a new name.

Students need to be taught responsible use of AI



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JOYANTA JYOTI MONDAL

Since the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerged, it has become an integral part of university academia. The increased usage is also seen among Bangladeshi students. From simplifying complex concepts to generating entire assignments, generative AI technologies have undeniably changed how students learn and work. With this rapid adoption, a major concern arises: are we teaching our students to reason manually and critically before they head towards such tools for answers?

There is nothing wrong with embracing new technology. In fact, I welcome it, especially given our country's comparative gap in digital access. However, we must also recognise its potential to weaken essential human reasoning if used mindlessly.

AI is a powerful tool, but like a sword, it must be wielded with skill

and intention. Some of the students I mentor for research sometimes rely on AI without first trying to form an opinion or construct an argument on their own. Research by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology suggests that, over time, this can create what they refer to as "cognitive debt"—a reduction in brain connectivity and problem-solving ability when external tools are overused. We may be on the right track using AI to make our lives easier, but not by being unmindful. Before students rely on AI, they must engage their brains. Otherwise, what comes after is the gradual erosion of the strength of critical thinking that defines us as humans.

This is not just a theoretical concern. Bangladesh's National AI Policy 2024 rightly states that AI should be used to enhance education quality and promote critical thinking, not replace them. The policy calls

for AI solutions to support problem-solving capacity. But in practice, we see a different reality: students often skip the thinking process altogether and go straight to the chatbot. This undermines the very goals the policy sets out to achieve.

Bangladesh's education system already faces deep-rooted challenges. For instance, the emphasis on memorisation and a lack of encouragement towards open-ended inquiry have created generations of students trained to recall, not reason. If we do not act now, the risk is not just academic dishonesty, but the long-term underdevelopment of intellectual independence.

Around the world, universities are already rethinking how they teach. For instance, the University of Washington in the US is redesigning its computer science curriculum with a bold message: "coding is dead." Director of the programme Prof Magdalena Balazinska explained this does not mean coding has no value; rather, AI can now handle much of the routine translation of designs into software. The goal is no longer to train coders, but to develop software engineers who can think critically, design intelligently, and guide AI tools effectively.

The same shift is required

here. Teachers and institutions in Bangladesh need to urgently reconsider how curricula are structured. Are we training students to navigate ambiguity, ask better questions, and justify their claims? Or are we rewarding mechanical outputs that AI can easily replicate?

To be clear, this is not about being anti-technology or anti-AI. AI can be a brilliant partner in learning when students know how to think. When it is used prematurely, it robs students of the very skills they are supposed to develop in their academic institutions.

Students should be encouraged, even required, to manually draft arguments and explore possible perspectives before turning to AI chatbots. Educators can play a key role here by redesigning assignments to reward process over product, and reasoning over parroting.

To make this shift sustainable, support from different institutions is key. The University Grants Commission (UGC), education ministries, and individual universities must provide updated guidance, training modules, and revised assessment strategies that acknowledge the presence of AI without letting it replace thought. Integrating AI into education must be a structured, deliberate process, not an unregulated habit.

Coke Studio Bangla and the cost of Indigenous representation



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MYAT MOE KHAING

I pressed play on Coke Studio Bangla's latest release, *Baaji*. The first notes of Marma music filled me with pride. Here was a piece of my heritage on a prominent stage! But as the video unravelled, a familiar unease set in.

Written by Bangalee artist Hashim Mahmud, *Baaji* tells a love story. It follows a man journeying into the hills and the sea, seemingly in pursuit of an Indigenous woman, singing "I know I can get you! I bet you!" Even if playful, this line echoes a troubling trope often sold in the tourism industry: go to the hills, find the elusive *paharimeye*. The storyline casts her as so mysterious that even her tears are questioned: "Are they a trick, a tease, or true?" Or does this framing teach us that Indigenous women's pain is performance, and they send mixed signals?

Even more surprising, though the song romanticises an Indigenous woman, the video casts a Bangalee theatre artist. Listening with your eyes closed, you may imagine an Indigenous woman; open them and you see a masterclass of erasure!

Could this not have been an exception to the recurring trope in Bangladeshi storytelling where the man seeks and the woman is the reward? I'm not asking for a simple gender reversal, but for a rethinking of the patriarchal framework where one gender acts and the other remains static. This trope becomes far more troubling when applied to Indigenous women, who already navigate a brutal reality often shaped by fetishisation, violence, and erasure.

In May 2025, the body of a 29-year-old Khyang woman was found in a ditch near the under-construction Thanchi-Likri border road. Locals and Indigenous activists claim she was gang-raped and murdered. A 2022 International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) report shows that around 43 percent of gender-based violence cases involving Indigenous women occurred in the plains. In 2018, Amnesty International called for investigation into the rape of two Marma sisters. These are not isolated incidents, but part of a systemic pattern shaped largely by the male gaze.

Indigenous scholar Chandra K Roy notes how dominant narratives often exoticise Indigenous women while silencing them. Feminist scholar Anne McClintock describes this as the "colonial fantasy",



'Politics exists in *Baaji* whether Coke Studio Bangla acknowledges it or not.'

PHOTO: RAW XPOSURE

reducing women to passive, hypersexualised figures. Professor Jasbir Puar, an American academic and author, argues that racialised desire becomes a form of symbolic conquest, sustaining structures of domination.

This is the context in which *Baaji* lands.

Yes, music invites multiple readings. While some see just a love story, I see this through the lens of an Indigenous woman living with these patterns. Both views

the erasure and exploitation of Indigenous women does not register in the national conscience? Are people unaware, or do they just not care? Over time, I've realised that the burden of understanding is not mine. It rests with the powers that be.

I checked the credits, hoping for Indigenous representation beyond one vocalist, a flute player, and a "bamboo dance" team. None held decision-making roles. *Baaji* boasts elite musicians, directors,

Contrast this with how some other artists approach cross-cultural collaboration. In *Sapphire*, Arijit Singh and Ed Sheeran embraced Indian culture with depth. Indian instruments like the tabla and sitar weren't used as exotic sound effects but integrated into the core composition. Sheeran does not lead the story. He's a respectful guest walking alongside Arijit and local artists.

Or take Sunehra Tasnim, a Bangladeshi content creator, who recently released

a video about Rangamati. She didn't romanticise Kapta Lake. She acknowledged its violent history and the displacement of Indigenous communities. She wore a traditional Chakma *pinon hadi*, explained its meaning, highlighted an Indigenous artisan and shared the spotlight with Indigenous creator Tiya Chakma. She even spoke Chakma to express a desire for connection.

So, can an Indigenous woman and a Bangalee man not fall in love? Of course, they can. But love doesn't float in a vacuum, especially when Indigenous women are often silenced, displaced, and disappeared. Hence, when a powerful platform tells a story of a Bangalee man searching for an Indigenous woman who doesn't speak, sing, or choose, is that really romance?

I name Bangalee cultural workers not out of malice, but to ask the dominant group holding the capital in Bangladesh to tell stories with accountability. Politics exists whether the video acknowledges it or not. If your story unfolds on colonised space, features Indigenous bodies, and borrows cultural symbols, it's already political. From Lalon's spiritual songs to Bob Dylan's protest anthems, music has the power to speak the truth. So why should Coke Studio borrow political aesthetics without any responsibility for how it represents them?

Then how do we know if a collaboration is meaningful? Ask the represented community: *Do you feel seen?* For me, the answer is no. Despite the production value, it lacked the depth that makes a cultural exchange authentic. What could they have done differently? Collaborated with Indigenous artists and historians as co-creators, researched social and historical contexts, and challenged imagery tying land and femininity to silence.

