

## 69 migrants killed as boat capsizes off Mauritania

AFP, Nouakchott

A boat carrying migrants capsized off the coast of Mauritania earlier this week, killing at least 69 people, with around 100 likely missing, officials told AFP yesterday.

"One of our patrols was able to rescue 17 (people)", a senior coastguard official told AFP. "So far, 69 bodies have been recovered and buried, and the search is continuing."

The accident occurred late on Tuesday night when the migrants saw the lights of a town off the coast of Mauritania some 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Nouakchott and "moved to one side, causing it to capsize", the official said.

According to a statement from the migrants, the boat had left The Gambia a week earlier with about 160 people on board, including Senegalese and Gambian nationals, the official added. The local gendarmerie confirmed "69 bodies have already been recovered".



PHOTO: AFP

**Riot police fire tear gas at demonstrators during a clash outside the Jakarta Mobile Brigade (Brimob) headquarters yesterday, following the death of a motorcycle taxi driver who was struck and run over by a police tactical vehicle during Thursday's protest over parliamentarians' allowances, education funding, and the government's school meals programme, in Jakarta, Indonesia.**



## Japan, India to deepen economic ties

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi yesterday agreed to deepen economic and security ties as New Delhi confronts new US tariffs and Tokyo looks to counter China's growing influence.

"Japan and India should draw on each other's strengths, help solve each other's challenges, and even tackle together the issues that future generations will face," Ishiba said at a joint press announcement with Modi after talks in Tokyo.

The two leaders pledged to boost defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific over the next decade.

## 'No way' US troops can invade Venezuela

Says Maduro as US naval buildup targets Latin America drug cartels

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Thursday there was "no way" US troops could invade Venezuela after Washington deployed five warships and 4,000 troops to the Caribbean to pressure the leftist strongman.

The United States said the deployment to the southern Caribbean, near Venezuela's territorial waters, is an anti-drug trafficking operation.

Venezuela has responded by sending warships and drones to patrol its coastline and launching a drive to recruit thousands of militia members to bolster its defenses.

"There's no way they can enter Venezuela," Maduro said, vowing that his country was well prepared to defend its "peace, sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The United States has, however, made no public threat to invade. Maduro, who claimed a disputed third term in July 2024 elections, has been in US President Donald Trump's sights ever since the Republican's first term in office.



Since returning to power in January, Trump's attacks on Venezuela have focused chiefly on its powerful gangs, some of which operate inside the United States.

Washington accuses Maduro of heading a cocaine trafficking

Soles, which the Trump administration has designated a terrorist organization.

The US recently doubled its bounty to \$50 million for Maduro's capture to face drug charges.

Maduro, who succeeded socialist firebrand Hugo Chavez in 2013, has accused Trump of attempting to effect regime change.

Maduro's government regularly accuses the opposition and foreigners of conspiring with US entities such as the CIA to harm Venezuela, accusations the opposition and the US have always denied. It characterizes sanctions as "economic war."

Maduro has also called for civil defense groups to train each Friday and Saturday.

## JP, Gono Odhikar clash

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demanding a ban on the activities of Awami League's accomplices.

"After the protest at the central office, we were marching from Paltan towards the Nightingale intersection. Bricks and stones were thrown at us from behind while passing by the Jatiya Party office," he said.

He also said there were about 300-400 people in front of the Jatiya Party office and Gono Odhikar suspects those people included Awami League and Jubo League men.

The Jatiya Party organised an emergency press conference at its central office after the incident.

Its Secretary General Shameem Haider Patwary alleged Gono Odhikar carried out an attack from its procession.

Later, army and police came to the spot and brought the situation under control, he said. He said several JP leaders were injured and hospitalised.

Shameem said that Gono Odhikar Parishad must apologise for its "misdeeds" and the government should take punitive actions against the party.

Meanwhile, the Inter-Service Public Relations Department in a statement said some leaders and activists tried to create unrest through mob violence during the demonstration despite repeated requests.

They launched organised attacks on law enforcers and around 9:00pm escalated the violence further with a torch procession, the ISPR said. At that time, the demonstrators hurled bricks and stones and also attempted to set fire to various establishments.

In addition, movement of ordinary people in Bijoynagar,

Nayapaltan, and adjacent areas was severely disrupted.

"As a result, law enforcers were compelled to use force to protect public security," the ISPR

said, adding that five members of the army were injured in the incident.

