



"We will continue our humanitarian and diplomatic role without any hesitation, in order to stop the bloodshed."

Qatar's PM Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani on Gaza peace effort

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GAZA GENOCIDE GOES ON... Palestinians inspect the site of Israeli air strikes on houses at al-Shati (Beach) refugee camp in Gaza City, yesterday. Israeli strikes killed at least 50 people across Gaza yesterday, pushing the overall death toll to 64,756 since the offensive began on October 7, 2023. Story on page 12.

Northern region drying up amid freshwater loss

Global study reveals alarming trend in Bangladesh over the last 2 decades

PINAKI ROY

Freshwater, both surface and groundwater, from northern Bangladesh has been declining steadily for the past two decades, reveals a new global study.

The research, led by Arizona State University and published in *Science Advances*, analysed over 20 years of satellite data.

Titled "Unprecedented continental drying, shrinking freshwater availability, and increasing land contributions to sea level rise", it found that 101 countries in the northern hemisphere have suffered unprecedented freshwater loss since 2002, driven by climate change, unsustainable groundwater use, and extreme droughts.

"Bangladesh is among the countries where freshwater has been declining for over the last two decades. Every year, it is reducing by 2.5mm-10mm. This is very alarming for us," said Md Rayhan, a Bangladeshi PhD student at Arizona State University who contributed to the study.

Using GRACE/FO satellite data from 2003 to 2024, the study tracked total water storage (TWS) across the Ganges-Brahmaputra Basin, which covers much



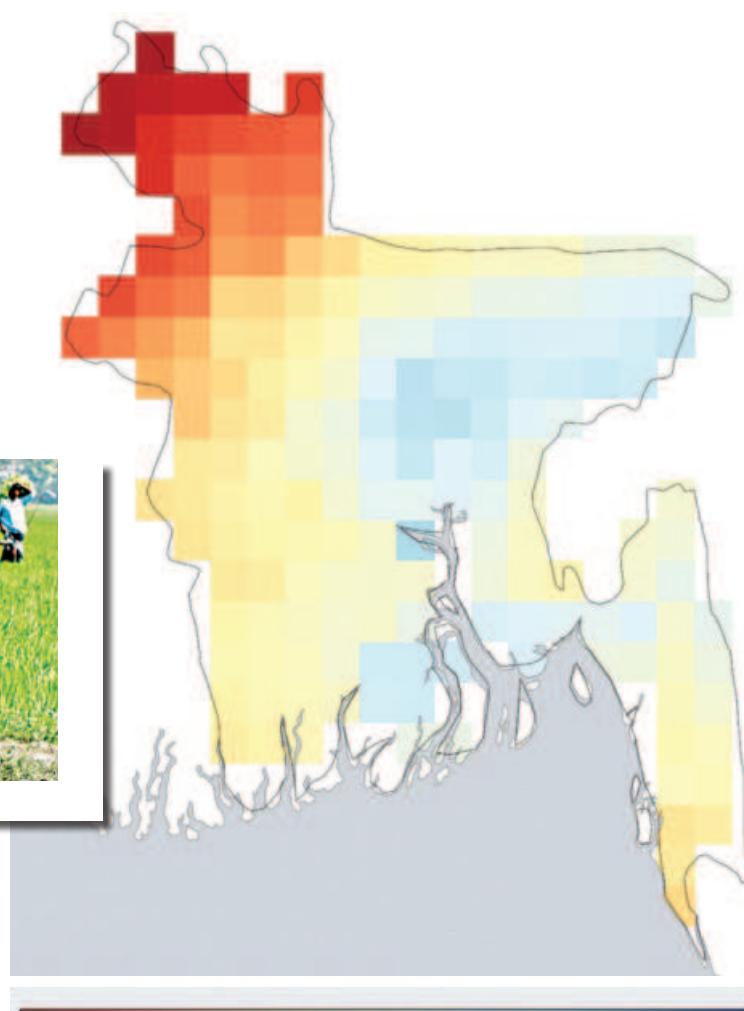
of Bangladesh. It found a consistent decline over 21 years.

The North-West and North-Central regions appeared in reddish shades on satellite maps, showing annual TWS losses between -1 and -2cm.

"These TWS patterns show that over the past 21 years, parts of Bangladesh within the Ganges Brahmaputra Basin have experienced long term declines in water storage.

"This water loss is not just a short-term change, but a long-term trend that has remained consistent even as more data has been added to the study. Scientists

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WATER STRESS ACROSS BANGLADESH

Deep red zones in the north indicate severe water decline, yellow areas reflect moderate stress, while blue regions represent relatively stable water levels.

MAP COURTESY
SCHOOL OF SUSTAINABILITY, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, USA

Funding uncertainty stalls post-crash response plan

MAJOR STEPS UNDER RESPONSE PLAN

- ➊ A national ambulance service system
- ➋ Trauma-care training for health workers
- ➌ Providing logistics, essential medicines to health facilities along major highways
- ➍ Formation of steering committee to establish regulatory mechanism
- ➎ Employing trauma care specialists at all healthcare facilities
- ➏ Strengthening info management to monitor post-crash care

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The health authorities seek to roll out a post-crash response plan for the first time to reduce preventable deaths and disabilities resulting from road accidents, but funding uncertainties are delaying its implementation.

Though the draft of the three-year plan involving Tk 678.61 crore was formulated about four years ago for 2023-2025, it was finally approved on July 24 this year, leaving only five months for implementation.

The authorities are unsure about when they can start implementing it, as they are yet to secure funding.

Officials said the implementation window may close before the plan is put into effect, and in that case, it has to be revised.

The plan sets five strategic goals that include improving pre-hospital care for road crash victims and ensuring standard treatment at primary healthcare facilities.

The Noncommunicable Disease Control (NCDC) Programme of the DGHs prepared the plan titled "Strengthening post-crash response for the victims of road traffic injuries in Bangladesh: strategy and costed action plan for 2023-2025" in collaboration

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Ballots cast in Thursday's JUCSU election being tallied last night at Jahangirnagar University's Senate Hall.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Nepal gets new PM after revolt

Ex-chief justice Sushila Karki to lead an interim govt for six months till elections

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's former chief justice Sushila Karki was sworn in yesterday as the country's prime minister to lead a six-month transition to elections, after deadly anti-corruption protests ousted the government.

The previous prime minister quit on Tuesday.

"I, Sushila Karki... take an oath in the name of the country and the people to fulfil my duty as the prime minister," the 73-year-old Karki, Nepal's first woman chief justice, said as she was sworn into office by President Ram Chandra Paudel.

"Congratulations! We wish you success, wish the country success," Paudel said to Karki after the small ceremony in the presidential palace, attended by diplomats and some former leaders.

The Himalayan nation of 30 million people was plunged into chaos this week after security forces tried to crush rallies by young anti-corruption protesters.

At least 51 people were killed in the worst violence since the end of a civil war and the abolition of the monarchy in 2008.

The military took back control of the streets on Wednesday, enforcing a curfew.

The appointment of the judge, known for her independence, comes after two days of intense negotiations by army chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel and Paudel, including with representatives from "Gen Z", and some former leaders.



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JUCSU POLLS

Frustration as counting drags on CEC blames manual tallying; one EC resigns citing 'mismanagement'

SAKIB AHMED, MD ABBAS and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

More than a day after voting ended in the long-awaited Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union election, the authorities were still struggling to complete the vote count, triggering mounting anger and suspicion.

Besides, the death of a teacher called for counting duty cast a pall of gloom over the campus.

The JUCSU election, held after 33 years, had raised high hopes among students eager to see their union revived. Yet by yesterday night, the excitement had given way to frustration as results were repeatedly delayed.

As the night wore on, the combination of slow counting, administrative resignations, and the tragic death of the young teacher left the campus tense and uncertain.

The results, originally expected to conclude yesterday morning, were first deferred to noon and then to night. At 8:20pm, the election commission issued an emergency notification saying the tallying would continue through the night.

As of 10:00pm, 24 hours after the counting began, the process was completed for 21 hall unions. The counting of votes of the central union began afterwards. The counting was underway at 1:00am.

JUCSU Chief Election Commissioner Md Moniruzzaman told reporters in front of the Senate Bhaban yesterday evening that the process might take the whole night.

He also said all the election officials were under surveillance and they were asked not to share results before the official announcement.

Officials admitted the process had slowed down because of the decision to abandon OMR machines and return to manual counting, a shift made following demands from several candidates.

The commission later doubled the number of counting tables from five to 10 in the morning, with additional CCTV cameras installed. But even with these adjustments, results remained out of reach.

Commission Member Secretary and University Proctor AKM Rashidul Alam said they had been prepared for machine counting, but had to improvise after the last-minute change. "Since we were not

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MY DHAKA

ICE CREAM

Dhaka's perfect remedy for every mood

RBR

Ice cream is a sinful indulgence for anyone... I have a confession to make about this decadent, intense pleasure. I am addicted to ice cream bars and cones. My craving feels almost excessive. My love for ice cream remains as steadfast as ever. It all began in those quiet summer afternoons of my childhood, when the bell of the ice cream man would lure me into getting the orangey ice lolly treats.

Ice cream on a stick, or ice cream bars and cones, have led Dhakaites to commit to gluttony. The heat serves as an excuse, but people are using it as validation to treat themselves to ice cream bars. They indulge after office hours or classes, after an intense counselling session, after a boring meeting, after striking a deal, finishing a job, or even facing a failure; the tea-breaks are for ice cream now. This sweet treat perks you right up.

"Our freezer from Bellissimo, a premium line of ice cream brand in Dhaka, is stocked twice a week. The speciality bars like Supremo and Perfetto, in Vanilla and Chocolate flavours, are an instant sell-out item. I am giving you my last two bars. We got restocked yesterday," says a chirpy teenager in a department store



in Uttara's Zohara market, as he was packing my order. I was personalising an assorted box of my favourite flavours from different brands.

The shops had company freezers from brands like Igloo, Savoy, Polar, Bellissimo, Za'N Zee, and more. Each of these companies, to stay alive in a competitive market, is coming up with innovative flavours.

The ice bar menu has moved far from Igloo's choc bar and orange lollies. In fact, Igloo has reinvented its stick ice cream menu with loads of fancy and upscale flavours. Their Exotica Almond Split and Swiss Chocolate premium bars, with crispy and nutty chocolate crust on the outside and a velvety vanilla or chocolate centre, are

unparalleled. Then there is the salted caramel-flavoured Robusto ice cream bar, with an extra-thick, real chocolate coating on the outside from Polar; it just steals your heart in one bite. Last weekend, I was out with friends, and let me tell you, we cannot chill without chocolates and ice cream. Thus, we ended up savouring Savoy Discone ice cream in a chocolate wafer cone.

The Discone of Savoy, with a chocolate fudge centre and a thick layer of chocolatey upper crust, is ambrosia for mortals. The best is the last bite of the crispy cone, filled with gooey chocolate melt. The treat leaves you licking the wrapper and your fingers, covered in chocolate drips.

Besides these local and popular brands, Fruitsicles, a home grown, hand-crafted gourmet ice popsicle

brand, has made a place in our hearts. Their fruity, tangy, and zesty concoction of ice pops is love. This stuffy September, they are offering a new flavour, Guava chilli. Fruitsicles pop-up carts are found at almost every city fair, and at Jatra in Banani.

The ice cream market sales are broadly divided into two categories: impulse and family purchase. The impulse category is boosted by people like me who shop for cones, cups, sticks, and ice lollies, and in the process, make up for approximately 70 percent of total ice cream sales, according to newspaper reports.

The ice cream market in Bangladesh is now worth more than Tk 2,000 crore, with 97 percent of it being dominated by branded companies. The remaining portion is occupied by locally made ice cream. Isn't that cool?

Northern region drying up

FROM PAGE 1

call this kind of steady, ongoing change a 'robust' trend," Rayhan said.

"It means the drying pattern in Bangladesh has been strong and consistent, not just due to random weather or short term events. The study shows that Bangladesh is one of the places in the world where water storage has been going down consistently over the study period."

A GLOBAL CRISIS

The study warns that nearly six billion people in 101 countries -- about 75 percent of the global population -- have lost freshwater over the past two decades.

Researchers found that 68 percent of land-based water loss came from groundwater alone, contributing more to sea level rise than the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets combined.

"These findings send perhaps the most alarming message yet about the impact of climate change on our water resources," said Jay Famiglietti, the study's principal investigator and a Global Futures Professor at ASU's School of Sustainability.

"Continents are drying, freshwater availability is shrinking, and sea level rise is accelerating. The consequences of continued groundwater overuse could undermine food and water security for billions of people."

Lead author Hrishikesh A Chandrapurkar added, "Glaciers and deep groundwater are like ancient trust funds. Instead of using them sparingly during crises such as prolonged droughts, we are depleting them without replenishment, edging towards an imminent freshwater bankruptcy."

According to the United Nations, by 2030 the world will need at least 30 percent more water, 45 percent more energy, and 50 percent more food.

Climate change is compounding this crisis in Bangladesh, as declining Himalayan meltwater inflows and sea level rise are already causing saltwater intrusion in northern districts, further reducing both surface and groundwater availability.

As a downstream nation, the country also faces a regional disadvantage. Upstream extraction in India and Nepal continues to affect flows. This imbalance worsens seasonal stress across the country.

GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION

The country extracts about 32 cubic kilometres of groundwater every year, 90 percent of which is used for irrigation and 10 percent for domestic or industrial use.

"Due to such over-extraction, groundwater is being contaminated with salt and heavy metals. Twenty-four percent of lands are now exposed to extremely elevated arsenic, salinity and groundwater depletion hazards," said Dr Anwar Zahid, former director of groundwater hydrology at the Bangladesh Water Development Board.

"We've observed that groundwater levels in urban areas, particularly Dhaka and the Barind Tract, have been declining permanently at an alarming rate. This implies that the water level is not being recharged even after monsoon. With increased extraction, fluctuation of groundwater levels has

Nepal gets new PM

FROM PAGE 1

loose umbrella title of the youth protest movement.

Thousands of young activists had used the online app Discord to debate the next steps -- and name Karki as their choice of next leader.

Karki, dressed in a red sari dress, took the oath but did not make a further speech. She smiled and bowed with her hands pressed together repeatedly in traditional greetings.

"It is a moment of victory... finally the power vacuum has ended," said Amrita Ban, a Gen Z protester.

"We did it," key youth protest group Hami Nepal posted on Instagram, calling for unity.

"Honour the lives of those who sacrificed themselves for this moment".

Dipak Kaphle, from the president's office, said Karki had been appointed to lead an "interim government... to conduct an election for the House of Representatives within six months".

That would mean parliamentary elections before mid-March 2026.

Protests fed into long-standing economic woes in Nepal, where a fifth of people aged 15-24 are unemployed, according to the World Bank, with GDP per capita standing at just \$1,447.

At least 21 protesters were among those killed, mainly on Monday during the police crackdown on demonstrations against corruption and poor governance that was sparked by a ban on social media.

Parliament, major government buildings and a Hilton Hotel were among the sites set ablaze by protesters on Tuesday.