As a marginalised community, we're often made to feel grateful for scraps of visibility. Yes, being featured matters. It sparks curiosity and recognises us as part of this land's cultural fabric. But gratitude doesn't erase the need for critique. And this critique doesn't come from bitterness. It comes from love—for our truth and the Indigenous women being objectified for generations.

If similar portrayals featured Palestinian women in Gaza, Kuki women in Northeast India, Yazidi women in Iraq and Syria, or First Nations women in Australia and New Zealand, the harm would be equally serious.

Representation without inclusion is tokenism. With systemic exclusion, it perpetuates structural violence. I am asking platforms like Coke Studio not to tell our stories without us because #RealMagic happens through research, respect, and responsibility.

A non-inclusive July Charter will be a betrayal



Dr Samina Luthfa
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SAMINA LUTHFA

In any society, genuine structural change occurs when the material conditions shift, which includes the transformation of the forces of production, the economic structure, the organisation of political elites, and even the cultural elites. The 2024 July-August uprising certainly had revolutionary aspirations. People wanted change in political culture, governance, exclusionary practices, and discrimination in the country. However, while the aspirations existed, the preparations were lacking. Neither the political parties, the civil society, nor any other group was sufficiently prepared to channel the energy that moved the uprising into structural changes in the economy, politics, or other vital areas. As a result, the institutions and settlements remained unchanged.

Since we were not ready to turn the energy of the uprising into something qualitatively different, I would not call the July uprising a revolution. I would call it an uprising, where people from all walks of life came together to stop Sheikh Hasina from killing our children and innocent civilians, who were protesting non-violently. The second catalyst was to dismantle and rebuild the fascist structure of the Awami League, which had been used to destroy key institutions. Yet, after Sheikh Hasina's overthrow, we are witnessing the return of the same old settlements in culture, politics, governance, and even the judiciary.

Now comes the question of whether the uprising succeeded. If we look at the timeline, it began as a student protest, a movement demanding better opportunities in

In July, people filled the streets because they felt the state no longer respected them as human beings, as citizens. Our votes did not matter, our voices did not matter, and no one was accountable to us. We were treated as if we had no value. We fought to reclaim our dignity as citizens, demanding equal respect and equal rights for all. That equality must be established. Religion, gender, profession, or any other grounds of discrimination cannot remain in the charter.

government jobs. Later, because of the regime's repression and killings, the protest spread. The political and economic repression people suffered from also became a factor. Citizens lacked the right to speak out, the right to a free press, and the freedom of expression, all of which were restricted to a severe degree. People were angry because the economy was failing, and avenues of dissent were closed. While these factors were significant, without the videos of the regime's brutality circulating on social media, the uprising would not have gained momentum so rapidly.

Although the uprising was successful in overthrowing the

previous regime, after which Sheikh Hasina fled, in the long term, it failed to fulfil people's aspirations. It did not bring systematic change to the structure of the fascist regime's apparatus. "Bangladesh 2.0" could not yet build new institutions or establish a process of justice for those who sacrificed their lives hoping for change. There is still no visible path to justice for those who were martyred and wounded. We wanted those who had lost their lives to be remembered, and the wounded to receive rehabilitation and treatment. None of that has been fully achieved yet. These are major failures. However, judging the uprising by its immediate outcome, it can be termed as successful, as it removed the autocrat and made the Awami League politically and culturally vulnerable in ways we had not expected for a long time. It also opened up a window of opportunity to initiate some real changes.

We hope to see the initiation of those changes and the aspiration of a discrimination-free Bangladesh, witnessed in the chants, slogans, and songs of the July uprising, reflected in the much-discussed July Charter. If the charter turns out to be a document that serves only the majority and the powerful, and if it is imposed upon the rest, it will be a huge disappointment. If the charter is not inclusive of minorities, women, Indigenous Peoples, non-Bangalee communities, and non-Muslims, then it will not be my July Charter. It must uphold the dignity and rights of all citizens. In July, people filled the streets because they felt the state no longer respected them as human beings, as citizens. Our votes did not matter, our voices did not matter, and no one was accountable to us. We were treated as if we had no value. We fought to reclaim our dignity as citizens, demanding equal respect and equal rights for all. That equality must be established. Religion, gender, profession, or any other grounds of discrimination cannot remain in the charter. That is our expectation.

We also expect that the Liberation War—the very foundation of our independence—should never be undermined. The moment of a nation's inception is profoundly important for many reasons, and there is no room to diminish it. The history of Bangladesh's Liberation War is bloody and genocidal. It cannot be compared to anything else or dismissed as a conspiracy.

There must be no false equivalence between 2024 and 1971, or other events such as the Partition of 1947 or the Language movement of 1952. All these points in history are crucial moments that formed the foundation of our country—enacted in blood. These historical moments cannot be compared. Denial of these events cannot be tolerated. No one has the right to do so.

Our demand from a fundamental human rights perspective is: equal dignity as citizens. We also demand that we do not regress on our achievements. Each achievement has a long and painful history, paid for with blood, sweat, and tears. The sacrifices made to secure our liberty, freedom, and rights cannot be reversed. Any attempt to undo those achievements is unacceptable.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project (SACP) Department of Agricultural Marketing Sech Bhaban (Level-06), 22, Manik Miah Avenue, Dhaka-1207 www.dam.gov.bd

Memo No. 12.02.0000.41.001 (Part-2).22-136

Date: 26 August, 2025

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Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Description of Goods	Tender Document Last Selling Date and time	Tender Closing Date and time
1	1143282	Procurement of 41,500 Pieces Training Bag for PHP Training	Date: 09/09/2025 Time: 17:00PM	Date: 10/09/2025 Time: 14:00PM
2	1143283	Procurement of 41,500 Set Note Pad, Short Manual and Pen for PHP Training	Date: 09/09/2025 Time: 17:00PM	Date: 10/09/2025 Time: 14:00PM
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6	1143287	Supplying Lunch and Refreshment for the Participants of 1660 batches PHP Training	Date: 16/09/2025 Time: 17:00PM	Date: 17/09/2025 Time: 14:00PM

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Dr. Mohammed Razu Ahmed
Component Director
Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project (SACP)
Department of Agricultural Marketing

KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM'S 49TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Like an undying phoenix, THE SPIRIT OF NAZRUL LIVES ON



DESIGN: DOWEL BISWAS



The British Raj understood the danger of such words. *Bhangar Gaan* was banned by 1924, and soon after, his incendiary *Prolay Shikha* met the same fate. His newspaper, *Dhumketu*, landed him in prison, where he endured cruelty at the hands of jailers.

Is it a coincidence or inevitability that Kazi Nazrul Islam's verses echo whenever Bengal rises in defiance? Each uprising, each cry for freedom, seems to find its mirror in the words of this fiery young man who, at just 22 and fresh from the mud of the First World War, sat with a wooden pencil in a modest Kolkata room and gave birth to *Bidrohi* (*The Rebel*). That night in December 1921, while his comrade Muzaffar Ahmed slept, Nazrul scribbled furiously. By the morning, the air was charged with something new. "Bolo Bir, Chiro Unnoto Momo Sheer..." ("I am the Rebel Eternal, / I raise my head beyond this world, / High, ever erect and alone!") he declared. It was not merely the birth of a poem but of a cultural rupture. Critics would later see in *Bidrohi* a break from the 'Rabindric' serenity that had long defined Bengal's literary

landscape—a new current of words forged in fire, laced with the clang of rebellion.

In each of our fate-defining uprisings, resistance, and even a brutal war, revolutionaries kept their spirit high and unbroken against death.