Meanwhile, protesting the attack on Nur, leaders and activists of Gono Odhikar Parishad marched on the DMCH premises. Similar protests were held in Narayanganj, Chattogram and Gazipur.

In Dhaka, National Citizen Party leaders and activists also brought out a procession in protest against the attack on Nur.

CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam visited Nur at the hospital, while Law Adviser Asif Nazrul condemned the attack on Nur in a Facebook post.

When Asif Nazrul went to visit Nur at the DMCH later, Gono Odhikar leaders and activists started demonstrating in front of the hospital. Later, law enforcers escorted him out of the DMCH, said hospital sources.

The BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Andolan Bangladesh also condemned the attack on Nur.

## EC to set up cell to combat fake news

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disinformation on social media now pose a significant challenge alongside traditional political and law-and-order issues... To counter false and misleading information, the EC will set up a separate cell," Nasir said.

"We are constantly facing new challenges — ones that did not exist before. Law and order issues have always been there. Earlier the degree was lower, now it may be somewhat higher. And we may also have to confront challenges that we do not yet know," he added.

He made the comments a day after the EC unveiled its work plan for the next general election and set November as the deadline for wrapping up all major preparations.

In his August 5 televised address, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said he would request the Election Commission to hold the national polls before next Ramadan in February 2026. The following day, his office sent the formal directive to the EC to complete all necessary preparations by that time.

Nasir Uddin yesterday also underscored professionalism and neutrality as the core principles guiding the Election Commission in preparations for the upcoming 13th parliamentary election.

At the same event, Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar said the upcoming national election could be the "riskiest" in Bangladesh's history.

He stressed that the commission's foremost duty is to deliver a fair and acceptable election, regardless of the risks involved. "There is no alternative. There can be no deception or malpractice in the election. The commission and everyone on the ground must remain committed," he said.

## Economic policies must be freed

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power. Who holds power in Bangladesh, and how do they exercise it?" he said.

Khan said the political settlement shifted again from the middle class to the elite-dominated class during the Awami League regime, from 2009 onwards.

"It was growth for the oligarchs' growth through theft and capture."

"Infrastructure was built at two or three times the cost. Power plants were priced 50 percent higher than competitors. All of it was hidden behind subsidies, corruption, and bank looting."

Such a system, he argued, was bound to collapse. The recent student uprising merely accelerated an implosion already in motion.

Khan, however, said that Bangladesh's early success in manufacturing and job creation after independence was rooted in a broad-based capitalist class. Unlike India or Pakistan, where narrow elites controlled industry, Bangladesh in the 1980s and 1990s saw entrepreneurs rising from the bottom.

"Thousands of garment factories, small industries, and medium enterprises emerged. At that time, Bangladesh was creating more jobs per unit of growth than India."

Because the political system was responding to the middle class of society, not just the upper echelon. When the middle has power, small and medium enterprises flourish, and they create jobs, Khan added.

For Bangladesh to move forward, Khan said, it must confront its oligarchic system head-on. "That means prosecuting those responsible for mega-crimes and mega-theft, recovering stolen assets, and enacting a strong competition policy."

Khan stressed that Bangladesh's oligarchic regime was sustained not only by domestic arrangements but also by foreign support, particularly from India.

"This is why politics, economics, and foreign policy are deeply intertwined."

At the event, Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling, said, "Over the last 15 years, we have seen an increasing reliance on deals-based arrangements. This led to a deepening form of state capture."

"Business groups realised that influencing bureaucrats or politicians wasn't enough; they aimed to secure power by becoming MPs themselves, which deepened and entrenched a deals-based system."

Prof Raihan also said the country now confronts major reform challenges in taxation, banking, trade, exports, and public spending, particularly in health and education, where budget allocations and quality have stagnated or declined.

Raihan said, revitalising Bangladesh's economy faces two main challenges. On the supply side, political, business, and bureaucratic elites must reach a consensus to implement reforms.

On the demand side, reform calls largely come from civil society and development partners, not political actors. Without political buy-in, behavioral change is unlikely, risking a repeat of past cycles, he added.

Prof Mahbub Ullah, former chairman of Dhaka University's economics department, said the key challenge is creating a foundation for productive and innovative entrepreneurship.

"When we speak of revolution, we mean building a new society and a new economy. But Bangladesh, like the Bengal delta, sits on unstable soil. You cannot construct a five- or ten-story building on weak ground; similarly, piling reforms on a fragile socioeconomic foundation will not hold."