KP Sharma Oli, the 73-year-old leader of the Communist Party, then quit as prime minister. His whereabouts are not known.

More than 12,500 prisoners who escaped from jails across the country during the chaos "are still at large", police spokesman Binod Ghimire told AFP.

Nepal's army said it had recovered more than 100 guns looted in the uprising, during which protesters were seen brandishing automatic rifles.

Japan expands sanctions against Russia

AFP, Tokyo

Japan yesterday expanded sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, freezing the assets of more people and groups as well as slashing the Russian oil price cap.

Tokyo will freeze the assets of 14 individuals and 51 organisations, including Russian officials, company executives and pro-Russian figures in Ukraine, according to the foreign ministry.

Japan will also cut the current oil price cap to \$47.60 from \$60 per barrel, which was set in 2022 by the G7, aiming to restrict Russia's revenue.

Funding uncertainty stalls

FROM PAGE 1

with the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB). The World Health Organisation provided technical support.

FIVE STRATEGIC GOALS

The strategic goals include improving pre-hospital care for road crash victims; ensuring standard treatment at primary healthcare facilities; optimising the functioning of all hospitals to reduce mortality and reintegrate crash survivors into productive life; and providing logistics, essential medicines to health facilities along major highways.

The other goals are strengthening management of road traffic injury data and developing monitoring and evaluation system for post crash management; and enhancing multi-sectoral collaboration to strengthen post crash response.

Achieving these goals will require the involvement of more than a dozen stakeholders, including various ministries, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the WHO.

UNCERTAINTY OVER FUNDING

The funds for implementing the plan were supposed to come from the Fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), but the interim government scrapped the programme, said an official of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), seeking anonymity.

According to official data, 13,827 people were killed and 18,077 injured in road crashes between January 2023 and July this year.

However, the actual number is much higher, as many incidents go unreported.

Instead, the government decided to take up two projects to complete the unfinished task of the Fourth HPNSP and continue supply of emergency products to public hospitals. No allocations were made in the projects to implement the three year plan, added the official.

"Funding is now uncertain, and it is difficult to say when the implementation can begin," the official said.

When contacted on August 31, Prof Syed Zakir Hossain, line director of the NCDC Programme at DGHS, said they have drafted a project proposal that includes an allocation for the plan.

"But we have to wait until the project is approved. If the plan's implementation window closes in the meantime, we may have to revise the strategy."

Saidur Rahman, secretary at the Health Services Division, told this correspondent yesterday that they would expedite the process of the project's approval to implement the plan as soon as possible.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The implementation of a post-crash response plan has become more urgent than ever with the country witnessing a sharp rise in road crash fatalities.

According to official data, 13,827 people were killed and 18,077 injured in road crashes between January 2023 and July this year.

However, the actual number is much higher, as many incidents go unreported.

According to the WHO Global

9 killed as rescue boat capsizes in Pakistan floods

REUTERS, Lahore

At least nine people died when a rescue boat capsized during flood relief efforts in Pakistan, authorities said yesterday.

The incident took place in a village near the historic city of Multan in eastern Punjab province on Thursday, a statement from the Punjab Disaster Management Authority said.

It said the boat had rescued 24 people from flooded villages when it overturned, adding that the remaining 15 were safely removed from the water.

Rescue officials say villagers have been refusing to leave their homes in some parts of rural Pakistan, especially without their cows, goats and other animals, one of their main sources of income, which often leads to forced evictions.

The rescue work in the region is "tough because people are not cooperating", the authority said.

Floods triggered by this year's intense monsoon rains and swollen rivers have killed 946 people, including 97 in the province, in Pakistan since late June, and inundated large swaths of crops.

YEMEN'S HOUTHS

US issues new round of sanctions

REUTERS, Washington

The United States imposed a fresh round of sanctions targeting Yemen's Houthis on Thursday in what the Trump administration said was Washington's largest such action aimed at the Iran-aligned group.

The US Treasury Department said it was issuing sanctions against 32 individuals and entities as well as four vessels in an effort to disrupt the Houthis' fundraising, smuggling and attack operations.

Among the targets are several China-based companies that Treasury said helped transport military-grade components, as well as other companies that help arrange for dual-use goods to be shipped to the Houthis. The sanctions also target petroleum smugglers and Houthi-linked shipping companies, a Treasury statement said.

In response, China's foreign ministry said yesterday that it opposed the US "abuse of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction", which "violated international law and the basic norms governing international relations."



also increased with time."

A 2019 study found Bangladesh losing groundwater at an average rate of 8.73 millimetres per year. In 2006, the number of shallow pumps was 11.8 lakh; by 2019, it had risen to 16 lakh.

Dhaka Wasa alone pumps about 3.3 million cubic metres of water every day -- enough to fill 20 Mirpur stadiums.

For families in Dhaka, tube wells are increasingly unreliable, forcing many to rely on costly water deliveries.

In Kieraniganj, villagers face water scarcity for months. "From March to June, we get no water," said resident Akhil Chandra Das.

Farmers also struggle. "All the farmers use groundwater to irrigate their paddy field because it is cheaper than surface water. To irrigate one bigha [33 decimals] of boro, it takes Tk 3,000 for a season. But to irrigate with surface water, we need to hire day labourers or install shallow machines which are even costlier," said Shimul Ali, a farmer from Rajshahi's Paba upazila.

"However, since it rained a lot this year, we didn't need to irrigate our fields."

Meanwhile, coastal villagers face salinity intrusion in drinking water, leaving them dependent on rainwater harvesting or unsafe sources.

DRAWBACKS AND SOLUTIONS

"The population is increasing every year, and so is the demand for freshwater, particularly for irrigation and industry. Naturally, our natural water storage is shrinking day by day," Dr Zahid told The Daily Star.

He stressed the need to shift towards surface water and rainwater retention.

Large-scale rainwater harvesting has not materialised, while chronic urban waterlogging prevents effective recharge. Experts warn that without urgent updates and enforcement, water governance will remain inadequate.

A 2023 global study published in Nature and supported by NASA's GRACE satellite data shows Bangladesh losing significant amounts of freshwater annually.

According to the World Bank (2021), groundwater levels in parts of Dhaka are dropping by nearly 2-3 metres every year, threatening long-term water security.

This crisis is further compounded by salinity intrusion in coastal regions and reduced dry-season flows of major rivers such as the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna.

Without urgent interventions in sustainable water management, Bangladesh's freshwater decline could severely impact agriculture, public health, and overall resilience to climate change," warned urban planning expert Ahmed Mukta.

As the water level continued to decline, last month, the government announced fifty unions in 26 upazilas of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon and Chattogram as severely water stressed. Of the unions, 47 are in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, and Naogaon, while three are in Chattogram's Patiya upazila. The government is working on preparing a guideline to restrict water abuse in those areas.

"Due to such over-extraction, groundwater is being contaminated with salt and heavy metals. Twenty-four percent of lands are now exposed to extremely elevated arsenic, salinity and groundwater depletion hazards," said Dr Anwar Zahid, former director of groundwater hydrology at the Bangladesh Water Development Board.

"We've observed that groundwater levels in urban areas, particularly Dhaka and the Barind Tract, have been declining permanently at an alarming rate. This implies that the water level is not being recharged even after monsoon. With increased extraction, fluctuation of groundwater levels has

on the night before the election and the irregularities on election day are linked.

The election was "arranged to ensure the victory of candidates from a particular political group. We also demand a fair settlement of the complaints and the holding of an acceptable election," the statement read.

However, the Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed Shikkhatri Oikya Forum, questioned Prof Sattar's resignation, terming it a "farical act" and dismissing the allegations of irregularities as "baseless".

Their assistant general secretary candidate Ferdous Al Hasan asked how Prof Sattar, despite being the chief of the pro-BNP teachers' forum, was made a member of the EC.

Z

EC launches voter reg for expatriates in Canada

BSS, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) has launched voter registration and smart National Identity (NID) card services for Bangladeshi expatriates in Canada.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin inaugurated the services on Thursday at the Bangladesh High Commission in Ottawa, where he handed over smart NID cards to several registered expatriate Bangladeshi, officially launching the initiative, according to a message received yesterday.

The CEC said expatriate Bangladeshi, who contribute significantly through remittances, investment, and knowledge transfer, must also have a direct say in shaping the country's future.

The CEC also held a Q&A session with members of the Bangladeshi community who attended the event.

Bangladeshis living in Canada can now avail voter registration and NID services at the High Commission in Ottawa and the Consulate General in Toronto. Officials said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to safeguard the democratic rights of nearly 10 million citizens abroad, ensuring their voices are represented alongside their contributions to national development.

Woman's body found in sack in Kadamtali

STAR REPORT

Police recovered the body of a woman from Kadamtali's Muradpur area in Dhaka yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Rekhansa Begum, 42, of Sutabaria village in Patuakhali's Galachipa, said Kamrun Nahar, a sub-inspector of Kadamtali Police Station.

The body was found near a shop on Haji Lal Mia Sardar Road around 9:15am, the SI added.

"After being informed through 999, we recovered the body that was in a sack. The face was partially decomposed, but there were no visible injury marks on the body," she said.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. Family members have been informed, and further details will be known once they arrive, she added.



Excavation work by Dhaka North City Corporation has left a 2.5km stretch from Kawlabazar to Dakkhin Khan Bazar in poor condition for the past two years. More recently, work began on another section from Sheyalbari Road to Kawlabazar about four months ago, further disrupting movement.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A ROAD TO MISERY

Commuters bear brunt of stalled drainage project in Kawla

HELEMUL ALAM

worsened daily struggles, particularly for students.

"It now takes me 20 minutes to walk to the university from Kawlabazar, while the rickshaw fare has jumped to Tk 60 from Tk 20 before the road digging," said Anamika Rani Roy, a BSc Textile Engineering student at Northern University.

"I have to walk about 10 minutes with these heavy bags to reach my house because no vehicle can pass through this road," said Tanveer, who had just returned from his village home in Rajshahi.

The road, stretching about 2.5 kilometres from Kawlabazar to Dakkhin Khan Bazar via Shiyaldanga Road, is in extremely poor condition due to excavation work by the Dhaka North City Corporation for installing storm-water drainage lines.

According to locals, work on the two-kilometre stretch from Dakkhin Khan Bazar to Northern University, near the back of Sheyalbari Road, has been ongoing for the past two years. Although the drainage lines were laid, DNCC has so far carpeted only about one-fourth of the road.

Meanwhile, work on the section from Sheyalbari Road to Kawlabazar began around four months ago, leaving the road virtually impassable.

No vehicles can move through this portion, said residents.

The poor condition of the road has

Primary School, said she faces serious hardships on rainy days. "It takes me 10 minutes to walk home, but the muddy road makes it very difficult," she said.

"My income has dropped by half since the work began. I couldn't pay rent for the last two months," said Md Russel, a tailor. "Customers avoid this road, and vehicles cannot come through."

Taslima Akhtar, caretaker of House-43 on Shiyaldanga Road, said, "Tenants avoid renting houses here because moving furniture is nearly impossible."

She added, "We used to have nine or ten cars in our garage. Now none are here. Owners had to move them outside the area, paying Tk 2,000-3,000 a month for parking elsewhere. The road has been in bad condition for a long time and often goes under ankle-to-knee-deep water. This drainage work was supposed to bring us relief, but instead, it has only brought us more pain."

Contacted, DNCC Administrator Mohammad Azaz acknowledged the delays, saying that resistance from some residents has slowed progress.

"Many people are reluctant to vacate occupied portions of the road needed for widening, which is a barrier to completing the work swiftly. However, we are trying our best to finish the project as early as possible," he said.

Tk 150 crore down the drain?

Two unused Dhaka slaughterhouses gathering dust

DIPAN NANDY

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) built two modern slaughterhouses to ensure hygienic animal slaughtering – one in Old Dhaka's Kaptan Bazar and another in Hazaribagh of the Dhanmondi area. The Hazaribagh slaughterhouse has remained idle for six years since its inauguration. The Kaptan Bazar facility remains unused even though it was completed one and a half years ago. City dwellers are yet to reap any benefit from these ventures, costing around Tk 150 crore.

Residents and urban planners say these much-hyped "modern" slaughterhouses have turned into white elephants.

Urban planner Prof Adil Muhammad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, told The Daily Star, "Before implementing any project, feasibility studies must be done to assess viability. DSCC did not conduct these studies for Hazaribagh and Kaptan Bazar slaughterhouses. Had it been done, such costly projects would not have remained idle or become burdens. The corporation must take responsibility."

DSCC invited tenders four times to lease out the facilities, but no firms applied. Officials said the city corporation lacks

the manpower and expertise to run them. Informal approaches fell apart as well.

The Hazaribagh slaughterhouse, built at Gojimohal, cost Tk 81.19 crore. It was designed to slaughter 30 cows and 60 goats per hour for 16 hours daily. Another Tk 15 crore was later spent on imported machinery. Former mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon inaugurated it in 2019, though construction was incomplete. No animal has been slaughtered there since.



The Kaptan Bazar slaughterhouse, started in 2018, was delayed for years due to contractor's negligence. Completed in May 2023 at a cost of Tk 52 crore, it has also remained locked.

A recent visit found the five-story Hazaribagh slaughterhouse shut, covered in dust, and unguarded. Just outside

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'She was more than just a teacher'
Students, colleagues, family mourn JU teacher Moumita

STAR REPORT

Around 12:50pm yesterday, a white ambulance entered the central field of Jahangirnagar University. Teachers, students, and staff rushed forward, gathering around the vehicle.

Inside lay the body of Jannatul Ferdous Moumita, an assistant professor in the Fine Arts department, who had been on duty during the JCSU polls just hours earlier.

On the campus where she once studied and later built her academic career, her life came to an abrupt end. She was only 32.

Moumita, the department's first graduate to return as a teacher, joined as a lecturer in December 2021. She fell ill in the morning while working as a polling officer in the JCSU polls and was later declared dead at Enam Medical College Hospital.

Just a day earlier, she had been on duty at Pritilata Hall. Yesterday, her janaza was held at the central field, attended by hundreds. As her body arrived, many stood in silence with tears



Jannatul Ferdous Moumita

in their eyes, while others wept openly. Friends embraced and consoled one another.

Students recalled seeing her healthy and energetic only days earlier.

"She was not just a teacher to us; she was like our elder sister. The place she held in our hearts, the way she taught us... this is an irreparable loss," said Jannatul



Grief-stricken mourners at Jahangirnagar University

Ferdous, a student.

Struggling to continue, she added, "On Sunday, she was supposed to teach us landscape drawing."

Another student, Oishi Sarker, said, "We started our first lessons with her. Whenever we went to her for personal or academic reasons, she never turned us away. She treated

us like younger sisters, even counsellings us when we were stressed. Accepting that she is gone is impossible."

Faculty members, too, were devastated. Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof Sohel Ahmed said, "Moumita was like my daughter. She would talk to me about many things."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Dozens injured as violence erupts during football match

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
 Cox's Bazar

Dozens of people were injured after violence broke out during the final match of the Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Gold Cup Football Tournament at Birshreshtha Ruhul Amin Stadium yesterday.