Nazrul's verses struck at the very marrow of oppression. "Bolo Bir, Chiro Unnoto Momo Sheer..." ("I am the Rebel Eternal, / I raise my head beyond this world, / High, ever erect and alone!") he declared. It was not merely the birth of a poem but of a cultural rupture. Critics would later see in *Bidrohi* a break from the 'Rabindric' serenity that had long defined Bengal's literary

division. "I do

not bend to anyone," he roared,

as if to remind Bengal that true freedom meant dismantling every hierarchy, not just the colonial one. In this way, his rebellion was at once national and universal.

His *Bhangar Gaan* (*Song of Destruction*), first sung in 1921 after his return from Cumilla, still reverberates like a clarion call:

"Ore o torun Ishan, Baja tor proloy-bishan!
Lathi mar, bhang re tala,
Joto shob bondi shalay—
Agun jwala, agun jwala, phel upadip!"

("O young wind, rise and blow your doomsday horn! Break the locks,

smash the chains, set the prison houses afame!")

The British Raj understood the danger of such words. *Bhangar Gaan* was banned by 1924, and soon after, his incendiary *Prolay Shikha* met the same fate. His newspaper, *Dhumketu*, landed him in prison, where he endured starvation and cruelty at the hands of jailers. Yet even in chains, he mocked authority. At Hooghly Jail, under the notorious superintendent Arston, Nazrul sang parody songs to keep the prisoners' spirits alive: *Tomari jele palish thele, tumi dhonno dhonno he!* ("In your jail, polishing floors, how glorious you must be!").

Denied rice, forced to live on thin gruel, he began a hunger strike that lasted 39 days. Tagore himself wrote pleading for him to relent—"Give up hunger strike, our literature claims you"—yet prison authorities suppressed the message. Only the maternal appeal of Biraja Sundari Devi finally persuaded him to break his fast. Even so, his defiance had already transformed prison walls into a theatre of resistance.

Nazrul's rebellion was never nihilistic.

His songs were at once destructive and creative—tearing down the old, but also

urging the forging of unity and justice.

In *Chal Chal Chal (March Forward)*, he roused his countrymen with lines that still march across history:

"March forward, brothers, march forward,

For the freedom of the country, for the salvation of the people.

Let the shackles break, let the sky be lit—

March, march forward, to the call of



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

independence."

This was poetry as drumbeat, verse as anthem. In *Bolo Bolo Bolo (Speak, Speak, Speak)*, he sharpened silence into weaponry:

"Speak with strength,
Let your voice be the weapon,
Shake the very foundations of unjust rule."

And in *Sarbojanin (Universal)*, he transcended the nationalist frame altogether, envisioning a world where:

"Let there be no more division, no more pain,
Let the light of love shine through every heart,

For all men are brothers, and all lands are one."

Here was Nazrul at his most radical—not just a rebel poet of Bengal, but a prophet of humanism, collapsing borders, faiths, and hierarchies into one vast fraternity.

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Here was Nazrul at his most radical—not just a rebel poet of Bengal, but a prophet of humanism, collapsing borders, faiths, and hierarchies into one vast fraternity.

Nazrul's rebellion was never nihilistic. His songs were at once destructive and creative—tearing down the old, but also

urging the forging of unity and justice.

In *Chal Chal Chal (March Forward)*, he roused his countrymen with lines that still march across history:

"March forward, brothers, march forward,

For the freedom of the country, for the salvation of the people.

Let the shackles break, let the sky be lit—

March, march forward, to the call of

independence."

That was poetry as drumbeat, verse as anthem. In *Bolo Bolo Bolo (Speak, Speak, Speak)*, he sharpened silence into weaponry:

"Speak with strength,
Let your voice be the weapon,
Shake the very foundations of unjust rule."

And in *Sarbojanin (Universal)*, he transcended the nationalist frame altogether, envisioning a world where:

"Let there be no more division, no more pain,
Let the light of love shine through every heart,

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60% of rape

FROM PAGE 3
Still, comparisons between 2024 and early 2025 showed deeply concerning trends.

In 2024, 364 rape cases were reported, while in the first six months of 2025 alone, 354 cases were recorded, nearly matching the previous year's total.

Gang rape incidents totalled 148 in 2024 and 106 in the first half of 2025, while cases of murder following rape rose from 112 in 2024 to 127 between January and June 2025.

Sexual abuse and harassment cases climbed from 224 in the entirety of 2024 to 320 in just the first half of 2025, while dowry-related incidents rose from 68 to 96.

Afroza noted that both the perpetrators and the victims are young, which is extremely concerning, as it shows that adolescents are becoming involved in incidents of sexual violence.

She also pointed to one encouraging development – “Although there are still attempts to cover up rape cases, pressure to withdraw complaints, and efforts to settle through local arbitration instead of punishment, the tendency of victims to file cases has increased,” she said, adding that social activism and protests are also rising.

Other speakers noted that children remain unsafe both at home and outside, demanding urgent action for their protection.

They said grassroots incidents are now reported more frequently in the media because they are harder to conceal.

They also highlighted Mahila Parishad's 98 percent legal success rate, though delays remain a problem, with some trials dragging on for 25–26 years.

Presiding over the event, Mahila Parishad president Fauzia Moslem said a growing culture of misogyny fuels violence against women.

Rising communalism, hatred toward women, and criminal tendencies, she warned, push women and children into marginalised positions, making them frequent victims during periods of instability.

She stressed the need to replace misogynistic culture with a women-friendly one and urged the media to keep these issues alive in public discussion.

She also called for stronger collaboration between the media and the women's movement to prevent violence against women.

Political will key

FROM PAGE 4
Implementation of the July Charter requires contributions not only from political parties but also from the Election Commission and other state institutions. Some proposals may be enacted through ordinances, others by executive orders. The government too has clear responsibilities,” he said.

Chief Adviser's Special Assistant Monir Haider noted that the consensus commission's progress should not be underestimated. “In other countries, it has taken an average of two and a half years to reach such achievements,” he said.

Presenting the keynote, Sujan national committee member Md Ekram Hossain said the July Charter, prepared after dialogues with political parties, is positive but its success depends entirely on implementation, which remains disputed among parties.

He stressed the need to distinguish which reforms require constitutional amendments, ordinances, administrative decisions, or immediate action.

The dialogue was chaired by Sujan's acting president Justice MA Matin.

Former comptroller and auditor general Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, journalist Sohrab Hasan, Dhaka University Professor Asif Mohammad Shaham, and representatives from various civic organisations also attended the event.

MONIRAMPUR IN JASHORE

Waterlogging disrupts edn in 25 schools

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Educational activities have been disrupted in 25 institutions in Monirampur upazila of Jashore due to widespread waterlogging.

Most houses and schools have been inundated, and the situation has persisted for the past month. Despite this, classes have continued, with primary lessons now being held in tents set up in the courtyards of local homes.

Students of Bholbari Government Primary School are attending classes in the house of the school's PTA president, as the school grounds have been submerged under knee-deep water for the past month. The alternative arrangement allows lessons to continue despite the challenging conditions.

The floodwaters have caused immense hardship for both students and teachers, particularly in the Bhabdab area, where nearly three lakh people have been stranded due to continuous rainfall and water from upstream.

Several other government primary schools, including Kumashima, Hatgacha, Panchkati, and



Mahishdia, have also shifted classes to temporary shelters in private homes.

Fourth grader Devbrato Biswas and fifth grader Anushka Biswas said the roads to their school remain submerged, forcing them to wade through water and mud to attend classes.

Pranesh Biswas, headteacher of Bholbari Government Primary School, said a tent had been erected at the home of the PTA president to allow classes to continue.

PTA president Nityo Biswas confirmed that bamboo and poles were collected from the village to

construct the temporary structure, which is now hosting regular lessons.

