

60% of rape

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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.

Alfroza 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

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“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 Shahan, 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 Bhabdah 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, Panchkatia, 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.

Protesters were shot

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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, Jubo 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 Shariar Khan Anas narrated how the 10th grader left home, joined the protest and was killed with five others in Chankharpul 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

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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 Putul.

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 Mujib Siddiq Bobby, 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

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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.

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 BTRC. “The commission is considering necessary steps,” she added.

JU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof

Sohel Ahmed said the administration would seek BTRC'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

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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, Dihidar Masum Kabir, Jasmin Ara Begum, Murad e-Mawla Sohel, Md Zakir Hossain, Md Rafizul Islam, Md Manjur Alam, Md Lutfur Rahman, Rezaul Karim, Fatema Anwar, Mahmud Hasan, Abdur Rahman, Syed Hasan Jubair, AFM Saiful Karim, Urmi Rahman and SM Iftekhar Uddin Mahamud.

Formulate Journalist Protection

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often face harassment after investigative reports. “There is a persistent gap between journalists, editors, and media owners that cannot be solved individually,” he said.

Lars Heiberg Bestle, regional director for Asia at IMS, said, “Independent media is not a luxury; it is a necessity for democracy.”

Media Reform Commission members – Financial Express Editor Shamsul Haque Zahid and DW Akademie Project Manager Jimi Amir –

expressed frustration over the non-implementation of the commission's recommendations.

Jamuna Television CEO Fahim Ahmed, another member of the commission, said it would have been better if their proposals had been incorporated into discussions of the National Consensus Commission.

Press Institute of Bangladesh Director General Faruk Wasif said, “The government is bound to reform media, but it cannot control everything by regulation.

Adopt data protection measures

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data flows, and give disproportionate authority to regulatory bodies.

ARTICLE19 underscored that without meaningful safeguards, such measures risk undermining public trust and stifling the digital transformation Bangladesh is seeking to promote.

The organisation set out a series of “non-negotiable red lines” to guide the legislative process.

These include embedding strong legal protections against arbitrary or disproportionate surveillance, ensuring restrictions on rights are lawful and proportionate, and clarifying vague terms such as “public interest” and “operational necessity” that could otherwise be misused.

It also demanded establishment of an independent and transparent Data Protection Authority,

shielded from political interference through secure tenure, financial autonomy, and accountability mechanisms.

ARTICLE 19 also highlighted the importance of protecting citizens' right to freely given and revocable consent, particularly for vulnerable or marginalised communities, and ensuring individuals have timely and effective avenues for redress when their rights are violated.

The group further called for narrowing exemptions for law enforcement and national security, subjecting them to independent judicial or parliamentary oversight, and affirming that data protection must not be misused to curb freedom of expression, journalism, or civil society advocacy.

ARTICLE 19 also pressed for participatory and transparent rule-

Bangladeshi startups

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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 Rifad Hossain, focuses on democratising employment opportunities in Bangladesh.

“Shomvob is helping Bangladeshis 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 firm Cocoon Capital.

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

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energy cooperation, security and the situation of the Rohingya, alongside other regional and global issues of mutual interest.

They identified new avenues of cooperation, particularly in science and technology, artificial intelligence, energy transition, fisheries, biotechnology, climate change, agricultural mechanisation and modernisation of marine ports and shipyards.

The Korean side reiterated its commitment to support Bangladesh's high-quality infrastructure projects under both loans and grants, and to encourage South Korean manufacturing plants and production houses to expand their industrial value chains to Bangladesh.

The Korean side commended Bangladesh's humanitarian role in hosting the Rohingya, and assured continued support for their early repatriation to Myanmar, alongside sustained humanitarian assistance.

PRAYER TIMING		AUGUST 27			
Fazr		Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-30		12-45	4-45	6-33	8-00
JAMAT 5-05		1-15	5-00	6-36	8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					