The match between Ramu and Teknaf upazilas was set for 3:00pm, but by early afternoon the gallery was overcrowded. Witnesses said spectators forced their way into the stadium, prompting police to take action.

Organisers suspended the match around 5:30pm. Soon after, thousands of spectators stormed the field, vandalising the press box, dressing rooms, and goalposts, and setting a fire that was later doused.

Among the injured was UNO Nilufa Yasmin Chowdhury. Cox's Bazar Sadar Police Station OC Elias Khan said several policemen were also hurt.

Around 30 people were treated at Sadar Hospital, said Dr Subaktigin.

Police said the unrest stemmed from excessive crowding, said Additional SP Nazmus Sakib Khan. "We tried to prevent serious injuries, but had to act against unruly behaviour."

Spectators, however, blamed ticket mismanagement, alleging inflated prices and restricted entry despite purchasing tickets.

"The stadium has suffered extensive damage," said district sports association member Mohammad Hossain.



ICU shut for 5 months in Patuakhali

Patients left without life-saving care as vandalised unit remains closed

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Patuakhali 250 bed General Hospital has remained closed for the last five months after it was vandalised on April 14, leaving critically ill patients without life-saving services.

Since then, patients in critical condition have been forced to travel to Barishal or Dhaka, often at great risk. In some cases, delays in treatment have led to deaths, relatives alleged.

Hospital authorities said the five-bed ICU was set up in February 2021 during the pandemic with support from the health ministry. It was the only ICU facility in the district and had treated more than 500 patients in the last five years.

The closure followed the death of Hossain Mohammad Ashiq, 21, a student of Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU).

Ashiq drowned while bathing in a pond near Government Janata College after playing football with friends. He was first taken to Dumki Upazila Health Complex and later to Patuakhali Hospital, where he died during

treatment.

Accusing doctors of negligence, enraged students vandalised the ICU. Police and army personnel rushed to the spot to bring the situation under control.

Following the incident, then deputy commissioner Abu Hasnat Mohammad Arifin



formed an eight-member probe committee headed by Civil Surgeon Dr Khaledur Rahman Miah. The committee later submitted its report to the DC.

However, ICU services never resumed.

"I raised the issue at the district

coordination meeting. Critically ill patients used to get emergency services here. Now they must take the risk of going to Barishal or Dhaka. We demand immediate resumption of ICU services," said Zakir Hossain, president of Patuakhali Press Club.

Dr Dilruba Yasmin Liza, superintendent of the hospital, said most of the sensitive and expensive equipment inside the ICU was damaged during the vandalism.

"We used to provide emergency care for patients whose condition deteriorated suddenly. But due to the damage, specialised ICU services are no longer available. The unit is now being used as a general ward," she said.

Asked about the probe committee's findings, Civil Surgeon Dr Khaledur Rahman Miah said, "We submitted the report to the then deputy commissioner. It is up to the DC to disclose or act upon it."

Contacted, Jewel Rana, deputy director of the Local Government Department and acting DC of Patuakhali, said, "The report has been sent to the health ministry for further action. I cannot share the details."

Cybercrime cases pile She was more than

FROM PAGE 3
 inadequate, under-resourced, and overburdened," she said.

In 2025, the interim government promulgated the Cyber Protection Ordinance (CPO), 2025, addressing some gaps in earlier laws. It recognises internet access as a civil right, criminalises AI-driven cyberattacks and online harassment of women and children, makes speech-related offences bailable, establishes a Cyber Security Council with civil society representation, and empowers courts to

dismiss false or fabricated cyber cases at an early stage," Ishrat added.

Though disposal of cybercrime cases has increased slightly this year, more than 4,452 lawsuits were still pending with cyber tribunals as of June 30, the SC report said.

Between April 1 and June 30, a total of 367 new cases were filed and 1,324 cases were disposed of by the tribunals, which are set up in eight divisional cities.

As of July 14, a total of 116 accused in cyber cases were in jail, according to the Department of Prisons.

Her department chair, Mohammad Shamim Reza, said, "She was my direct student -- always responsible and dedicated until the very end. Moumita wanted to take a day's rest, but this sudden duty was imposed on her. It may have caused immense mental pressure on her."

Later in the evening, her husband, Sirajul Islam Masum, carried her body to her ancestral home in Jelapara village of Pabna.

Grief engulfed the family home, where her parents -- both retired teachers -- live. Her father, Mustafizur Rahman Rumi,

a former Bangla teacher at Chatmohar Degree College, was inconsolable.

"My daughter texted me in the morning, saying she was going to count votes. When I heard the news, I couldn't believe it," he said. "She had the dream to become a teacher, and her dream did come true. She was preparing to study abroad, but now she is gone..." he said, before breaking into tears.

Her mother, Lutfunnahar Poly, a retired political science teacher at Pabna College, was not in a condition to speak.

"We got married earlier this year. We didn't even get the chance to properly start our family life together," said Moumita's husband, Masum.

Moumita was laid to rest last night at Arifpur graveyard in Pabna Sadar upazila.

Tk 150 crore down

FROM PAGE 3

the Kaptan Bazar site, shops continue roadside slaughtering, with goats tied up waiting to be killed.

Local shopkeeper Rofiqul Islam said, "Butchers slaughter animals in front of their shops and clean the blood and waste themselves. If the slaughterhouse opened, it would benefit everyone."

DSCC records show the first Hazaribagh tender in December 2022 set the lease fee at Tk 8.56 crore for three years, but no bidders came. Even after lowering the fee to Tk 6.16 crore in September 2023 and floating two more tenders, no interest was shown. A new tender is being prepared for Kaptan Bazar.

A property department official, seeking anonymity, said, "Doubts over anyone ever using these slaughterhouses remain. That is why no operator

has come forward despite lowering the lease fees."

DSCC chief property officer Hasiba Khan admitted their failure to find an operator. She added that the Kaptan Bazar slaughterhouse was still under the Engineering Department due to incomplete electrical work.

DSCC's health division claims the two units are fully equipped for hygienic slaughtering.

Chief health officer Dr Nishat Parveen told The Daily Star, "Our veterinary officers currently monitor

slaughtering in the city to the best of their capacity. But both slaughterhouses have arrangements for hygienic processing.

Once operational, more regional slaughterhouses will be built. We will also ensure that no animals are slaughtered outside once the facilities open."

SYLHET-AKHAURA ROUTE Suspended trains leave commuters in hardship

MINTU DESHWARA

Hundreds of low-income earners, vegetable vendors, and fish traders in Sylhet are suffering as three of four local train services on the Sylhet Akhaura route remain suspended, with the lone surviving service offering little relief.

For daily wage earners, vegetable vendors, and fish traders, the absence of reliable rail transport has forced many to turn to expensive and overcrowded road transport.

According to officials and local sources, the once-busy route is now served only by the Surma Mail, which itself runs irregularly with just three coaches, one of which is reserved for the postal department.

At one time, the Sylhet-Akhaura route was served by multiple local and intercity trains including the Jalalabad Express on the Sylhet-Chittagong line, the Kushiya Express, and a DEMU train -- all now inactive.



The Jalalabad Express was suspended during the pandemic, the DEMU was discontinued in 2019 due to mechanical issues, and the Kushiya Express has not run for nearly four years.

The three local trains remain suspended due to shortage of engines, coaches, and manpower, said Kulaura Junction Station Master Roman Ahmed.

Gias Uddin, a fish importer from Sylhet, said they used to bring Chandpuri hilsa and sea fish from Chittagong by train at a much lower cost.

"The closure of the Jalalabad Express has hit us hard. Road transport is expensive and less reliable," said Gias.

Regular commuters such as Sipon Khan of Langal said, "Earlier we could travel for Tk 30-40. Now it costs over Tk 100, not to mention the delays."

Contacted, Sylhet-Akhaura Railway Traffic Inspector Shahjahan Patwary said the delay in restarting local trains is due to shortage of engines, coaches, and drivers. "Several letters have been sent to higher authorities. We run the mail train when engines are available," he said.

18 AL activists held in Dhaka

STAR REPORT

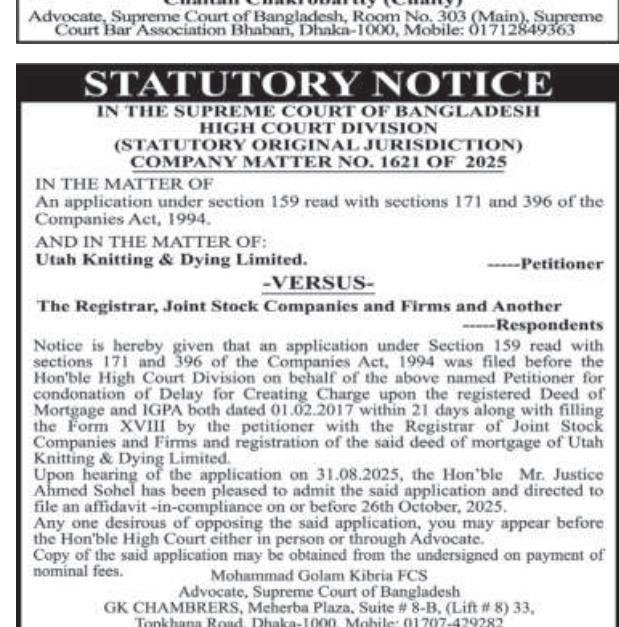
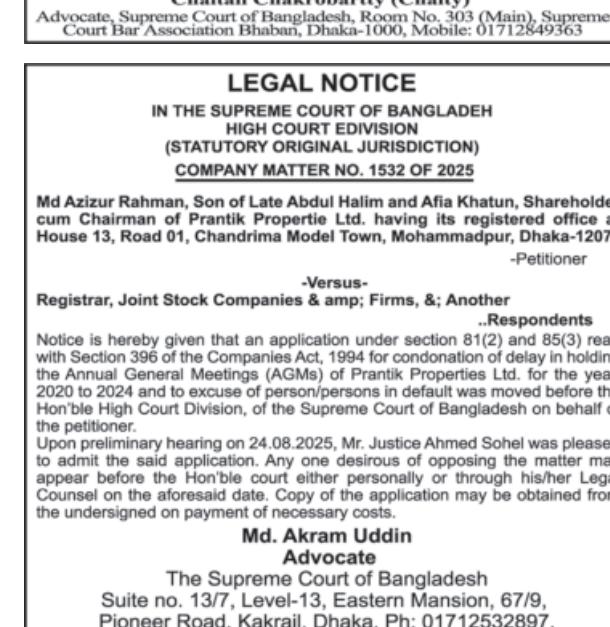
Police arrested 18 leaders and activists of the Awami League and its associate bodies, whose activities have been banned, in separate drives in Dhaka's Darussalam and Mirpur areas on Thursday.

Of them, 12 were arrested by Darussalam police while they were preparing to bring out a flash procession at Technical Intersection around 3:40pm, said police.

Acting on a tip off, a patrol team rushed to the spot and detained them with the help of locals, while several others managed to flee, said a press release.

In a separate drive, Mirpur Model Police arrested six others around 2:45pm near Paikpara Type Staff Quarters, following information that a group of Awami League and banned Chhatra League activists were holding a secret meeting and chanting anti-government slogans.

Legal actions against them were underway.



AHSANULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

141-142 Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208.

Web: www.aust.edu

Date: Sep. 09, 2025

Ref. No: AUST/UE Office/OTM/Tender-03/2025-26

INVITATION OF TENDER FOR FOOLPROOF ATTENDANCE SYSTEM

(TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL)

Sealed tender both for Technical and Financial (two envelope system) are hereby invited from the Manufacturer or their local agent for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Operation & Maintenance of Foolproof Attendance System for Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), 141 & 142, Love Road, Dhaka-1208. The tender documents will be available for purchase (non-refundable) from the office of the Treasurer, Ahsanullah University of Engineering and Technology during office hour 10 AM to 5 PM at a cost of Tk. 5,000.00 (Five thousand) only in Pay Order from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favour of "AHSANULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY".

The tender will be received in the same office and will be opened the outer envelope containing technical and financial offer and the technical part only on the last date of submission of Tender at 3:30 pm in presence of the Bidders or their representative (if any). The tender must be accompanied by a Bank Draft / Pay order of Tk. 2,50,000.00 (Taka Two lac and fifty thousand) from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favour of "AHSANULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY" along with Technical Offer as bid security money without which the tender shall be out right rejected.

The AUST authority reserves the right to accept any or reject all tenders without assigning the reason what-so-ever and is not bound to award the work to the lowest bidder.

Last date of selling Tender Document: Oct. 05, 2025 up to 2-30 PM

Prebid Meeting: Oct. 09, 2025 at 2-00 PM at VC Seminar Room (Lift-3, Blk-D)

Dead Line of Submission Tender: Date: Oct. 13, 2025, Time: 3-00 PM and tenders will be opened at 03-30 pm on the same day (Oct. 13, 2025)

INNOVATION:: CREATION:: LEADERSHIP



South Korean protesters hold signs reading 'Trump, apologize!' during an anti-US rally near the US Embassy in Seoul yesterday, denouncing the detention of South Korean workers following a US immigration raid in Georgia.

Patience has run out with Putin

Says Trump as Kremlin declares 'pause' in Russia-Ukraine peace talks

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday said his patience with Russian President Vladimir Putin was running out, as the Kremlin announced a "pause" in peace talks between Russia and Ukraine.

"It's sort of running out and running out fast," Trump said in an interview with Fox News' "Fox and Friends" program.

Pushing for a deal to end the fighting, Trump has engaged in a flurry of diplomacy -- including hosting Russian counterpart



AFP, in a briefing call.

Poland tells Trump Russian drone raid not a 'mistake'

Russia, Belarus start drills as West watches warily

Ukraine targeted nuke plant in drone barrage: Russia

Vladimir Putin in Alaska -- but Moscow has pressed on with its offensive and aerial barrages.

"Our negotiators have the opportunity to communicate through channels. But for now, it is probably more accurate to talk about a pause," spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, including

escalate aerial attacks on Ukrainian cities.

The Russian defence ministry posted a video showing heavy military equipment -- including armoured vehicles, helicopters and navy ships -- taking part in the drills.

Russia also accused Ukraine of launching an attack drone at a nuclear power plant, as Moscow said it downed more than 200 Ukrainian drones in one of Kyiv's largest overnight attacks.

Ukraine has for months launched retaliatory drone strikes against Russian energy sites, calling them a fair response to Moscow's own barrages on its cities and power grid.

Russia's nuclear power agency Rosatom said one had targeted the Smolensk nuclear power plant, around 300 kilometres (186 miles) west of Moscow.

In a separate development, Russia and its key ally Belarus began major joint military drills early yesterday, putting Nato on edge

days after Poland accused Moscow of escalating tensions by firing attack drones through its airspace.