Monirampur Upazila Secondary Education Officer Zillur Rashid said the grounds of at least 25 schools, colleges, and madrasas have been submerged, leading to the suspension of classes in many institutions.

Abu Motaleb, upazila education officer, said while the grounds of 14 government primary schools remain submerged, alternative education activities are ongoing, and the learning process will continue in this manner until the water recedes.

Cyberbullying, smear campaigns cast

FROM PAGE 1

to Chhatra Shibir. While some, who refrained from naming any group directly, suggested that radical organisations opposing women's participation were behind the attacks.

Sharan Ahsan, who is likely to contest for the general secretary post from the Sompritir Oikyoga panel, said the targets are not only women but also indigenous and general students who oppose fundamentalist ideologies.

“These accounts can influence the outcome of the election and threaten neutrality.” His panel has already submitted a memorandum to the Jucsu election commission, urging action.

Shah Mohammad Faysal Hossain, joint convener of JU Chhatra Dal, echoed the concern. “A specific group is running smear campaigns against Jucsu candidates, particularly women. We understand that they are being run by Shibir,” he claimed.

“Radical groups fear women's leadership. Their aim is to discourage women

from running and voting,” he added.

Faiza Mehzabin, president of Jahangirnagar Sanskritik Jote, also pointed to evidence that radical groups are behind the smear campaigns. “Their main objective seems to be discouraging women's candidacy and participation. If the election commission fails to act, the overall transparency and level playing field of the election will be questioned,” she warned.

Touhid Mohammad Siam, member secretary of Bangladesh Ganotantrik Chhatra Sangsad who is going to contest for the general secretary post, alleged that radical groups opposed to women in politics are leading the smear campaign while promoting their own preferred contenders.

Shibir, however, denied the allegations. Its Office Secretary Majharul Islam said, “We don't run fake pages or bots. Even female candidates from our panel face hate online. We too have submitted a memorandum to the election commission,

demanding action against these smear campaigns.”

Saeed Al-Zaman, digital media researcher and JU assistant professor of journalism and media studies, said such smear campaigns pose a major threat to political participation, especially among swing voters.

“When the flow of accurate information is blocked by propaganda, fair participation suffers,” he said. He urged the shutdown of all propaganda pages that use the university's name without authorisation.

Rezwana Karim Snigdha, associate professor of anthropology and a member of the JU Election Commission, termed the smear campaigns “ideologically motivated”.

“They want to reduce the visibility of women,” she said, noting that tackling such pages is beyond the commission's capacity alone and requires support from national agencies like the BRTC. “The commission is considering necessary steps,” she added.

JU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof

Sohel Ahmed said the administration would seek BRTC's help to block propaganda pages if the election commission recommends.

Offenders would also face disciplinary action under university rules, he said.

25 new High

FROM PAGE 4

senior judges of the lower judiciary, deputy attorneys general, and practising Supreme Court advocates.

The newly appointed HC judges are Md Anwarul Islam (Shaheen), Md Saiful Islam, Md Nurul Islam, Sheikh Abu Taher, Aziz Ahmed Bhuiyan, Rajiuddin Ahmed, Faisal Hasan Arif, SM Saiful Islam, Md Asif Hasan, Md Ziaul Haque, Dibidar Masum Kabir, Jasmin Ara Begum, Murad-e-Mawla Sohel, Md Zakir Hossain, Md Rafizul Islam, Md Manjur Alam, Md Lutfur Rahman, Rezul Karim, Fatema Anwar, Mahmud Hasan, Abdur Rahman, Syed Hasan Jubair, AFM Saiful Karim, Urmia Rahman and SM Iftekhar Uddin Mahamud.

Sourav, Mahbubar, Ashim, Ullas, Akter Jahan and Shofiqul also testified in another corruption case filed against 17 people, including Hasina and Joy.

On the other hand, Mahbubar, Ashim, Ullas, Akter Jahan and Shofiqul gave their statements in the third case filed against 18 people, including Hasina and Joy.

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After recording the

DHAKA WEDNESDAY AUGUST 27, 2025

BHADRA 12, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

9

Protesters were shot

FROM PAGE 12

student movement, Chhatra League activists stopped ambulances near Dhaka University's Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Hall, asked about patients' identities, and obstructed the injured from reaching the hospital.

During treatment, armed Chhatra League activists entered the hospital and inquired about the injured. Students pleaded us to hide their identities,” he said, holding

Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and law enforcers responsible for the brutality and demanding justice.

Apart from Mostak, four other witnesses testified yesterday.

Nasir Uddin, a trader from Feni, testified that he was shot twice by armed members of Awami League, Juba League and Chhatra League when they attacked an anti

discrimination procession

that he participated in Feni town on August 5 last year. One bullet pierced through his right heel while another one hit below his left knee and got stuck in a bone.

He told the tribunal that he later heard that seven or eight people were shot dead in Feni on August 4 that year.

He said with the under of Sheikh Hasina, AL ministers Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and Obaidul Quader, Awami League men led by local lawmaker Nizam Uddin Hazari shot protesters.

Saidur Rahman, grandfather of deceased Sharir Khan Anas narrated how the 10th grader left home, joined the protest and was killed with five others in Chankharpur on August 5.

Mafizur Rahman, assistant director of Mitford Hospital, testified that investigators seized three bullets from hospital

officials, removed from bodies of wounded protesters.

DMCH Assistant Registrar Monirul Islam in his testimony said 23 bullets, pellets and bullet fragments were also seized from the hospital.

During cross-examination, state defence counsel Amir Hossain, representing Hasina and Asaduzzaman, claimed that the witnesses had made false statements. He alleged Mostak testified due to “ideological differences”, which Mostak denied.

Amir also disputed the claims that shots were fired from helicopter and from high places.

Prosecutor Mizanul Islam told the tribunal that they hope to finish presenting the prosecution witnesses within the next two weeks. The number of prosecution witnesses in the case is 81 and 29 have testified so far.

7 witnesses testify against Hasina

FROM PAGE 3

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun of the Special Judge's Court 5 in Dhaka recorded the statements from 11:30am to 1:35pm, said Anti-Corruption Commission's Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

He said that Dhiraj, Mahbubar, Ashim, Ullas, Akter Jahan and Shofiqul testified in one of the graft cases filed against Hasina and 11 others.

On the other hand, Mahbubar, Ashim, Ullas, Akter Jahan and Shofiqul also testified in another corruption case filed against 17 people, including Hasina and Joy.

Sourav, Mahbubar, Ashim, Ullas, Akter Jahan and Shofiqul gave their statements in the third case filed against 18 people, including Hasina and Joy.

After recording the

statements, the court set September 2 for next hearings in the three cases.

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

According to the anti graft body, Hasina, in collusion with senior Rajuk officials, unlawfully secured six plots – each measuring 10 kathas, in the diplomatic zone of Sector 27 of the Purbachal New Town project for herself and her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul; Rehana and her son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby and daughter Azmina despite their ineligibility under existing regulations.

On March 25, the ACC

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

The commission has listed all accused as fugitives.

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

On July 1, the court ordered the relevant authorities to issue six gazette notifications summoning the 29 individuals to appear at the court.

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

BNP suspends Fazlur Rahman

FROM PAGE 3

stricter organisational punishment.

Fazlur Rahman, however, told this newspaper that he had not yet received any official letter from the party.

“I replied to the show-

cause notice today at 4:00pm. I have not been given any party letter yet,” he said yesterday.

A show-cause notice was served on Fazlur Rahman on August 24. Instead of submitting a written explanation immediately,

he requested additional time.

On August 25, the party extended the deadline by 24 hours.