The foundation must be rebuilt by redistributing power, a gradual process that requires time and patience, said Prof Mahbub.

"That is why I do not see a bright future for Bangladesh in the near term. This is my unfortunate conclusion: we must wait. If we do, perhaps we will see results."

Otherwise, as before, we will face

another uprising, then another, in a recurring cycle. Whether that cycle can be broken, I do not know, he added.

Nuria Lopez, chairperson of the European Chamber of Commerce (EuroCham), called for urgent reforms and a strategic extension of the timeline with LDC graduation approaching amid global economic uncertainty.

She highlighted private sector challenges, including unreliable power and gas, high interest rates, and logistics costs 10 percent higher than regional competitors, which discourage investment.

At the event, Imran Matin, executive director of BRAC Institute of Governance and Development at BRAC University, also spoke while Zakir Hossain Khan, chief executive of Change Initiative, moderated the panel discussion.

## National polls

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would suffer immensely and the risk of fascism returning would only increase. He urged that only a free, fair and impartial election could pave the way for restoring democratic governance.

Stressing the importance of restoring democracy in the country, Fakhrul said BNP has historically been at the forefront of political reform in Bangladesh and the party's founder Ziaur Rahman ended one-party rule and introduced multi-party democracy.

He guaranteed press freedom, judicial independence and opened the door to a free-market economy. It was under BNP initiatives that reforms were achieved.

Fakhrul called on party members to reflect deeply on their responsibilities, saying, "Think about how to take the country forward, how to purify our intentions, and how to serve the people. People are yearning for change — and they expect that change from the BNP. If we are to deliver it, we must stand before them with honesty and dedication."

## 43 bodies recovered from

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the condition of the bodies and other evidence. They also acknowledged that the actual number of murder victims is likely higher.

On August 27, police recovered a headless corpse from the Shitalakkhya River in Narayanganj. With the help of the Police Bureau of Investigation, the body was identified through fingerprint matching as Habib, 27, a resident of Moddhya Kanchpur under Sonargaon upazila.

"It was a gruesome murder. The criminals had beheaded him and hidden the head elsewhere, possibly to prevent identification. The body was identified because it surfaced early and had not yet decomposed severely," said Inspector Abdul Mamud, in-charge of Kanchpur River Police Outpost.

Police officials also said decomposition of bodies in water, along with evidence damage — sometimes from fish bites or vessel impacts — often misleads investigators and forensic doctors during autopsies.

Typically, police file an unnatural death case after recovering a body. This case is later reclassified as a murder case if evidence of homicide is found during the investigation or through autopsy results.

Omar Faruk, a professor of criminology and police science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said criminals often use rivers and railway tracks to dump bodies after murders to destroy evidence and evade legal action.

"This mainly happens in cases of organised crime. The criminals usually select river areas for dumping the bodies even before committing the killings," he said.

"Many of the bodies are recovered in a heavily decomposed state, while others drift far from the victims' localities, leaving families without any clue about their fate," he added, noting that in many cases, police fail to make headway in investigations, ultimately depriving families of

justice.

Abdullah Al Mamun, superintendent of Dhaka District River Police, said, "If we cannot identify any bodies or detect the case after a long time, we consult with the Police Headquarters and either hand the cases over to other agencies or submit a final report to the court."

"We preserve DNA samples to match if anyone comes forward to claim the bodies," he added.

Kusum Dewan, additional inspector general of police and chief of the River Police, said that identifying bodies is a major challenge in investigating cases and delivering justice when victims are found in rivers.

"In many cases, we cannot identify the bodies as they are often found in a decomposed state. Besides, many bodies drift from one district to another while criminals commit the murders elsewhere and dump the bodies in rivers to hide evidence," she said, adding that river police do their best to investigate each case.

## Thai court

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leaked June telephone call, during which she appeared to kowtow to Cambodia's former leader Hun Sen when both countries were at the brink of an armed border conflict. Fighting erupted weeks later and lasted five days.

The decision paves the way for the election by parliament of a new prime minister, a process that could be drawn out, with Paetongtarn's ruling Pheu Thai party losing bargaining power and facing a challenge to shore-up a fragile alliance with a razor-thin majority.

There are five people eligible to become prime minister, with only one from Pheu Thai, 77-year-old Chaikasem Nitisiri, a former attorney general with limited cabinet experience, who has maintained a low profile in politics.