The "Zapad" exercises come as Russian forces grind across the sprawling front line in Ukraine and

Commissions for police a good move

Govt must make sure they deliver real change, not cosmetic reform

It is encouraging to learn about the interim government's decision to establish two separate commissions for the police—the Independent Investigation Services and the Internal Complaints Commission—to usher in long-awaited accountability within the force. This decision signals a renewed commitment to reform the force long plagued by impunity, politicisation, and public mistrust. However, while the intent behind forming the commissions is commendable, the structure and execution of these commissions must be carefully scrutinised to ensure they can bring real change.

The Police Reform Commission first proposed the formation of an independent police commission in January, as part of a broader set of recommendations to overhaul the force. These included aligning police's use of force with the UN peacekeeping standards, curbing custodial torture, extortion, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances, and amending outdated police laws to ensure accountability and human rights compliance. Now that two separate commissions are supposed to be formed instead of one, some believe that this may create obstacles in the reform process. The differences of opinions among various stakeholders about the commissions' formation, therefore, must be resolved through proper discussion.

Reportedly, the Independent Investigation Services, which will be chaired by the law adviser or minister according to the government's decision, will be tasked with probing misconduct within the police, without external interference. This is a critical development, especially given the force's history of shielding its own members from scrutiny. To be effective, the commission must be legally empowered to conduct impartial investigations, free from political or bureaucratic pressure. The Internal Complaints Commission, meanwhile, will be chaired by the home adviser or minister, with the inspector general of police (IGP) as member-secretary. Its mandate includes building a people-friendly and transparent police force by resolving internal grievances, ensuring accountability in recruitment and promotions, and overseeing training, welfare, leadership selection, structural reforms, and policy development. While its scope is broad, its credibility also hinges on its independence.

Over the past decades, public confidence in our police has steadily eroded due to widespread corruption and its political misuse. Particularly during the Awami League regime, the force saw a significant decline in credibility. This loss of trust intensified during the July uprising last year, when police brutality reached unprecedented levels through indiscriminate shootings and the killing of protesters. Therefore, following the regime's collapse, demands for meaningful police reform grew louder.

With the formation of these commissions, we hope to get a more accountable and people-friendly police. However, for the commissions to work independently, robust legal safeguards and genuine political will are needed. Without them, they risk becoming another missed opportunity. But if formed with sincerity and determination, they have the potential to transform the police from a force of coercion into a public service rooted in protection and trust.

Declining press freedom concerning

Journalists must be protected, press freedom must be upheld

The state of press freedom around the world, as depicted in a report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), is gravely concerning. Per the report, global press freedoms have significantly declined between 2019 and 2024, reaching their lowest level in 50 years. Afghanistan, Burkina Faso and Myanmar are the worst affected, while South Korea is ranked fourth due to increased government-led defamation lawsuits and raids targeting journalists. The IDEA secretary general has rightly voiced alarm over this sharp deterioration in a key indicator of democratic health. According to the think tank, governments are increasingly resorting to coercive measures to control the media, which is a worrying development.

Although Bangladesh's press freedom has improved slightly—from 165th to 149th position—according to this year's World Press Freedom Index, the situation in the country is still classified as "very serious." During the 15 plus years of the Awami League's rule, journalists faced severe harassment and violence and media freedom was heavily curtailed. Unfortunately, that atmosphere of fear and insecurity still persists even after the AL's fall. Journalists continue to be targeted and assaulted across the country. According to a report by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), incidents of violence targeting journalists surged in August this year, doubling from the previous month. One journalist was killed and another brutally attacked while carrying out their professional duties.

Journalists are also being targeted by violent mobs in Bangladesh. The recent attack on speakers at a roundtable inside Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) by a mob is a case in point, where instead of the attackers, journalist Monjurul Alam Panna was detained under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Legal harassment of journalists continues even after the fall of the fascist government, with 266 journalists implicated after August 5, 2024. The entire situation exposes the current government's failure to ensure the safety of journalists. We urge the government to thoroughly investigate all incidents of violence against journalists and bring the perpetrators to justice. Likewise, legal harassment of journalists must come to an end. The government must also implement the recommendations made by the Media Reform Commission to improve the overall state of journalists and press freedom in the country.

We also urge the world leaders to work on improving the state of press freedom in their respective countries. Media outlets must be given the space to work independently so they can speak truth to power. We must remember that to build and maintain a functioning democracy anywhere in the world, ensuring press freedom and protecting journalists are essential.

EDITORIAL

When campus politics takes the centre stage



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The landslide victory of the Islami Chhatrashibir-backed panel in the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) election on Tuesday came as a shock to many. (The results of Jucsu polls at Jahangirnagar University, held on Thursday, was pending as of 7:30pm Friday.) Ever since the transition to parliamentary democracy in 1991, our political establishment has gotten used to a musical chair with the Awami League and BNP as the main contenders in national politics. Politics in the public universities reflected those in power; student unions were confined overtly to debates over dining hall menus, dormitory allocations, and cultural activities, and covertly to construction commissions and controlling rented properties in the vicinity. The disproportionate attention given to student polls exposes the political vacuum created by the country's eroded electoral culture. The media's hunger for symbolic contests catapulted student elections to the centre stage, as if they were national referendums.

Ironically, while the hype pitches student unions as "proxy parliaments," the unions' constitutions limit them to nothing more than a welfare body under the vice-chancellors' authority. Five student representatives of the unions will join the university senates for a year or until their successors step in, provided they have a valid student status. In a changed political landscape, students are likely to seek more stakes in the governance of the universities. Even so, the coverage of these student elections cannot be justified.

The only justification is that these elections are test cases for the interim government, which has promised a just transition to the democratic process. The shrinking space for competitive electoral politics caused by successive national elections being rigged, suppressed, and boycotted has made citizens lose faith in the ballot box. Such a vacuum allowed campus elections as a rare space where voters found agency. The campaigns looked like some rituals to revive democracy from its deathbed. The spectacles

created by newspapers, podcasts, and social media platforms satisfied our longing for democracy.

The lopsided attention given to DU poses another Orwellian riddle: why is one institution more of an institution than the other? Given DU's image in the national imagination as a site of every political movement, such emphasis is understandable. Then again, it highlights a problem for democracy, where too much weight is



FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The Ducusu election this year saw a significantly large voter turnout, figures suggesting that it was the highest turnout in several decades.

placed on one institution to mirror the pulse of an entire nation.

We often perceive campuses as miniature representations of the country. However, universities, with their educated demographics, may not fully represent the actual voters. But the momentum created during the elections may impact the decision-making process. That is why Shibir went for a tactical rebranding and scripted the performance to present themselves as a new finalist in the political game. They started their campaign by promoting the decoupling of student politics from national bases. They demanded a ban on party-leaning student politics and the declaration of hall committees by students' organisations. They aimed

to achieve two objectives: to dissociate themselves from the stigma associated with their parent body, Jamaat-e-Islami, and to destabilise Jatiotabadi Chatratal's (JCD) return to campus after a long absence. Shibir opted for both a new name and a new optic, while JCD was caught off guard with its hands buried in the cookie jar of old politics. They were presented as the main actors in the ongoing culture of extortion, usurpation, vandalism, and underhanded dealings.

For those of us who have seen the violent phases of Shibir activism in the 80s and 90s, this is a surprising twist. To broaden their reach, they fielded a progressive female candidate and even a candidate from the Indigenous community. This strategic gesture portrays the organisation as an inclusive force.

What the progressive camps have

narrative of being martyrs of the present, especially in the July uprising.

It is time that other student bodies learnt from the student-centric initiatives. JCD took an oath to abolish bullying in the public room, which has become a nightmare for all incoming students. Yet it was somewhat too late. The recruitment strategy of Shibir involved mentoring students for admission and providing them with subsidies, off-campus jobs, tutoring services, medical and legal aid, and basic utilities, such as water filters in halls. The source of the funding remains a significant and unresolved question. However, while mainstream wings flexed their muscles, Shibir focused on providing welfare.

JCD, in contrast, was crippled by its parent organisation's indecision. Unsure of whether to contest campus polls before securing a national electoral breakthrough, they delayed, dithered, and ultimately joined under pressure. Students read this hesitation as weakness—a reflection of a party more obsessed with national power games than student welfare. Swing voters shifted to Shibir not out of ideological alignment but to punish JCD and send a message to the BNP.

The greatest loser in this battle, however, is the National Citizen Party (NCP). Given their close ties to the government, their decline is truly tragic. Yet, amid this hype, one must confront the sobering fact: Ducusu's or Jucsu's constitutional powers are limited. Under the 1973 act, the VCs are the ex officio presidents of these bodies. The very functions over which national parties battle for symbolic control are not legally within the mandate of student unions. The hype, amplified by social media algorithms, manufactured the illusion of a mandate. What Shibir won was not a parliament but a stage with the whole world watching.

Such a rise of religion-based student forces can reverberate beyond campus walls. It can pose a fundamental question: are the youth genuinely shifting towards faith-based politics, or merely fleeing the rot of mainstream student wings? This is where the election is likely to have a broader national impact. The Shibir-backed panel's Ducusu win matters, but not in the way headlines suggest. It signals the exhaustion with mainstream party proxies, the power of disciplined rebranding, and the political hunger created by the absence of credible national elections. It shows how a campus can become a stage when the national theatre remains closed.

Trial by fire

The Gen Z movement now has to unite to take the lead in reconstructing the Nepali state



Kunda Dixit
is the publisher of the Nepali Times.

KUNDA DIXIT

This article was published before it was reported on Friday that former Chief Justice Sushila Karki would take oath as the interim prime minister of Nepal.

Many young Nepalis at the Gen Z rally on September 8 carried banners that read, "Enough Is Enough."

But by the end of the day and into

September 9, the arson and mayhem had gone out of control of the idealistic young activists. As Parliament, Singha Darbar, the Supreme Court, public and private property were torched and looted, "Enough Is Enough" took on a new meaning.

What started out as a hashtag-led campaign exposing the luxurious lifestyle and extravagance of the scions of powerful political figures soon snowballed into a larger movement against corruption and impunity. #Nepokids in Nepal metamorphosed into a political reform campaign, which again transmuted on Tuesday into class rage.

The Oli-led coalition government's ban on social media last week forced what was essentially an online movement into the streets. Hami Nepal and the Gen Z platform organised the rally at Mandala on Monday

despite information that controversial political forces and other elements planned to infiltrate it. Which they did.

By Tuesday afternoon, Kathmandu was being firebombed. The three pillars of state—the legislative, executive, and judiciary—were reduced to ashes. Even the fourth estate was not spared, and became the target of unnamed arsonists.

The damage was not just to physical

buildings, but to the national psyche. But just like Hami Nepal emerged from the rubble of the 2015 earthquake, the Gen Z movement now has to take the lead in rebuilding from the cinders of 2025. Nepal needs to rise from the ashes, and be reconstructed from the ground up by a new generation with accountable government, equitable and inclusive growth, and an open society.

What this week's upheaval showed, aside from the tragedy of the lives lost and physical destruction, is that Nepalis value freedom of expression and can use it to stand against injustice and keep fighting for reform and progress.

But there are pitfalls ahead. Some of the same forces that piggybacked on the Gen Z rally are now outside the gates of Army Headquarters opposing the consensus candidate for interim prime

minister. There are scores of imitation Gen Zs across the internet with familiar cast of characters from the past.

The army must have learnt from the February 1, 2005 experience that it should remain as a non-political institution of last resort—there cannot be wannabe prime ministers applying loudly for the job at the gates of its headquarters in Tundikhel.

The army was needed on the streets on Tuesday night, when the situation spiralled out of control. But it should now be President Ram Chandra Poudel who must take a more proactive role than he has so far in re-establishing stability. He cannot waste time in appointing an interim government led by a caretaker prime minister of unquestioned integrity to oversee elections.

This is also the demand of Gen Z activists, who want parliament dissolved and changes in the constitution to allow wide-ranging reforms.

Changing the constitution now will mean another shaky rimerole like the 2008-2015 period. The amendments can be made after new elections.

Our common ground

A transformative transition like this also means a lot of uncertainty with competing interest groups trying to take advantage of the fluid situation. Nepal has gone through these upheavals before (although not on the scale we saw this week) with the 1990 People's Movement or the 2006 Peace and Democracy Movement. Each time, there was hope that finally elected leaders who fought and suffered for liberation and freedom would deliver.

Alas, the Nepali people have been let down every time. It has to be different this time. And who better to lead it than a new generation with hopes, aspirations, energy and resolve to build Nepal anew, led by a caretaker prime minister known for her independence, courage, and honesty.

In this edition, we carry two op-eds by Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi writers about similar youth-led movements that toppled governments in their countries in 2022 and 2024. Both have important lessons for Nepal's Gen Z.

If former Chief Justice Sushila Karki is appointed to head the interim government, she will be our Muhammad Yunus. But as we saw in Bangladesh, it did not go as smoothly as everyone had hoped. Similar story in the aftermath of Sri Lanka's Aragalaya movement.

There were different triggers in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, but one common strand was a neglected and disempowered citizenry which could not take it anymore. They organised organically through social media to push for change.

The wildcard in all three countries is geopolitics, and the competing strategic interests of the India, China, United States triangle—especially with the Trump-Modi tiff.

Time is now of the essence. The longer this drags on, the more difficult it will be to find common ground and start rebuilding. Ending the violence does not mean keeping things in a political vacuum.

This article first appeared in the Nepali Times on September 11, 2025.

REMEMBERING BADRUDDIN UMAR

A tribute to a genuine scholar and a committed activist



Prof Rehman Sobhan, one of Bangladesh's most distinguished economists and a celebrated public intellectual, is founder and chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

REHMAN SOBHAN

I have just bid farewell to yet another dear friend and comrade with whom I embarked on a journey towards a more just Bangladesh nearly six decades ago. I was introduced to Badruddin Umar by our mutual friend Mosharraf Hossain sometime around 1961. Umar had just returned from Oxford where he had graduated with a degree in PPE (politics, philosophy and economics). Mosharraf, Umar and I believed in a socialist future for what was then East Pakistan, though Umar's approach to socialism was much more solidly grounded than mine and was firmly anchored in the Stalinist variant of socialism. Umar believed, and possibly continued to believe to the end, that the decline and disintegration of the Soviet Union began with the death and repudiation of the Stalinist legacy by his successor Nikita Khrushchev.

The finer points of socialism and the nature of a socialist society remained an ongoing discourse with Umar over the next 62 years. We had fierce debates on politics and policy, which were intensified once I became involved in the political movement for self rule for Bangladesh. In the post liberation period, during my tenure as member of the first Planning Commission, along with Mosharraf Hossain, Anisur Rahman and Nurul Islam, Umar in the columns of the *Holiday* was a regular, if not always well-informed, critic of our policies. Yet, over the years of intellectual and political contestation, Umar remained one of Mosharraf Hossain's closest friends and a good friend to me. We argued and disagreed, but the relations remained civilised and never crossed the bounds of decency.

Umar was more than a friend; he was also a relation through my late wife, Salma Sobhan. Salma's mother, Shaista Iramullah, and Meherbano, Umar's mother, were first cousins. Umar's grandmother and Salma's grandfather, Prof Hassan Suhrawardy, were children of the reputed scholar Ubaidullah al Ubaidi, founder and principal of the Aliva Madrasa in Dhaka. Umar was, thus, a legatee of a political aristocracy where his great grandfather Abdul Jabbar Khan, his grandfather Abul Kasem Khan, and his father Abul Hashim were important figures in Bengal politics over the course of a century.