However, the reply he submitted yesterday was deemed “unsatisfactory” by the party, leading to the temporary suspension.

“I replied to the show-

Bangladeshi startups

FROM PAGE 3

Consumer Technology category, Pathao raised \$12 million in a pre-series B round last year led by VentureSouq, taking its total funding past \$50 million. The fresh investment is aimed at expanding its fintech arm, including Pathao Pay, a digital wallet, and Pay Later, said Forbes.

“Pathao's inclusion in the Forbes Asia 100 to Watch is a recognition of our enduring commitment to building products that our customers love and are happy to pay for,” Fahim Ahmed, CEO of Pathao, told The Daily Star.

Shomvob, a newer entrant founded in 2022 and headed by CEO Rifat Hossain, focuses on democratising employment opportunities in Bangladesh.

“Shomvob is helping Bangladeshi find jobs that match their skills and goals. Through its platform, job seekers can create digital profiles to apply for roles or participate in online training programs,” said Forbes.

Companies can use Shomvob to review candidates, outsource recruitment, and manage payrolls. Initially focused on finding work for low-income women, Shomvob received a Gates Foundation grant of \$3,00,000 in 2023. Last May, it raised \$1 million in pre-seed funding led by Singapore-based VC

Forbes Asia's selection process involved rigorous evaluation based on factors such as industry impact, innovation, business model, revenue growth, and funding attractiveness. Companies were required to be headquartered in the Asia Pacific region, privately owned, and have no more than \$50 million in annual revenue or \$100 million in total funding as of August 15, 2025.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 4
energy cooperation, security and the situation of the Rohingyas, alongside other regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Skills, Compliance, and Coordination Vital for Agro Export Readiness

Swisscontact, in collaboration with The Daily Star, organised a roundtable titled 'Export Readiness of Agro-Processing SMEs through Skills Development' on June 26, 2025. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



The Daily Star

swisscontact



Halal Hussain
Country Director, Swisscontact
Bangladesh



Bangladesh has strong potential in agro-processing, which is emerging as a key driver of value beyond traditional farming. Global demand for safe, high-quality processed food is growing fast, and Bangladesh already exports over \$1.2 billion annually in this sector. But growth is limited—only 12% of agro-processors meet international standards. Most SMEs are not export-ready. They struggle with understanding export rules and standards, packaging and branding, certification, and connecting with buyers. Addressing these gaps is crucial to unlocking the sector's full export potential.

At Swisscontact, we aim to address these challenges and move towards more action-oriented interventions that lead to tangible change on the ground. Recently, we started another project, supported by the World Trade Organization (WTO), focused on the agro-processing sector. Under this initiative, we have selected 20 products, including vegetables and fruits, for export to seven destination countries. Swisscontact is working to understand export requirements and then collaborate with traders, exporters, and farmers to address them.

In the BYETS project, which is supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, we have been working to equip youth with employability and entrepreneurship skills. One of the key sectors BYETS focuses on is agro-processing, where we support SMEs with business development services to enhance their capacity to access export markets. Recently, we organised an expo under the project, and going forward, this will remain a key area of focus.

We aspire not only to improve skills but also to go beyond skills development, providing SMEs and young job seekers with greater opportunities and practical support. Moving forward, we aim to collaborate closely with all relevant stakeholders, including trade bodies, government agencies, certification experts, and private-sector actors, to ensure a more coordinated and impactful approach.

Tanjila Tazreen
Senior Policy Advisor- Economic Affairs and Private Sector Development, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh



Agro-processing and agriculture have long been key areas of bilateral trade between the Netherlands and Bangladesh, with Dutch seeds and potatoes widely used in Bangladesh. Recognising the untapped potential in Bangladesh's labour force, the Netherlands has prioritised agro-processing to create jobs, enhance skills, and improve productivity. Agro-processing offers significant growth potential, provided it receives policy support and market access. As Bangladesh transitions from LDC status and the Netherlands redefines its global trade approach, supply chain resilience and compliance with international standards are crucial. Dutch collaboration aims to strengthen these areas through skills development and trade

facilitation. Agriculture remains a priority for the Netherlands, with shared goals of boosting efficiency, productivity, and inclusive growth in Bangladesh's agro-processing industry.

The BYETS project, supported by the Dutch government and Embassy, focuses on youth and women's skills development, aligning with Bangladesh's goal of creating jobs and export diversification. Under BYETS, over 1,200 workers have been trained, and a national curriculum has been developed with the National Skills Development Authority. However, a long-term, systemic approach is needed beyond project-based interventions to sustain progress in the sector.

Md Abul Hashem
President, Bangladesh Agro-Processors Association (BAPA)



Despite being an agricultural country, Bangladesh lags in agro-processing, relying heavily on imported raw materials. However, it exports processed food to over 150 countries, with earnings exceeding \$1 billion, and aims to reach \$2 billion soon. A major challenge is the lack of proper testing facilities. Most products cannot be tested locally, and outdated machinery often yields inaccurate results. Samples are sent to India or Thailand, increasing costs and causing delays. While a national testing lab is underway, progress remains slow.

Halal-certified products offer significant export potential, but international buyers demand full traceability. The Islamic Foundation provides certification, but compliance across the supply chain is essential. Farmer awareness is another gap. Incorrect chemical usage leads to export compliance issues, highlighting the need for training at every stage, from farming to processing. The Bangladesh Agro-Processors' Association (BAPA) has over 700 members involved in food export; however, many local suppliers do not want to engage, and new businesses struggle due to a lack of skilled labour and expertise.

Trade incentives also need realignment. Currently, manufacturers, not exporters, benefit the most, disadvantaging SMEs in the sector. Addressing these challenges could unlock greater growth for Bangladesh's agro-processing industry.

Mahbub Baset
Chief Operating Officer, IFAD Multi Products Limited



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key support from the BYETS project. Consistent quality across local and export markets remains a priority, with BAPA playing a crucial role. Despite political unrest last year, the industry remained stable, thanks to strong worker engagement. BYETS initiatives promote ownership and motivation, resulting in confident workers, fewer buyer complaints, and highlighting the need for ongoing training and collaboration across the sector.

Ikramul H Sohel
Senior Programme Officer, Inclusive Economic Development, Development Cooperation Sector, Embassy of Sweden



The Swedish Embassy's work in Bangladesh focuses heavily on the RMG sector but also actively supports agriculture, particularly in climate-vulnerable areas. Given that agriculture employs around 60% of the country's female workforce and remains vital to economic development, strengthening this sector is crucial.

Reflecting on the RMG sector's growth, which began in 1979, there are valuable lessons for agriculture, especially in policy shifts, food safety, certification, and worker protection.

Clearer policy guidance is needed to address gaps in the agro value chain, including backwards and forward linkages.

Access to finance is another key challenge. Sweden's credit guarantee facilities for MSMEs could serve as a model for agro-processing businesses. Additionally, improving skills in packaging, labelling, and product testing across the value chain is essential. With systematic efforts, the agro sector has the potential to achieve global recognition, much like the RMG industry. The Swedish Embassy remains committed to supporting Bangladesh in this journey.

KH Nurul Momen Kayes
Proprietor, TRUST & TRADE



Trust & Trade exports to 12 countries, including Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Turkey, with \$11 million in exports last year. However, stricter FDA standards and customs regulations in Japan and Taiwan present major hurdles. Many farmers and middlemen remain unaware of evolving policy and quality requirements. To tackle this, Trust & Trade is collaborating directly with farmers to improve production standards. Additionally, delays in testing and health certification, especially for European markets, continue to hamper exports.