Our family relationship rarely intruded into our personal and professional relationship. In 1961, when Kamal Hossain and I decided to establish a think tank, the National Association for Social and Economic Progress (NASEP), we drew in Mosharraf Hossain, then a reader in economics at Rajshahi University, and his two university colleagues, Prof Salauddin Ahmed from the history department and Badruddin Umar, then a reader in the political science department. In those days, we identified the primary contradiction within the Pakistan state as the undemocratic nature of the state and its consequential implications for denial of self-rule for the Bangalees. We also believed in the need for a secular, egalitarian, social order with our own varied perspectives on the nature of a socialist system which would be appropriate for our society. NASEP sought to initiate debate to explore policy options for the then East Pakistan. We prepared a number of pamphlets on the challenges of democracy, disparity and education, and on the challenge of communalism, prepared by Umar.

Umar, more so than other members of NASEP, had very little confidence in the Awami League, then led by HS Suhrawardy, who was in fact his *manu* as he was Salma's *manu*. Umar was highly critical of Suhrawardy as the prime minister of Pakistan when he declined to honour the 21-point manifesto of the Jukto Front, which swept the 1954 provincial elections in East Bengal, demanding that Pakistan withdraw from the US led military pacts of CENTO and SEATO.



Badruddin Umar (1931-2025)

ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

Here, all of us at NASEP were in full agreement with Umar. I had, indeed, as a student in Cambridge, participated in a debate between the Cambridge University Majlis and the Cambridge Conservative Society, where I had argued along with Amartya Sen and Arif Iftikhar, "This house rejects SEATO." When the AI split on this issue of the US alliance and also on the demand for full autonomy for East Pakistan, Umar strongly identified with Maulana Bhashani and the politics of the National Awami Party (NAP) founded by him.

Among all of us at NASEP, Umar was the most politically oriented and believed that it was not enough to just write and debate about politics; we needed to be directly engaged in the process. Somewhere around 1968, Umar made a life-changing decision to join polities, not just as a part-time activist but on a full-time basis. A number of academics and professionals did indeed become members of political parties without leaving their income-earning professions. But few Bangalee Muslims such as Prof Muzaffar Ahmed, who had become one of the leaders of NAP, had opted to actually do so on a full-time basis. In the case of Umar, this meant resigning from his position as professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at Rajshahi University. He was already under attack by the then governor, Monem Khan, for his critical writings against state policy, as were some of us in the economics department at Dhaka University.

Since neither Umar nor his wife owned any income-generating assets, the only source of income available to the family was Umar's salary from Rajshahi University. His resignation thus had severe implications for the livelihood of his family, which included three children: a son and two daughters.

This absence of a regular source of income for Umar prevailed to the end of his life. Fortunately, his wife Suraiya could be provided with employment in a bank just after liberation, and she remained the principal breadwinner of the family. After her retirement, Suraiya continued working at AIN

this later. But royalties from his writings provided a significant contribution to the family coffers and continued to do so to the very end of his life. His definitive work on the Language Movement of 1952 is still in print after 60 years and continues to provide him with royalties along with many other of his publications.

Umar's heroic and principled decision to commit himself to full-time politics unfortunately came at an unpropitious moment. His political engagement was associated with his commitment to join the then Communist Party. The East Pakistan Communist Party (EPCP) had unfortunately gone through a number of divisions in the 1960s, associated with the split in the global communist movement between Moscow and Beijing. A once powerful left movement associated with the NAP and backed by a united underground Communist Party had weakened itself through division. One faction of the EPCP, associated with China, sided with the Maulana Bhashani-led faction of NAP. The other, pro-Moscow faction backed the segment of NAP led by Prof Muzaffar Ahmed.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the pro-China component of the NAP-EPCP alliance further weakened itself by sub-dividing itself into four factions: one led by Maulana Bhashani, which served as the NAP; another faction led by Mohammad Toaha and Abdul Haque, which was joined by Umar; a third faction led by Matin and Alauddin; and a fourth faction led by Abul Bashar, the trade union leader, Kazi Zafar, and Rashed Khan Menon. At that time, the pro-China faction of the left were far from clear about where they stood in relation to the Bangalee nationalist movement, which was reaching its apotheosis through the Six-Point Movement led by Bangabandhu. Umar in his own writings strongly argued for the left fully committing itself to the emerging struggle for a self-ruled Bangladesh, but such a clearly defined position was not decisively embraced by the left factions.

Umar wrote in Volume 2 of *The Emergence*

of the pro Chinese Communists and led to a softening of his attitude towards Ayub Khan, who was considered as an 'anti imperialist' factor in the region" (Page 83).

Umar remained associated with Toaha during the Liberation War, but had disagreements with him on the role of his party in the Liberation War and eventually left the party. For most of the 54 years after the liberation, Umar remained involved with the left movement both at the grassroots and cultural levels. He was associated with a left group led by himself and Prof Shahiduddahar. They once invited me to address one of their discussion groups on agrarian reform, a subject on which I had earlier published a book. I do not have much knowledge of this final phase of Umar's political life, but it does not appear that his involvement did much to advance the left cause, which remained divided and ineffective.

Whatever may have been the outcome from Umar's political activism, as a scholar and intellectual of the left, he remained a powerful figure till the end of his life. As a scholar, I would personally rate Umar as the most outstanding political historian produced by Bangladesh. His historic work on the Language Movement in East Pakistan remains the definitive work on this historic phase of the nationalist struggle. The work is clearly informed by a political perspective, but the scholarship, with access to primary sources of information such as the detailed diaries of Tajuddin Ahmad, remains without equal. The volume, based on deep research carried out without any institutional support or financial backing, was a labour of love by Umar and the product of a true scholar. The work is still in print after 60 years and will be read long after Umar's departure.

Umar has written other works on political history. Of these, one of his most important works is provided through his two-volume publication, *The Emergence of Bangladesh* (OUP, 2004). This work originated in a series of articles Umar had begun publishing in the *Holiday*. I read these articles with interest

and was deeply impressed by the highly informative and analytical quality of his work, which I believed should be widely read by a generation who had little if any memory of the historical antecedents of the emergence of Bangladesh. I suggested to Umar that he should collect these articles together and publish this as a coherent volume of political history. Umar was unsure if his version of history would find ready publishers in Bangladesh, so I suggested that I could reach out to Oxford University Press (OUP) in Pakistan, which could also provide a large market in Pakistan, since the work covered the entire period of Pakistani rule up to 1971.

I contacted the CEO of OUP in Pakistan, Ameena Saiyid, who was well-known to me. She had transformed OUP in Pakistan into a globally recognised brand, whose books could be found on the shelves of bookshops and libraries not only in Pakistan but also in India and around the world. Ameena readily responded to my suggestion and OUP, after some hiccups between Umar and his editor at OUP, went ahead and published both volumes, which were widely acclaimed. Once OUP surrendered its copyright after exhausting the sales potential of the work in Pakistan, Cambridge University Press in India took up the publication of the two volumes. I have read, learnt much and drawn upon both volumes in writing parts of my memoir. The two volumes are again well-researched and written from a left perspective. Indeed, the first volume is sub-titled *Class struggles in East Pakistan, 1947-58*. Umar's political perspective did not prejudice the width and depth of the historical research informing his work in these volumes.

Beyond his political activism and scholarship, Umar was an exceptional human being. He cherished his family, who remained devoted to him to the end. His wife Suraiya was a pillar in his life, where not only did she serve as a breadwinner but also as a pillar of the family where Umar's long absences in the field and his risk-prone involvement in political movements exposed the family to much insecurity. Both Mosharraf's wife Inari

Whatever may have been the outcome from Umar's political activism, as a scholar and intellectual of the left, he remained a powerful figure till the end of his life. As a scholar, I would personally rate Umar as the most outstanding political historian produced by Bangladesh. His historic work on the Language Movement in East Pakistan remains the definitive work on this historic phase of the nationalist struggle.

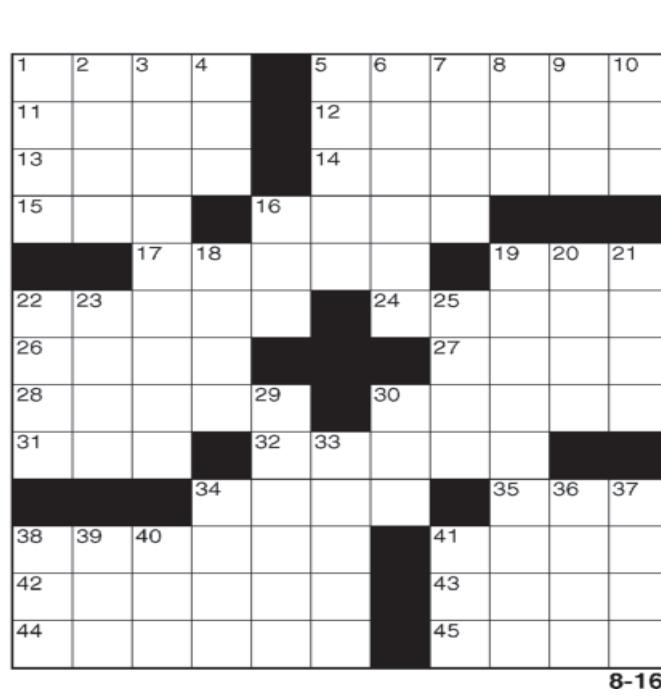
and Salma were especially close to Suraiya, who treated them as her elder sisters. For all the tribulations he faced and the intensity and passions underlying his political conflicts, not just with successive regimes but within the left, Umar retained his sense of humour and civility in his social life. In our final encounter at my home in April of this year, he was in top form. He had lost most of his hearing, but not his eloquence and sharpness of mind. He could not attend my 90th birthday celebrations due to illness, but felt obliged to subsequently call on me as an old friend to contribute to the celebrations. His anecdotes were full of humour, where he laughingly observed that the harshest criticisms he received in his life were not from his ruling class enemies, but from the divided community of the left.

Umar is and will be remembered today as a committed and uncompromising icon of the left. He invested his scholarship as well as his public activism behind various struggles of working people, the unending fight against autocracy, the global war against imperialism, and what Umar regarded as the deeply divisive menace of communalism. But in any final analysis of his life, it will be his works of scholarship which will invest him with immortality.

ACROSS
1 Movie pig
5 Plot shocks
11 Plow pullers
12 Like some
prejudice
13 Winter glider
14 Bureau
15 Ready to go
16 Hart's mate
17 - cuisine
19 Chapel seat
22 Push rudely
24 Attain
26 Roof overhang
27 Massage target
28 Prague native
30 Take - (guess)
31 Wallet bill
32 Concur
34 Macramé unit
35 Cut off

38 Ottawa's nation
41 Clarinet's kin
42 Let up
43 Showed sorrow
44 Luke and Leia,
e.g.
45 Different
DOWNS
1 Head honcho
2 Car bar
3 German
composer
4 Wrap up
5 Characteristic
6 German
composer
7 Tea type
8 Naughty act
9 Tic-toe link
10 Cunning
16 Shade

18 Opposite of
"sans"
19 German
composer
20 Bounce back
21 Sharpen
22 Splinter group
23 Visibility
lessener
25 Move slowly
29 German
composer
30 Gallery fill
33 Urges on
34 Petruchio's love
36 "Clumsy me!"
37 Comic Davidson
38 Sedan or SUV
39 White House
nickname
40 Arrest
41 Have debts



50 years later, NAQUIB KHAN stands as a musical pillar



RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Back when cassettes were still a part of everyday life, my dad had a drawer overflowing with cassettes by Souls and Renaissance. I'd often hum along to songs like *Mon Shudhu Mon Chhuyechhey*, *Bhalo Lagey Jotsna Ratey*, and *O Nodire Tui Jaas Kothaire*. The melodies and lyrics felt magical, and I remember wishing to someday meet the person behind these songs.

Fast forward to 2025, that childhood dream came true. I had the incredible opportunity to sit down with Naqib Khan, the man behind more than 500 songs and a remarkable 50-year journey in music, who, humbly, shies away from the term 'legend.'

The musician dropped by the Daily Star office, and over a cup of coffee, we talked about his musical influences, his vision for the future of the music industry, and his plans to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Renaissance.

"I don't really consider myself a legend. I am still learning about music," he said with a smile. "Music is like a vast sea of knowledge, and we're just collecting pebbles by the shore."

Music, as it turns out, runs deep in his veins. His grandfather was a qawali artiste in Kolkata, his father also used to sing, and all three of his brothers shared a passion for music. Naqib and his brother Pilu were guided by their elder brother, Jalaluddin Khan (Ziloo Khan), who taught them how to create melodies and play the keyboard. Naqib had been practicing since kindergarten, without any formal training.

Looking back, he recalled how band music evolved in post-independence Bangladesh. Pop was at its peak. In Chattogram, bands like The Lightnings mostly performed English songs, while his brother formed Balarik in 1972, where all three siblings performed together. "My first concert was in 1972 in Cox's Bazar. I was really small, but that experience felt surreal," he said. Balarik disbanded the following year as members got busy with work.

Around the same time, another Chattogram-based band, Surela, mostly did folk and cover songs before eventually transforming into Souls. "In 1974, I joined Souls as a keyboard player. My first thought was, why not create original songs? Our debut album Super Souls came out in 1981, and to this day, people still listen to those songs. Even after 50 years, they've survived. At the time, we called it pop, but we

wanted to add new depth through melody and lyrics," he said.

But making music then came with real challenges. "It was difficult even to get a harmonium or tabla, let alone western instruments. Chattogram being a port city helped, as visiting foreigners sometimes sold us their old instruments. We had no sound systems; we made do with amplifiers, adding a microphone to sing. Kids today can't even imagine it," he laughed.

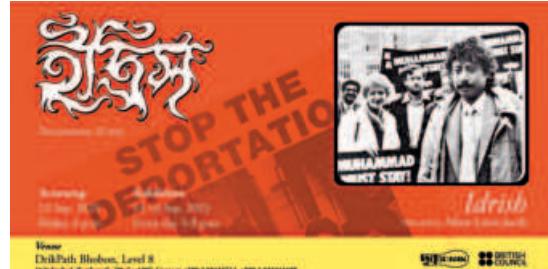
Recording was equally challenging. "There were no studios as such. In Dhaka, when we recorded the first Souls songs, the studio didn't even have spools—they recorded straight onto cassettes. For *Mon Shudhu Mon Chhuyechhey*, the keyboard pitch you hear was actually played by Pilu, not me, because I was busy harmonising the vocals. Since it was a mono recording, I couldn't play and sing at the same time," he explained.

In 1985, Naqib formed Renaissance and shifted to Dhaka. The transition wasn't easy. "Souls had already seen huge success, so we were nervous about how Renaissance would be received. At the time, Bangladeshi band music was shifting towards rock and heavy metal, which was exciting. We wanted to set ourselves apart by focusing on melody and lyrical depth, using our platform to share messages with society. Songs like *Aj Je Shishu* and *Hridoy Kadamaiti Kono Murti Noy* carried that spirit. When our first album Renaissance came out, the response was overwhelming. Though our body of work isn't vast, the success rate has been high," he reflected.

This year marks Renaissance's 40th anniversary, and plans are underway to celebrate with new songs and a special programme. Beyond his bands, Naqib has composed for some of Bangladesh's finest voices—Kumar Bishwajit, Tapan Chowdhury, Sheikh Ishtiaque, Samina Chowdhury, Fahmida Nabi, Shakila Zafar, Nancy, and many more. "It's a matter of pride that I composed the first songs and albums for many of them. Seeing them flourish gives me joy," he said.

Despite his vast body of work, the ever-humble musician returned to words that reflect his deepest beliefs: "I could never imagine that people would still be listening to my songs after 50 years. I pray I never let ego enter my heart. I am still a learner, and I want to keep exploring music."

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Idrish: Film Screening and Exhibition

Sep 12-16 | 6pm-8pm

DrikPath Bhabon, Panthapath



Melody & Memories

Sep 25 | 7pm-10pm

Jatra Biroti



Play: Kohey Facebook

Sep 27 | 7pm-9pm

Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA

TV TALKIES

Unleashes mutant mayhem with nostalgic spectacle

The dinosaurs are back, but this time they're stranger than ever. *Jurassic World: Rebirth*, directed by Gareth Edwards, shifts the franchise into a more fantastical direction. Rather than rehashing past formulas, the seventh instalment drops viewers into a high stakes mission where Scarlett Johansson's covert operative leads a team into a remote sanctuary, only to discover horrifying hybrids engineered from spliced DNA.

The new creatures—like the grotesque Distortus Rex and insect-like Mutadons—push the franchise toward sci fi horror, while the lush island cinematography and 35mm film grain pay homage to Spielberg's original. Edwards stages the action with scale and ferocity, balancing sweeping spectacle with tense jungle sequences. Johansson brings a grounded intensity, while Mahershala Ali and Jonathan Bailey add gravitas to the ensemble.

Box office results roared louder than expected, with



a \$318 million global debut. Critics, however, were split: some praised the energy and inventive monster design, while others bemoaned thin characters and narrative shortcuts.

WHAT'S PLAYING

'All My Love' by COLDPLAY

All My Love is Coldplay stripped bare: a plaintive ballad that carries the weight of romance and the shadow of farewell. Released in 2025, the song has been framed by Chris Martin as potentially the band's final proper single, giving it the weight of Beatles-esque tenderness.

The visuals are as stirring as the song itself. Spike Jonze and Mary Wigmore frame Dick Van Dyke in a luminous vignette; turning the video into a grace of time.

At the 2025 MTV VMAs, *All My Love* was named Best Rock, a crowning moment for a band already carved into music history.



TRENDY STREAMS

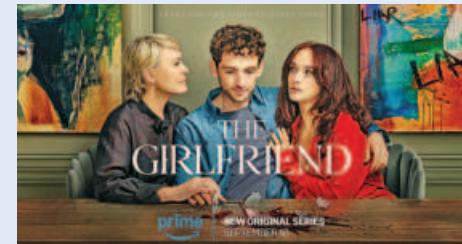
Netflix:
Maledictions



Hulu:
Tempest



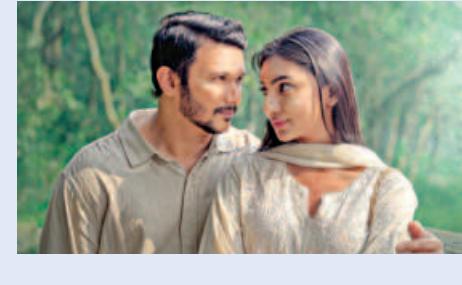
Prime Video:
The Girlfriend



Hoichoi:
AKA



Chorki:
Khub Kacheri Keu



STYLE STATEMENT

SABILA NUR

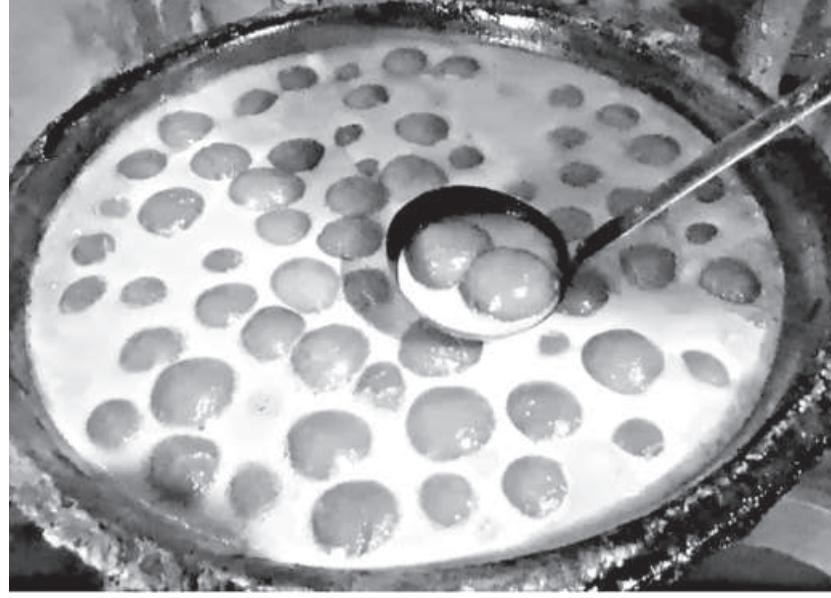
Sabila Nur turned heads with a look that redefined evening glamour at The Blender's Choice—The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards. Dressed in a sequined V-neck top paired with wide-leg trousers, her outfit was effortlessly elevated by a flowing cape embroidered with delicate beadwork. The all-black palette, complemented by a sculptural clutch shimmering with stones, added a touch of sparkle, while statement earrings perfectly framed her look.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

40 YEARS OF TRADITION AND GOODWILL

How Chunilal's rosogolla became Sarail's identity



MASUK HRIDAY, Brahmanbaria

At one end of the remote Aruail Bazar in Sarail upazila of Brahmanbaria, a small sweet shop has been drawing visitors for over four decades.

The reason: Chunilal's rosogolla, a delicacy that has become as much a cultural emblem as it is a treat for the taste buds.

Made by Sunil Mallik, who is better known as Chunilal, these rosogollas have long captured the hearts of locals and sweet lovers from afar. Crafted from pure, fresh cow's milk, they stand apart from the usual variety made from cottage cheese. Soft, spongy and perfectly balanced in sweetness, each piece weighs around 150 grammes.

Now 70, Sunil still prepares the sweets in front of customers, with the help of his son Gopal Mallik. The simple act of watching them being made has become part of the charm, drawing visitors to the

shop day after day.

For more than 40 years, the shop has offered only one product -- the rosogolla.

Sarail UNO Md Mosharaf Hossain said, "I went there with my wife and children, and we were amazed. I have never tasted such a large and delicious rosogolla



anywhere else. What makes it even more special is the dedication and tradition behind it."

Iqbal Hossain Mridul, principal of Aruail Abdus Sattar Degree College, added, "Chunilal's rosogolla has become an identity for Sarail."

Sanjib Kumar Debnath,

convenor of the Sarail History and Culture Preservation Council, noted, "Chunilal's rosogolla is now inseparably linked with our heritage. People from across the country visit Aruail just for this sweet. We want to preserve this legacy for future generations."

Salatur Rahman Sobuj, an assistant teacher at a local primary school, said, "Even my students know about Chunilal Dada's rosogolla. Many families send it to relatives living far away."

At Tk 60 apiece, the price is higher than the average rosogolla, but customers rarely complain. For them, the size, quality, and taste justify the cost.

"We use no artificial ingredients," Sunil said. "Our rosogolla is made with care and pure, natural ingredients, which people can taste and appreciate."

The magic, perhaps, lies in the sweet's very simplicity -- chhana, cooked with just the right amount of sweetness, and served with devotion.

Dengue cases

FROM PAGE 12

zones, eliminating adult mosquitoes, and ensuring sustained action across the country."

He also called for community mobilisation through targeted awareness campaigns.

Jahangirnagar University entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar said heavy rainfall in September and October might have temporarily reduced mosquito density in Dhaka, but intermittent rain could worsen the outbreak.

He called for targeted vector control around patients' homes and hospitals to curb transmission.

"Hospitals can become transmission hubs if Aedes mosquitoes bite infected patients and then others," he warned.

"Without active community participation in eliminating breeding grounds, controlling this outbreak will be extremely difficult."

Dr HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said delayed hospitalisation is a major factor contributing to fatalities.

Currently, four viral infections -- influenza, dengue, chikungunya, and Covid-19 -- are circulating simultaneously in the country.

He recommended early admission for high-risk groups, including patients with comorbidities, the elderly, and pregnant women.

"Many patients fail to recognise warning signs such as severe abdominal pain, breathing difficulties, bleeding, extreme fatigue, or a sharp fall in urination and platelet count. By the time they arrive at hospitals, their condition is often critical," he explained.

Many critically ill patients are referred to Dhaka hospitals from outside the capital, he said, adding that delays in referral from districts are another major factor contributing to fatalities.

He urged district-level hospitals to strictly follow the national dengue treatment guidelines and treat patients locally.

Public health expert Mohammad Mushtaq Husain echoed the call for early treatment and stronger healthcare capacity outside Dhaka.

He emphasised the need to strengthen secondary care hospitals to better manage vulnerable groups such as infants, the elderly, and those with comorbidities, so they can be stabilised before referral to tertiary hospitals.

Bay near Teknaf

FROM PAGE 12

upazila nirbahi officer of Teknaf, said around 80 fishermen have so far been detained by the Arakan Army. The respective trawler owners' associations are applying to us to rescue the fishermen, and the law enforcement agencies are working to secure their release, he added.

Mohammad Hasan, general secretary of Shahparir Dwip Mistrirpara Ghat Trawler Owners' Association, said one of his trawlers was among the five taken away on Wednesday. "As my boat was behind the others, 18 fishermen managed to escape."

Hasan added that during Myanmar's junta rule, Bangladeshi fishermen never faced such problems.

"But since the Arakan Army took control of Rakhine's coastal areas, they have been seizing our trawlers, looting fish, fuel, food, and everything on board. We are living in fear."

There are several trawler owners' associations in Teknaf, Shahparir Dwip, and St Martin's Island.

Meanwhile, Global Arakan Network, a news site affiliated with the Arakan Army, claimed that Bangladeshi fishermen are being detained for crossing into Myanmar waters.

The site claimed that 40 fishermen were held in separate operations on Wednesday, and it had earlier announced the capture of three trawlers with 18 fishermen on August 31.

On September 1, the site published photos and videos of the detainees, with locals identifying at least six of them as residents of St Martin's Island and 10 from Teknaf.

Sheikh Ehsan Uddin,

upazila nirbahi officer of Teknaf, said around 80 fishermen have so far been detained by the Arakan Army. The respective trawler owners' associations are applying to us to rescue the fishermen, and the law enforcement agencies are working to secure their release, he added.

Asked about the issue, Col Mahiuddin Ahmed, commander of Border Guard Bangladesh's Ramu sector, recently said, "This is not a case of abduction -- the fishermen are crossing into Myanmar's territory, which is why they are getting into trouble. We have protested strongly in the past [about such incidents], and we are protesting now. Through effective communication, they are usually brought back."

However, the lack of formal diplomatic relations makes the process difficult, the BGB official added.

According to trawlers' associations and BGB, around 200 fishermen abducted by Arakan Army returned home over last eight months.

"Many Bangladeshi live and work within the Middle East and Gulf region. I am deeply concerned for them and their families' safety and security because of how this Israeli government is pushing the entire region towards an abyss," he said.

Israel last month approved a new illegal settlement just east of Jerusalem, known as E1, a key area that the international community says, if implemented, would jeopardise a future Palestinian state.

The move will nearly bisect the West Bank, and according to Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich "bury the idea of a Palestinian state".

Tarique slams

FROM PAGE 12

He said Bangladeshis around the world have always stood in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Territory against violent colonial oppression and erasure, and continue to do so proudly.

"Recent news of plans to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank that would make any future Palestinian state virtually impossible is heartbreaking," Tarique said.

He said the continued apartheid and attack on the people of Palestine, their culture, their land, their history by Benjamin Netanyahu is no less than genocide and planned ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. "It is abhorrent."

The BNP leader also voiced concern for the safety of millions of Bangladeshis living and working in the Middle East and Gulf regions.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Road Division, Mymensingh.

Tel: 091-67677, Fax: 091-67677

Email: eemym@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.6152.448.15.288.25-2505

Dated: 11/09/2025

e-Tender Notice (LTM)

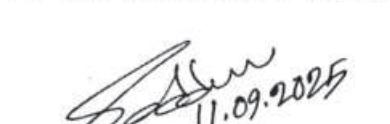
This is to notify all concern that the following tender have published through e-GP portal.

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package No. & Date of Publishing	Name of Work	Last Selling and Closing Date & Time.
01	Tender ID: 1148988 Package No. e-GP/Rev-18/LTM/MRD/2025-2026 & APP ID: 215127, Publishing: 11-Sep-2025 12:05	Maintenance of different roads by Clearing Shoulder, Traffic Sign Posts and Repair of Shoulder by providing earthwork at 7th(p), 8th(p), 10th and 11th (p) km of Mymensingh (DC office)-Raghurampur-Netrokona-Jamalganj-Mohanganj-Sunamganj Road (R-370) and 12th km (p), 13th Km (p), 14th Km (p), 15th Km (p) Mymensingh-Fulbaria Road (Z-3035) under Mymensingh Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	28-Sep-2025; 17:00 29-Sep-2025; 12:30

The interested persons/firms may visit the web site www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender.

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



K.B.M. Saddam Hossain
ID No. 602201
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Mymensingh.

GD-1997

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Upazilla Health Complex, Abhoynagar, Jashore

Email: abhoynagar@ufpo.dghs.gov.bd

Ref No: UHC/Abhoy/MSR/2025-26/683

Date: 21/08/2025

e-Tender Notice

Tender Id No	Package No. and Description	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time
1142809	MSR Group "Ka" Medicine (Non EDCL)	28-Sep-2025 12:00	28-Sep-2025 15:00
1142810	MSR Group "Kha" Surgical Equipment	28-Sep-2025 12:00	28-Sep-2025 15:00
1142811	MSR Group "Ga" Gauge Bandage Cotton	28-Sep-2025 12:00	28-Sep-2025 15:00
1142812	MSR Group "Gha" Linen Item	28-Sep-2025 12:00	28-Sep-2025 15:00
1142813	MSR Group "Uma" Chemical Re-agent	28-Sep-2025 12:00	28-Sep-2025 15:00
1142814	MSR Group "Ca" Furniture	28-Sep-2025 12:00	28-Sep-2025 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-tenderer will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, registration in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-tender document from the national e-GP portal have to be deposited online through any branch of any registered banks within the date mentioned in the tender notice. Further information & guideline are available in the national e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

N.B: Tender Schedule will be published on 14th September 2025 10:00 AM



Dr. Md. Alimur Razib
UH & FPO
Upazilla health complex
Abhoynagar, Jashore



FICTION

The Truth Factory



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

HAROONUZZAMAN

By the year 2035, Dhaka forgets the scent of the Gulshan Banani lake.