Saif Mohammad Moinul Islam
Senior Programme Officer, International Labour Organisation



There is a major mismatch between industry needs and current skills development, which has long been supply-driven and qualification-focused. The shift is now toward demand-driven models like workplace-based learning and apprenticeships. The ILO has engaged 1,600 agro-processing entrepreneurs,

communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities, in skills development programmes. This focus reflects Australia's long-term commitment to fostering sustainable economic growth and opportunities in Bangladesh.

Md Al Amin Rumi
AGM- Business Development, CEMS
Bangladesh



The RMG sector's export-marketing strategies contrast sharply with those of agro-processing, a disparity which requires urgent

attention. Authorities are now revamping engagement tools to ensure continuous stakeholder collaboration beyond expos, aiming for deeper networking. Success hinges on unified support from all involved parties. This shift seeks to bridge long-standing gaps and strengthen export readiness across industries, moving past one-off events towards sustained growth. Collective effort remains vital for meaningful progress.

Mohammad Mosharrof Hossain
Chief Executive Officer, Agro Food Industry Skills Council (AFISC)



The Agro Food Industry Skills Council, established in 2015, continues to face significant institutional capacity challenges, hindering

its ability to bridge the gap between planning and implementation. Despite being operational for nearly a decade, the council lacks a proper office or a structured workforce, functioning with only a few paid employees, including the CEO. This year, AFISC aimed to formulate 25 standards but managed only 10, with a pressing need for more export-focused standards. So far, just one quality standard for export readiness has been developed, leaving critical gaps in logistics, packaging, and related areas. Delays in obtaining a logistics training licence from Security Intelligence further stall progress, suggesting a lack of stakeholder prioritisation.

First, can the country develop a clear, sector-specific roadmap within the next two to three years? This plan must focus on products, markets, and industries where Bangladesh has a competitive edge. Second, what would be the impact on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) if such a roadmap succeeds? Without addressing these questions, achieving the desired level of export readiness will remain difficult.

Another crucial consideration is risk management. While known challenges, such as infrastructure gaps and supply chain inefficiencies, are often discussed, other risks, particularly those linked to climate change, are frequently overlooked. Tackling these will be essential to building a resilient and sustainable agro-processing sector. The road ahead is challenging, but with a well-structured strategy, Bangladesh could secure a stronger position in the global market. However, time is of the essence—the next few years will be decisive.

Palash Kanti Das
Senior Advisor, Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA)



By 2027, the global agro-processing industry is projected to be worth approximately \$4.186 trillion. Currently, Bangladesh holds a mere 0.03% share of this market. Even if the country overcomes its existing challenges, estimates suggest its market share might only rise to around 0.24%. This raises a critical question: can Bangladesh realistically capture even that 0.24% of the global market? To answer this, two key factors must be considered.

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Shahriar Islam
Senior Programme Manager (Strategic Partnerships Lead), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian High Commission, Dhaka



The Australian Government has prioritised several key areas in Bangladesh, both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including

health security, stability, economic resilience, and growth. These efforts are closely linked to skills development in the country. For over two decades, Australia has supported primary education in Bangladesh and has been actively involved in skills development for more than ten years. Unlike many initiatives that primarily target unemployment, Australia has also been emphasising export-oriented skills, preparing Bangladeshi youth not only for overseas employment but also for local and international job markets. Australia would also like to highlight one area that requires further attention: the inclusion of marginalised

Non-resident Bangladeshis are keen to purchase Bangladeshi products, but inadequate packaging hinders export potential.

Recently, two European firms have invested in the agro-processing sector, signalling growing international interest. Collaborations with Swisscontact and other stakeholders are also underway to address challenges and enhance market opportunities. These efforts aim to boost exports while meeting global standards.

Ananya Raihan
Chairperson, iSocial Limited



Today's discussion emphasised integrating e-commerce into agro-processing by engaging stakeholders like importers, exporters, manufacturers, and quality assurance bodies in skills development. While the BYETS project has made progress, expanding targeted interventions in priority sectors is crucial. The SME Foundation's one-stop information service, though unsuccessful in scaling, highlighted the need to link SMEs with policy and resources.

Common Facilitation Centres (CFCs) for micro and nano businesses could bridge market gaps. Addressing training apathy is vital, where a CPD study found 91% of overseas workers lacked formal training, underscoring the need for skills development across export-oriented value chains.

Recommendations

- » Introduce a one-stop information service for businesses and farmers
- » Establish Common Facilitation Centres (CFC) for micro and nano businesses
- » Ensure production of value-added products from underutilised materials to penetrate untapped export markets
- » Establish proper testing facilities in Bangladesh to avoid additional costs
- » Improve backwards and forward linkages
- » Ensure access to proper financing mechanisms
- » Review and reform the Quality Apprenticeship Act to encourage companies' investment in apprentices.
- » Utilise Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and Economic Zones (EZ)
- » Form a National Coordination Board to lead integrated skill development programmes
- » Formulate product-, market-, and sector-specific roadmaps

Other than the people mentioned, Nadia Afrin Shams, who is the Team Leader of BYETS at Swisscontact Bangladesh; Abhishek Yugal, a Managing Partner at Groovo Consulting; and Md. Naushad Alam, the Portfolio Manager at Inspira Advisory & Consulting Limited, Tanjim Ferdous, In-charge of NGOs & Foreign Missions at The Daily Star; were present and participated in the roundtable discussion.

'FREER' Venus exits

REUTERS, New York

Forty-five-year-old Venus Williams made an emotional exit in the first round of the US Open on Monday (yesterday, Bangladeshi time).

Ten-time Grand Slam winner Williams, back at Flushing Meadows — courtesy of a wildcard entry — after a year's hiatus, fought bravely against 11th seed Karolina Muchova, forcing a deciding set before bowing out 6-3 2-6 6-1.

"I'm very proud of how I played," said Williams, who last appeared here in 2023 and had sealed the singles title twice in 2000 and 2001.

"I think for me getting back on the court was about giving myself a chance to play more healthy," added Williams, who disclosed in 2011 that she had been diagnosed with Sjogren's, an autoimmune disease that causes fatigue and joint pain.

"When you play unhealthy, it's in your mind. It's not just how you feel. You get stuck in your mind too. So it was nice to be freer."

New hairstyle, same old ALCARAZ

Carlos Alcaraz arrived at the US Open with a drastic new look — a buzz cut that became the talk of Flushing Meadows — but the haircut didn't stop him from dismantling Reilly Opelka 6-4, 7-5, 6-4 to reach the second round. The 22-year-old Spaniard revealed the severe military-style crew cut was the result of his brother mishandling clippers before the tournament. "The only way to fix it was just to shave it off," Alcaraz laughed. "Some people like it, some don't. I'm just laughing at the reactions." Among the critics was close friend Frances Tiafoe, who called it "terrible," though Alcaraz insisted he was joking. The haircut debate aside, Alcaraz was clinical against Opelka, seizing crucial breaks in each set and finishing with a blazing forehand down the line. The 2022 US Open champion next faces Italy's Mattia Bellucci.



PHOTO: AFP

Kiron discloses mega plan for women

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has outlined a preliminary plan to arrange at least six international matches for the Bangladesh women's team as part of their preparation for next year's AFC Women's

yesterday.

Kiron previously stated that preparations for the women's team were initially scheduled to begin in early September. However, the residential training camp has been postponed by two weeks and is set to start in mid-

camp, the team will play two friendly matches against Thailand during the October international window. On October 30, the squad will travel to Japan for an intensive three-week training camp, where the players will focus solely on physical and tactical preparation

"If we are unable to organise the tri-nation series, we will still arrange two international friendlies," Kiron said. She added that discussions are also underway with New Zealand to potentially schedule two more matches against the New Zealand women's team in February. These would follow a training camp in January.