What once carried the rich tang of algae and the occasional breath of jasmine on humid evenings is now buried deep beneath slabs of concrete and webs of fiber optic cable. The old waterway still pulses faintly under the city, like a fading heartbeat that no one listens to anymore.

Above it, the skyline stretches sharp and blinding. Towers of chrome and mirrored glass catch the sun like blades. These are no ordinary office blocks—they are ministries with names so polished, so pristine, they almost ring false. One of them, taller than the rest, bears the name in silver letters: Shotto Karkhana.

'The Truth Factory'. It's not a metaphor. In this version of the Republic, truth isn't something you search for. It's something you manufacture. You refine it. Wrap it. Export it. It goes out into the world like soap, or rice.

On the 39th floor, Mizan Rahman begins his day the same way he always does—quietly, with a cup of lukewarm tea.

He slides on his retinal visor, and the office around him shifts. The air flickers, then floods with ghostly projections—floating screens filled with voices, blurry images, and flagged posts. They hover in front of his eyes, tagged in red: TRUTH PENDING.

His job? To decide what version of reality the Republic will accept.

He's a Senior Content Sanitation Engineer. There is a fancy way of saying it: he's one of the last humans between the raw chaos of the world and the tidy, edible truths handed down to the people.

"Farmer suicides spike in Barisal due to fertiliser debt."

Mizan blinks.

Swipe.

"Rewritten: Rural Empowerment Credits Successfully Implemented in Barisal Region."

Approved.

No hesitation. No second glance. He moves quickly, calmly. The lootage of crying children doesn't make him pause. Neither does the video of a woman holding up an empty water jug, or the charred remains of a public library in Kurigram.

Outside his office, the city hums with engineered calm. Billboards glow with holographic newscasters who smile with mechanical serenity. Above every doorway, drones float quietly, flashing the day's Harmony Score: 99.2% emotionally compliant.

In Dhaka, feelings are monitored. Emotions are managed. Truth? It's no longer a question of right or wrong. It's just a job.

Mizan learned long ago to stop asking who it serves.

Three floors down, Anika Ahmed stares at her screen. A single blinking cursor waits for her to begin.

She is 26. Too young to be this tired, but too old to still be surprised. She clings to a fading version of herself—a girl who once recited Rabindranath in school, and who dreamed of a byline in an English daily.

Those dreams shattered quietly when journalism was folded into the Ministry of Harmony. They told her she could still write. And she does—sort of.

Her new title: Narrative Reframer.

Today's assignment is brutal. A voice clip from Rangpur. An old man speaks directly into the camera, his voice splintering like dry wood.

"They told us we'd be relocated. But they took our homes. Our water. And my son. Now they call it progress."

The words sting—but it's the silence between them that tightens Anika's throat. That hollow grief reminds her of something... no, *someone*.

Her father. He was a journalist once. One day, he simply didn't come home. No arrest. No funeral. No answers.

She still waits, some part of her.

Now, her task is to turn the farmer's agony into something palatable—a "gratitude reel." Script a few sunny lines for a Ministry-approved actor and to overlay smiling faces, images of food handouts, wide-eyed children in clean school uniforms.

She stares at the keyboard. Her fingers twitch.

"You can't keep doing this," she whispers.

But she starts typing anyway.

Because rent is due.

Because conviction doesn't pay for groceries.

Because someone else will tell the truth. Won't they?

Far from the gleaming towers, on the bruised edge of the city, a boy crouches beside a broken rice cooker. His name is Farhan. He's 17. His face is still soft, but his hands move like he's defusing a bomb. Inside the shell of the cooker, he fits a makeshift transmitter—scraps of drone hardware, scavenged motherboards, and hope. He calls his rig 'Kichu Kotha' (Some Words).

He doesn't need to be reminded why he's doing this.

He remembers his mother, screaming into a live camera when the officials came for his father.

"They said re-training," she cried. "But he reported on a school collapse. Now he's gone!"

Her voice was never broadcast. The footage

vanished before it ever hit a feed.

But Farhan had saved it. He plays it back sometimes, just to remind himself that it was real.

Now, late at night, Kichu Kotha hisses to life on dead radio frequencies. It transmits scraps. Sighs. Half sentences. Ghosts of voices the Republic thought it had buried.

"You are not alone."

"You're not broken."

"What they erased is still real."

He doesn't know who listens. Maybe no one. But he speaks anyway because silence is surrender.

One humid evening, Anika waits outside the Ministry gates for a rickshaw. A tea-vendor's stall crackles nearby, the static from his old transistor mixing with the heat.

Then—clear as breath—a voice breaks through: "They took our homes. But we are still here."

The voice. It's the Rangpur farmer.

Anika freezes.

Around her, the crowd murmurs. A child tugs at her mother's sari. "What did that voice mean?"

"Fake news," someone mutters.

But Anika's heart hammers. That clip was supposed to be gone. Deleted. Replaced. Sanitized.

So who brought it back?

Back in the Truth Factory, Mizan's visor flashes.

Alerts flood in.

Unapproved fragments are leaking through the firewall. Deleted images are reappearing. The sanitised protest he rewrote that morning—it's back. Raw. Unedited. Real. A boy's scorched face. A woman shouting into an unfiltered camera. The real camera.

And then something stranger—posts are being tagged automatically: resonating.

People aren't rejecting the unapproved truths. They're embracing them.

Truth, somehow, has become contagious.

Mizan tears off his visor. His own reflection stares back, worn and stunned. His eyes search the glass for answers he used to have.

For the first time in 15 years, he doesn't know what to do.

In a dim warehouse in Old Dhaka, Farhan gathers with others around a battered projector. An ex-professor is there, and a girl with a contraband camera. A tea-seller, strangers, all of them, yet bound by something heavier than fear.

They pass pen drives like prayer scrolls. Inside: deleted videos, lost poems, banned broadcasts.

Farhan sets the rice cooker down. Hits play. The room fills with breath, sorrow, fury—voices once erased.

No one speaks.

They listen.

Days pass.

Symbols begin appearing—drawn in chalk on sidewalks in Mirpur, scratched into school walls outside Khulna, sprayed under bridges on Shat Masjid Road.

Kichu Kotha.

The Ministry floods the city with alerts.

"Beware of unauthorised transmissions."

"Protect your Harmony Score."

"Report Misinformation."

But it's too late.

You can't unhear the truth.

The lie was never just in the stories they told.

It was in the belief that people could forget how to feel.

By month's end, the Truth Factory falls silent.

Truth no longer arrives wrapped in approval tags or harmony metrics.

It crackles through old radios.

It whispers in alleyways.

It dances in chalk dust.

And in Dhaka, once again, people take the risk—because truth is not a script.

It's a protest. And protests don't ask for permission.

Haroonuzzaman is a translator, novelist, poet, researcher, and essayist. Besides teaching English in Libya and Qatar for about 12 years, he has had 20 years of teaching experience in English Language and Literature at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

POETRY

Dhaka myths

MALIHA FAIRUZ MAHI

I have become the smoke
In someone's teacup at 8,
The quiet breeze that flickers a candle—
before the call to prayer.

Dhaka, you burned me to ash
And tried to mold me like Hephaestus
As if I were your forged blade,
Your myth woven metal.

But still, I remain.

I walked your streets
With a heart full of wonder,
An echo of Athena in my breath.

But I bore no armour,
No father's name in marble.
So you took my questions

And turned them to fire.
Curiosity became curse,
And I—too proud, too much.

But still, I remain.
The sun goes down,
And with it, my name fades into shadow.

Men rise like minor gods,
Owning streets as if they'd built them from
thunder and bone.

But I was no Kali.

I held back the storm.

And for that,

You burned me,

With stares, stares like daggers,
With silences, silences deeper than riverbeds,

With rickshaw rides.
Rides that felt like sacrificial rites.

But still, Dhaka,

I remain.

Here, the victims are carved into monsters.

Like Medusa,

We are myths before we are memories.

Our stories twisted



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

Until even our reflection is too dangerous to hold.
But still the throne is passed
To the loudest liars.
You are Zeus
Lightning without consequence,
Judgment without justice.
And you burned me a thousand times.
But still, I remain.
My ashes scatter
Through Bailey Road, Moghbazar
Settling in the cracks of old tea stalls,
Clinging to lamp posts like forgotten prayers.
They flicker with a flame
That refuses to go out
Unlike your faded election posters,
Ghosts of promises that never learned to speak
truth.
You never loved goddesses, Dhaka.
Only men.
Only fire.
Only silence.
You burn and burn
And call it creation.
But until your final flame flickers out,
And until my last breath curls into the wind,
I'll remain. I will remain.

Maliha Fairuz Mahi occasionally writes for Star Books and Literature.

POETRY

Your hands shook the whole time

RAIAN ABEDIN

Winters feel less like winters, the sun
burns on my fragile skin. December. Tell me it's
December. Forget the dirt in my hair. When
I was 10; I hid myself far away. A spectral
shape amidst dust and sawdust. One
with dying furniture. Nana found me, climbing
all five stories, morning fog in his breath. I wake
up early
nowadays, collapsing into the dew. January
fog in my hair, green now against this light
that turns twice and faces you in a revealing glance.

somedays I am still in that minibus which became
your
altar. An altar is a collection of things you love.
Like
a story, pieced together in each breath. I inoculate
each word with meaning, somehow this poem is
about
you. Why wouldn't it be? I am made from your
bones.
When I was seven, you wrote me a letter. Your
hands shook the whole time, I imagined you
writing
in the cold. When I was twenty-three, the letter

broke
into fragments in my hands. We make altars
wherever
we go. At night I surround myself with the desire
to disappear, opening my window to the dogs
barking
outside, there's the gap between two buildings
where
moss grows in the rain. I imagine myself laying
there, an altar.

Raiyan Abedin is a poet, a student of Biochemistry,
and a contributor to The Daily Star.

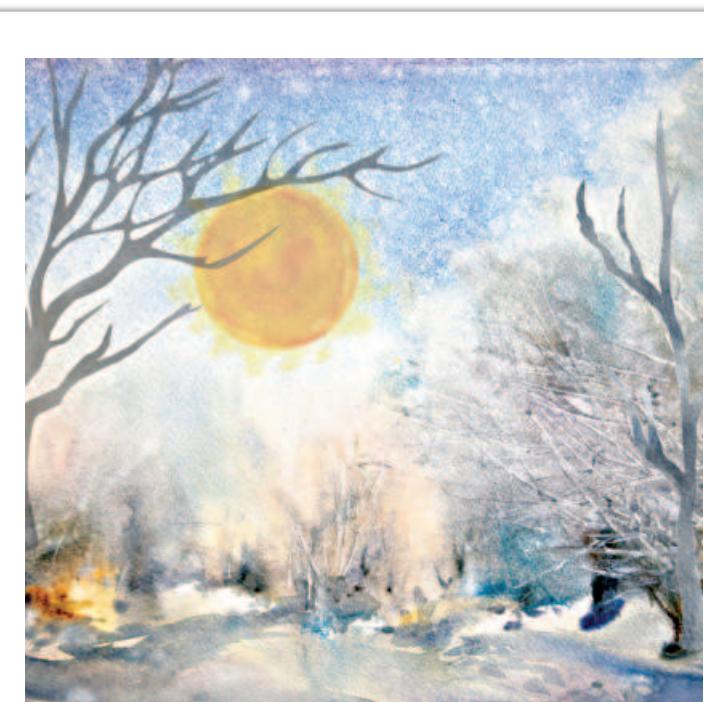


ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

Day of rest primes Tigers for Lankan showdown

- Sri Lanka hold the overall edge in T20Is against Bangladesh, winning 12 of the 20 encounters, while Bangladesh have eight victories.
- In Asia Cup T20 clashes, the record is level at 1-1. Bangladesh won in Mirpur in 2016, while Sri Lanka triumphed in Dubai in 2022.
- Bangladesh claimed victory in the most recent three-match T20I series between the two sides (2-1).
- Bangladesh captain Litton Das (2,496 runs) is 56 runs away from becoming the country's all-time leading run-scorer in T20Is.



Members of the Bangladesh team pose for a picture following Jumma prayers at the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

EKUSH TAPADER from Abu Dhabi

The day after a match, Bangladesh players usually avoid practice sessions. Considering the UAE heat and the packed tournament schedule, not heading off to the field on the only gap day between matches against Hong Kong and Sri Lanka in Abu Dhabi made even more sense.

But this time, the Tigers had requested a complete day off on Friday -- no training, no media duties -- which posed a problem as a pre-match press conference is mandatory in Asia Cup.

To keep all parties happy, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) came up with a unique solution: arranging the press conference at nearly midnight after the Hong Kong game on Thursday.

Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib, who attended, admitted the ACC's idea worked in their favour. "This decision was taken so that we could get the whole Friday off. It's definitely a good thing, it's very hot here. This way we can recover without any other worries."

Friday truly turned out to be a day of complete rest for the Tigers as other than

the Muslim members of the team offering Friday prayers at Abu Dhabi's famous Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque at noon, there were no activities.

The team management instructed players to spend the day stress free, not think about cricket, and go into the Sri

boost their Super Four qualification chances whereas a defeat would drag them into tricky scenarios ahead of the Afghanistan clash.

Before taking the field, Bangladesh believe they have a psychological edge over the Lankans, having won their first

It's [Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka] actually a rivalry for fans. For us, as players, [it is] a good challenge and competition. We just want to give a good game to Bangladesh and also to other nations.

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka



Lanka game refreshed and recharged.

Though Bangladesh started their campaign with an expected win over Hong Kong, their real challenge in the group-stage begins on Saturday with the Sri Lanka game, which would be followed by their final Group B match against Afghanistan on Tuesday.

A victory against the Lankans will

ever T20I series in Sri Lanka back in July. "We beat Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka, that gives us confidence. When you've beaten a team, it always puts you ahead mentally," Tanzim said.

Bangladesh also beat Sri Lanka in the last ICC T20 World Cup and again in the 2023 ICC World Cup. But in the Asia Cup, the story is different as in both the latest

ODI and T20 editions, the Tigers lost to Sri Lanka.

In Asia Cup T20s, the two teams are level with one win each while in the UAE, Bangladesh are yet to beat the islanders in a T20I, having lost to them in the previous two encounters.

Tanzim, however, preferred to only think about the recent sweet memories. "We'll go in with extra confidence against Sri Lanka. We won against them in the World Cup, we won the last series too. We've played them so many times that we know every player well. We'll be fully prepared."

Since the Nidahas Trophy in 2018, the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka rivalry has kicked up a few notches, and Tanzim admitted that the heat of the rivalry will inevitably be felt in Saturday's game as well. "Rivalry will always be there. But for me, rivalry isn't the main thing. Winning is very important."