"If the matches in New Zealand go ahead, we will travel directly to Australia for the Asian Cup. Otherwise, we will arrange matches against other countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, or Hong Kong en route to Australia," she said.

"Current plan for senior women's team involve six international matches and a training camp in Japan. Some players from the U-20 squad will have the opportunity to join the senior team, while separate matches for the U-20 team are also being arranged as part of their preparation for April's AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup in Thailand," Kiron added.

She also announced the launch of a more competitive Women's Football League starting on December 15, with the inclusion of stronger teams and at least one prominent corporate sponsor.



Asian Cup in Australia. Among the fixtures, two friendlies against Thailand are scheduled for October.

Mahfuz Akter Kiron, head of the BFF women's committee, revealed the plan during an informal briefing with select media representatives at the BFF House

September, once head coach Peter Butler returns to Dhaka from England.

Training camp for the senior women's team along with the U-20 squad will be accommodated in a hotel or resort rather than the BFF dormitory," Kiron said.

Following the September training

without any scheduled matches.

Kiron, who is also an AFC executive member, confirmed that BFF plans to utilise the FIFA windows in November and December by hosting a tri-nation tournament in Dhaka involving Vietnam and Azerbaijan.



Liverpool's 16-year-old Rio Ngumoha struck in the 100th minute to seal a 3-2 win over Newcastle in a Premier League thriller on Monday. The defending champions had led 2-0 through Ryan Gravenberch and Hugo Ekitike while Newcastle were reduced to 10 men due to a red card for Anthony Gordon just before half-time. But the Magpies fought back via Bruno Guimaraes and William Osula. Ngumoha's stoppage-time goal made him the youngest scorer in Liverpool's history.

No Neymar, Vinicius for Brazil's final WC qualifiers

AGENCIES

Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti announced his squad on Monday for the final two World Cup qualifiers against Chile and Bolivia, with Neymar missing out and Vinicius Junior rested.

The five-time champions, who have already secured their place at the 2026 World Cup, will host Chile at the Maracana on September 5 before travelling to La Paz to face Bolivia on September 9.

Neymar, 33, has not played for Brazil in nearly two years due to repeated injuries and was sidelined again with thigh discomfort. "We

don't need to test him. Everyone knows him," Ancelotti said. Vinicius, meanwhile, is suspended for the Chile match and was spared the trip to high-altitude Bolivia.

West Ham midfielder Lucas Paqueta returns after being cleared of betting charges, while Chelsea forward Joao Pedro is also recalled following an impressive Club World Cup campaign. The squad reflects a mix of established names such as Alisson, Marquinhos, and Casemiro, alongside emerging talents including Chelsea teenager Estevo.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the

Brazilian Football Confederation confirmed that Brazil will also face South Korea in Seoul on October 10 and Japan in Tokyo on October 14 as part of their preparations for next year's tournament. CBF general coordinator Rodrigo Caetano said the plan is to test Ancelotti's side against varied opposition, including African teams in November and top European nations in 2026.

Ancelotti, who took charge in May, said the upcoming fixtures will be crucial in assessing his squad ahead of the expanded 48-team World Cup in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
US Open
First Round
Live from 9:00 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2
CPL
Antigua & Barbuda Falcons vs Trinbago Knight Riders
Live from 5:00 am (Thursday)

Shanto, Miraz collect CWAB nomination forms

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batter Najmul Hossain Shanto and all-rounder Mehdi Hasan Miraz were among others who collected nomination forms on Tuesday for the upcoming Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh's (CWAB) elections, set for September 4. Yesterday was the deadline for form collection. Interested parties will have until August 30 to submit or withdraw forms.

Aside from Shanto and Miraz, national batter Mohammad Mithun, former captain Khaled Mashud, Imrul Kayes, former national team stars Shamsur Rahman and Shahriar Hossain Bidut have also taken nomination forms.

It could not be confirmed what specific categories of forms each player collected. There are a total of 11 categories for the CWAB elections. "Yes, all of them came, but who bought the nomination form for presidency is unknown to us. We haven't heard about which category forms Shanto and Miraz collected. Since it's the players' personal choice, no one will divulge at this moment," a cricketer, who has already submitted the form, informed.

"Only on August 30 will it be revealed how many players are contesting for the post of president and for member secretary and others," a source informed, wishing to remain anonymous.

Mohammad Mithun's name has, however, come up as a potential strong candidate for presidency. While Tamim Iqbal's name was heard as another potential candidate for the post, he has been away from the limelight in terms of CWAB elections recently. It could not be learned whether he submitted a nomination form.

Sources have also claimed that veterans such as Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim were not interested in contesting for presidency.

"We have confirmed the voting list of 225-230 (approx.) members," CWAB's ad-hoc committee member Neeyamur Rashid Rahul informed.



Bangladesh's 24-member national hockey team departed Dhaka in the morning and reached Raigir, Bihar via Kolkata yesterday ahead of the AHF Men's Hockey Asia Cup, starting August 29.



T20 World Cup -- so we're determined to make it count.

DS: You're playing in the Challenge Cup at Savar's BKSP. Is it ideal preparation for the sporting wickets you'll see at the World Cup?

FHP: At first, the [BKSP] wickets were too

bad, but the groundsmen worked hard to make those playable. I've built the mindset that we can't use pitches as an excuse, having played on these conditions for 15 years. Australia and New Zealand always bat on flat wickets, and that's why their mindset is different. We must prepare by adjusting to what we get.

DS: What are this team's strengths and weaknesses?

FHP: Our strength is that everyone knows we can only succeed as a team, not as individuals. Joti is a fantastic player, but she knows she can't win matches alone. In our victories, contributions have come from across the side. We don't have a super batter striking at 100-150 to finish games single-handedly, but our spin attack is world-class. The weakness is pace -- if the board invests in developing fast bowlers, we could become a much more complete side.

DS: You're often criticised for low strike rate. How do you see it?

FHP: At home, we usually play on slow, low wickets. My role is to anchor the innings. I accept I take time to settle, but my focus is always on putting the team in a strong position. Since the West Indies tour, I've worked on rotating the strike and improving my powerplay batting, even taking help from personal coaches. In the qualifiers, you could see progress; especially in Powerplay.

DS: This will be your second World Cup. Your goal?

FHP: We are going with high expectations. I won't claim we'll do something extraordinary, but if everyone contributes, we can achieve plenty.

Achievement of PhD degree



Dr. Sultana Begum

Sultana Begum (Moni) has successfully obtained her PhD degree from the Department of Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka. The research titled is "Total Quality Management (TQM) in Engineering and Technology University Libraries of Bangladesh", was supervised by Former Chairman of the department Professor Dr. Muhammad Mejbah-ur-Islam.

Her research is expected to open new opportunities for modern practices and greater adaptability in the library management system of Engineering and Technology Universities across Bangladesh.

It is worth mentioning that Dr. Sultana Begum also completed her MPhil degree from the same department in 2003. She is the second daughter of Haji Md. Maksudur Rahman and Sufia Maksud of Tangail, daughter-in-law of Haji Md. Jamshed Ali and Rezia Begum of Hazaribagh, and wife of Mr. M. A. Kader.

Dr. Sultana Begum firmly believes that the knowledge and insights gained from her research will strengthen the bridge between academia and industry, contributing significantly to the country's industrial development. Her achievement stands as both an inspiration and an important milestone in the field of research in Bangladesh. She humbly seeks everyone's prayers and good wishes for the journey ahead.



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Kazi Nazrul Islam's death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 49th death anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be observed in the country today.

According to the Gregorian calendar, Nazrul died on August 29, 1976, at the then PG Hospital, now Bangladesh Medical University, in Dhaka. But his death anniversary is observed in Bangladesh on 12 Bhadra (today) of Bangla calendar.

The Rebel Poet breathed his last in Dhaka and was buried next to the mosque on Dhaka University campus, fulfilling a wish he had made in one of his poems.

Nazrul was a poet, lyricist, musician, and philosopher.

Different political parties, socio-cultural and professional bodies



SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Govt to fix prices of essential medical tests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to reduce people's out-of-pocket healthcare expenses, the government is going to prepare a list of essential diagnostic tests and fix their prices.

The health ministry has already sought technical support from the World Health Organisation (WHO) in this regard, said Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry.

He disclosed this at a views exchange meeting on "Role of Mass Media in Health Services" at Shaheed Abu Sayed International Convention Center in Dhaka yesterday. Senior ministry officials, its agencies, and journalists attended the event.

The move to fix the test prices comes amid allegations that patients are often prescribed unnecessary tests and forced to pay widely varying prices, causing immense hardship.

Sayedur said people in Bangladesh spend 64-67 percent of their healthcare costs on medicines and another 11-12 percent on diagnostic tests. "Therefore, the government needs to intervene in these two sectors to reduce people's burden and prevent them from falling into poverty," he said.

He added that a taskforce has already been formed to prepare a list of essential medicines and a mechanism to regulate their prices.

During a recent meeting with WHO, the ministry formally sought support to draw up a similar list for diagnostics.

"At first we will prepare the list of essential medicines, then the list of essential diagnostics, and finally move



SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Drones take on Everest's garbage

AFP, Kathmandu

A team of drone operators joined climbers and guides at Everest Base Camp this climbing season, armed with heavy-duty drones to help clear rubbish from the world's highest peak.

Tonnes of trash -- from empty cans and gas canisters, to bottles, plastic and discarded climbing gear -- have earned once-pristine Everest the grim nickname of the "highest dumpster in the world".



Two DJI FC 30 heavy-lifter drones were flown to Camp 1 at 6,065 metres (19,900 feet), where they airlifted 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of trash down during the spring climbing season, which usually lasts from April to early June.

"The only options were helicopters and manpower, with no option in between," said Raj Bikram Maharjan, of Nepal-based Airlift

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

MEDICAL DEVICES IN NEONATAL UNITS

Unicef to pull plug on maintenance support

Officials fear service disruption unless prompt actions taken

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Unicef is set to discontinue its equipment maintenance support for Special Care Neonatal Units (SCANUs) from September, a move that may disrupt lifesaving services for newborns unless the authorities act promptly, say experts and health officials.

They suggest the authorities urgently come up with a transition plan to ensure uninterrupted services, noting that the health sector is already struggling with a shortage of technical staff.

Last month, the UN agency informed the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) of its decision to withdraw the support it has provided over the past 12 years through a third-party provider.

Currently, SCANUs are available at 60 hospitals across 52 districts, providing specialised support to sick and premature newborns, shows DGHS data.

Prominent paediatrician Prof Mohammad Shahidullah said that out of 30 to 32 lakh babies born in Bangladesh every year, more than three lakh or around 10 percent are premature. Besides, many children suffer from serious

infections, and all of them require SCANU services.

He said the health authorities have the capacity to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of Unicef's support, but they must develop a transition plan in consultation with the UN agency.

The Unicef decision comes at a time when a significant number

UNICEF'S WITHDRAWAL, CHALLENGES

In a letter to DGHS on July 16, the Unicef Bangladesh office said, "After reviewing our progress and aligning with the new country programme direction, we regret to inform you that Unicef will no longer continue the current equipment maintenance

Prominent paediatrician Prof Mohammad Shahidullah said that out of 30 to 32 lakh babies born in Bangladesh every year, more than three lakh or around 10 percent are premature. Besides, many children suffer from serious infections, and all of them require SCANU services.

of medical devices at 60 SCANUs remain out of order.

According to a DGHS assessment in mid-2024, at least 802 or 20 percent of 4,159 pieces of equipment at the SCANUs were non-functional with 209 deemed to be beyond repair.

Besides, 213 pieces of equipment were more than a decade old, said the DGHS report based on an inspection team's findings.

support for SCANU and Neonatal Stabilisation units (NSU) after the end of the existing contract with the third-party provider. This contract will conclude on September 30, 2025."

The UN agency also suggested exploring government-oriented services in collaboration with NEMEMW & TC, an agency under the health ministry, for carrying

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Once an important waterway in South Keraniganj, the Shuvadda Canal now barely resembles a canal. Unregulated dumping has reduced it to a landfill. A glimmer of hope emerged yesterday as the government launched a re-excavation initiative, starting from the Jhabbari Bridge area. This photo was taken on the same day near the Twin Bridges.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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Protesters were shot from above

DMCH doctor tells ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka Medical College Hospital doctor yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that many patients with gunshot wounds sustained during last year's July uprising were shot from high above.

"Several patients reported being shot from high places or helicopters. In some cases, bullets entered through their heads and exited through their backs," said Dr Mostak Ahmed, then a medical officer and now residential surgeon at the hospital's casualty department.

He said bullet trajectories indicated top-to-down firing, unlike the usual upward or horizontal trajectories.

Mostak was testifying as a prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her two top aides. He said he treated a large number of gunshot victims between July 19-21 and August 4-5 last year, most of them aged 20-30.

Recalling one harrowing case, he said a father and son arrived with bullet wounds, but the father died in hospital as his injured son mourned helplessly.

The doctor alleged that some colleagues affiliated with Swachip (Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad), a pro-Awami League doctors' association, asked them not to be over enthusiastic in treating the victims and said that criminals should not be treated. He added that five doctors were transferred on July 25 last year to obstruct treatment of the injured.

Mostak further said that during the anti-discrimination

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Cocaine haul raises transit route concerns

Guyanese held at airport with 8.6kg of contraband

RAFIUL ISLAM

A Guyanese national was arrested with around 8.6kg of cocaine at Dhaka airport yesterday, and officials said the drug was not meant for local use.

They added that since the cocaine use is almost nonexistent here, Bangladesh may be a transit point for the drug trafficking.

The Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID) seized the consignment, the largest in recent times, and detained the Guyanese citizen, Karen Petula Stuffle, at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.



She arrived in Dhaka from Doha around 2:00am. During a search, the CIID officials found the cocaine in 22 large capsule-shaped objects hidden inside her luggage.

The value of the contraband is estimated to be Tk 130 crore, said CIID Director General Mohammad Neazur Rahman while talking to reporters at his office.

The woman travelled to Doha from Brazil and then to Bangladesh, he said, adding that she was convicted in her country for carrying cocaine earlier.

She posed as a tourist to avoid drawing the attention of law enforcers. She had a plan to stay in Bangladesh for about a month and the smuggle the drug to another country, said Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), CIID, and police officials who interrogated her.

In the past, most of the cocaine consignments seized in Bangladesh were traced back to South America and their

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Digital bank licence window reopens

BB seeks applications between Sep 1 and 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has once again invited applications from interested investors willing to establish a digital bank.

The central bank has, in principle, decided to issue licences for digital banks against suitable proposals under the Bank Company Act, 1991, according to a statement.

Applications can be submitted between September 1 and September 30 this year, it added.

The statement said BB now seeks fresh sealed applications from eligible and qualified sponsors to set up digital banks.

"As a processing fee, each application must be submitted along with a non-refundable pay order of Tk 5 lakh issued by any scheduled commercial bank in favour of Bangladesh Bank," as per the circular.

It added that failure to provide all required documents and information would result in the automatic

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