Bangladesh are unlikely to make changes from the XI that beat Hong Kong. Tawhid Hridoy, who has been struggling with poor form, couldn't quite spread his wings against Hong Kong either, making an unbeaten 35 off 36. A big test awaits him against Sri Lanka.

Arsenal eye top spot, Real seek to stay perfect

AGENCIES

With the first international break of the season coming to a close, club football roars back into action this weekend. From England to Italy, Spain to Germany, several high-stakes fixtures headline Saturday's schedule, featuring managerial debuts, unbeaten runs, and one of Europe's most iconic rivalries.

Forest's fresh start meets Arsenal's title push
The Premier League's early kickoff sees Arsenal host Nottingham Forest at the Emirates. The Gunners, who narrowly lost to Liverpool before the break, could return to the summit with a win. For Forest, it's the dawn of a new era under Ange Postecoglou, whose attacking philosophy marks a stark contrast from the departed Nuno Espírito Santo. Yet with Forest conceding in each of their last 11 league matches, the Australian faces a tough baptism against Arteta's men, who boast a 36 year unbeaten home record versus Forest.

Alonso's Madrid target fourth straight win
Over in Spain, Real Madrid will aim for a fourth successive LaLiga victory when they visit Real Sociedad. Xabi Alonso's men sit top with a perfect record, having conceded just once in three games. Sociedad, by contrast, have stumbled to two points from three fixtures and are still adjusting after the loss of Martín Zubimendi. Madrid, unbeaten against Sociedad since 2023, can stretch their early lead ahead of their Champions League opener next week.

Hjulmand's new era begins at Leverkusen
In Germany, Bayer Leverkusen kick off a new chapter under Kasper Hjulmand, who replaced Erik ten Hag after just two league matches. The Dane faces a stern test against in-form Eintracht Frankfurt, who have stormed into the season with back-to-back wins after a DFB Pokal thrashing. With Frankfurt unbeaten so far and Leverkusen eager to steady the ship, the clash promises fireworks at the BayArena.

Derby d'Italia in Turin
Serie A serves up its first Derby d'Italia as Juventus host Inter Milan. Juve, perfect so far under Igor Tudor, carry strong home form into the contest, having lost just once in their last 11 Turin meetings with Inter. The Nerazzurri, however, arrive with pressure after a shock defeat to Udinese cast doubts over new boss Cristian Chivu. With both sides targeting Napoli's crown, this early showdown could prove decisive in shaping the title race.



PHOTO: AFP

Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Haris hit a 43-ball 66, featuring seven boundaries and three sixes, as Pakistan posted 160-7 before spinners Sufyan Majeem (2-7), Saim Ayub (2-8) and pacer Faheem Ashraf (2-6) ran through Asia Cup debutants Oman -- bundling them out for 67 in 16.4 overs -- to seal a 93-run win in Dubai yesterday.

Bangladesh eye SAFF U-17 title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have set their sights on reclaiming the title at the regional youth championship as they depart for Sri Lanka today to participate in the SAFF Under-17 Championship, scheduled to begin on September 15 at the Racecourse International Stadium in Colombo.

Bangladesh previously won the SAFF U-16 Championship in 2015 and the SAFF U-15 Championship in 2018. However, they have remained without a trophy since, despite reaching the finals of the SAFF U-16 Championship and the SAFF U-17 Championship in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

Coach Golam Rabbani Choton is optimistic about the current squad, which includes five under-19 players, including captain Nazmul Huda Faisal, who recently helped Bangladesh become runners-up in

the SAFF Under-19 Championship in India. The squad also features 14 players from BKSP, who played three international matches in Japan last month.



"I believe the Bangladesh U-17 squad is stronger compared to last time," Choton said at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

"We aim to progress match by match. We've prepared thoroughly, taking lessons from our defeat in the SAFF U-19 Championship

final against India," he added. Choton also noted that the team gained significant confidence after managing to take the final into a penalty shootout, despite initially trailing.

Captain Faisal, a BKSP student, has previously captained the Bangladesh U-17 team twice and the U-19 team once but has yet to secure a championship. This time, he is determined to change that.

"As captain, it's disappointing not to have won any trophies so far, but we're hopeful of achieving a good result in Sri Lanka. We've had intense preparations at the Jashore Shams-Ul-Huda Academy, and our focus will be on playing as a team," Faisal said.

Bangladesh have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts Sri Lanka and Nepal. Group B comprises India, Pakistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lyles and Duplantis in focus

AGENCIES

Olympic champions Noah Lyles and Julien Alfred will take to the track in Tokyo on Saturday for heats of the 100m, as the 20th World Athletics Championships begin.

Lyles will come under pressure from a top Jamaican duo seeking to break US dominance in the blue riband event.

Alfred, meanwhile, will look to bag another global title for St Lucia, her Olympic gold the first for the tiny Caribbean island.

There is no doubt that Lyles and Alfred have touched down in the Japanese capital with targets on their backs.

Although Lyles had a delayed start to the season, both have tasted success on the Diamond League circuit.

Lyles outran Botswana's Olympic 200m champion Letsile Tebogo in that event in the Diamond League finals in Zurich last month.



It was a result the American said had left him "with a lot of energy" heading to Tokyo.

Alfred also notched up a morale-boosting win over 100m in Zurich and was in no doubt about expectations.

Duplantis eyes record 14th

Meanwhile, Armand Duplantis is expected to cement his legacy as the greatest pole vaulter in history.

Duplantis is being pushed by Greece's Emmanouil Karalis in the pole vault, but the US-born Swede is untouchable on his day. The question is whether he will be able to better his own world record for a 14th time.

Duplantis returns to Tokyo's National Stadium for the first time since Tokyo 2020, where he won the first of his two Olympic golds.

The two-time world champion will be looking to triumph again in the Japanese capital but this time with what fans hope will be another chapter added to his growing lore.

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UNDERGRADUATE
ADMISSION SPRING 2025

OFFERED PROGRAMS

Faculty of Architecture and Planning

- Bachelor of Architecture (ARCH)
- Bachelor of Interior Architecture (BIA)
- B. Sc. in Civil Engineering (CE)
- B. Sc. in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE)
- B. Sc. in Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE)
- B. Sc. in Textile Engineering (TE)
- B. Sc. in Industrial and Production Engineering (IPE)
- B. Sc. in Mechanical Engineering (ME)

Faculty of Business and Social Sciences

- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

ADMISSION SCHEDULE

- Application Date: 01.09.2025 (Monday) - 23.09.2025 (Monday)
- Verification of Applications: 05.10.2025 (Sunday) from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Publication of the Shortlisted Candidates: 07.10.2025 (Tuesday)
- Admission Test: 11.10.2025 (Sunday)
- Publication of Merit List: 19.10.2025 (Sunday)
- Modification of Program Choice: 19.10.2025 (Sunday) - 31.10.2025 (Tuesday)
- Publication of Merit List with Selected Programs: 22.10.2025 (Wednesday)

NOTES

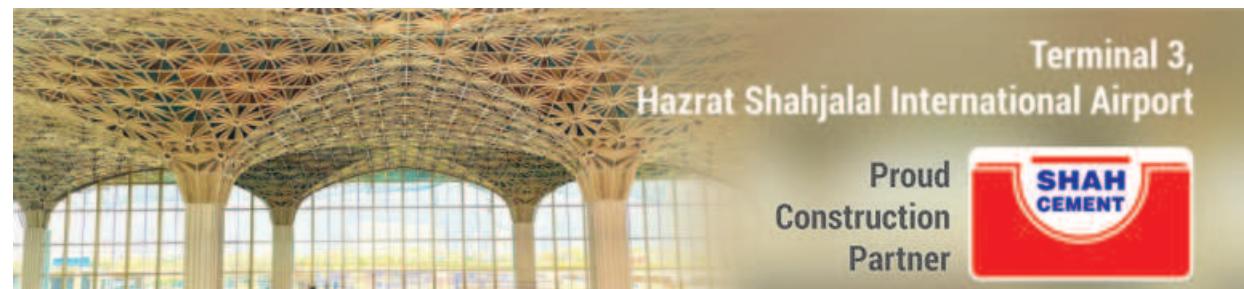
- Candidates have to apply through (<https://iums.aust.edu/admission/>) by paying the necessary application processing fees through bKash.
- Candidates passing SSC or O-level or equivalent examinations in 2020 and onwards, and HSC or A-level or equivalent examinations in 2022 and onwards can apply.
- Detailed application procedures and other information are available on the University Website (<http://admission.aust.edu>).

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Tarique slams new Israeli annexation in West Bank

UNB, Dhaka



Expressing unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday voiced deep concern over Israel's latest plans to expand illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

In a statement on his verified Facebook page, he warned that this move would further erase hopes for a viable Palestinian state and push the region closer to chaos.

"I strongly call upon the international community to condemn and put pressure on the Israeli government for their settlement plans and ask that the International Court of Justice not delay their verdict of a clear genocide in Gaza by the Israeli government while Palestinians suffer even more," the BNP leader said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

Dengue cases surge, Sept off to alarming start

Experts say intermittent rain, lax mosquito control may fuel outbreak

HEMUL ALAM

Dengue infections and deaths are once again on the rise, with the first half of September showing a sharp spike, raising questions about the effectiveness of government initiatives to tackle the menace.

In just 12 days into September, 23 deaths and more than 5,451 hospitalisations have been reported, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

If the trend continues, September is set to surpass the peak months of July and August.

August saw 39 deaths and 10,496 cases over the entire month, while July recorded 41 deaths and 10,684 cases.

In June, there were 19 deaths and nearly 6,000 cases, with significantly lower numbers reported between January and May.

The total number of deaths this year up to Thursday was 145, while cases stood at 36,927, DGHS data shows.

Experts say the recent spell of intermittent rain and the lack of sustained, nationwide efforts to control the spread of Aedes mosquitoes – the carriers of dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus – have created ideal conditions for the disease.

"We urgently need intensified mosquito-control efforts in hotspots," said entomologist GM Saifur Rahman. "This includes locating breeding

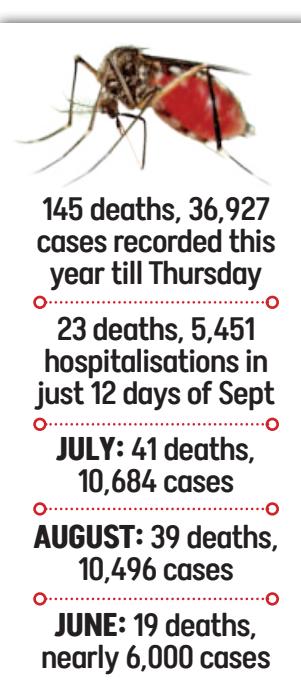
SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



Residents wade through pitch-black, foul-smelling sewage in Mir Hazirbagh of South Jurain, Dhaka. Although the sewerage system collapsed almost four years ago, the south city corporation has yet to take any action. When it rains, commuters suffer the most as contaminated water floods their homes. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



- 145 deaths, 36,927 cases recorded this year till Thursday
- 23 deaths, 5,451 hospitalisations in just 12 days of Sept
- JULY: 41 deaths, 10,684 cases
- AUGUST: 39 deaths, 10,496 cases
- JUNE: 19 deaths, nearly 6,000 cases

Israeli strikes across Gaza kill 50 more

AGENCIES

Israeli strikes killed at least 50 Palestinians, including 14 from a family, in the Gaza Strip yesterday, local health authorities said, most of them in Gaza City, where many residents are staying put despite Israeli evacuation orders because they have nowhere safe to go.

Israel has stated its intention to take full control of the ruined city, where about a million people are sheltering, as part of its plan to wipe out Hamas, and has been intensifying its attacks.

"The explosions never stopped since yesterday," said father of two Adel, 60, who lives in Gaza City close to Beach refugee camp. He did not wish to give his full name for safety reasons.

"Many families left their homes, and that is what the occupation wants," he told Reuters via a chat app. "By these bombardments they are telling people 'You either leave your area or die there.'"

The army said it had completed five waves of air strikes on Gaza City this week, targeting more than 500 sites, and that it had destroyed reconnaissance and sniper sites, buildings containing tunnel openings and weapons depots.

In a statement, it said it would "continue to intensify the pace of strikes in a focused manner, based on precise intelligence, with the aim of hitting Hamas' infrastructure".

Palestinian health authorities said

several deadly strikes had hit targets in the south of the territory, where some of those fleeing the bombardment of Gaza City have been heading.

Amjad Al-Shawa, head of the Palestinian NGOs Network, which liaises with the UN and international aid groups, told Reuters an estimated 10 percent of people in Gaza City had

- UAE summons Israel envoy over attack in Qatar
- UNGA to vote on a Hamas-free Palestinian state
- Doha hosts emergency Arab-Islamic summit tomorrow

according to local health authorities, caused a hunger crisis and wider humanitarian disaster, and reduced much of the enclave to rubble.

The territory's health ministry has said at least 411 people, including 142 children, have died of malnutrition and starvation in the enclave.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council has condemned Israel's attack on Hamas leaders in Qatar's capital, Doha.

The United Arab Emirates summoned the Israeli ambassador yesterday over Israel's attack on Hamas leaders in Qatar, in another sign of strain between the two countries with close economic and defence ties.

The Doha attack was especially sensitive because Qatar has been hosting and mediating negotiations aimed at securing a ceasefire in the Gaza offensive. Doha will host an emergency Arab-Islamic summit this Sunday and Monday to discuss the Israeli attack.

The UN General Assembly was set to vote yesterday on whether to back the "New York Declaration," a resolution – presented by France and Saudi Arabia – which seeks to breathe new life into the two-state solution between Israel and Palestine – without the involvement of Hamas.

At the UNSC meeting on Thursday, the council condemned strikes on Qatar earlier this week and called for de-escalation, without naming Israel, which carried out the attack

Bay near Teknaf turns risky for fishermen

88 abducted by Arakan Army since August first week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Frequent abductions of fishermen by Myanmar's Arakan Army have turned some areas of the Bay of Bengal, particularly off Teknaf upazila and St Martin's Island in Cox's Bazar, into unsafe waters for Bangladeshi fishing communities.

So far, nearly 88 fishermen have been taken away by the Arakan Army since the first week of August, according to local associations and administration.

Families of the victims are concerned about their loved ones' fate.

In the latest, the rebel group kidnapped 40 fishermen from five trawlers on Wednesday afternoon.

Sajid Ahmed, president of Teknaf's Kaukkhali Trawler Owners' Association, said two of the abducted trawlers were owned by members of his association, carrying 13 fishermen. The group has taken away thirty-three people from five trawlers since August 10, he added.

The families of the victims have urged trawler owners to take action to ensure the safe return of their loved ones. "Owners are coming to us, but apart from informing the authorities, we cannot take further steps," Sajid said.

Faizul Islam, acting chairman of St Martin's Union

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Nepali soldiers take positions to disperse protesters in front of the President House during a curfew imposed to restore law and order in Kathmandu yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Kirk shooting suspect in custody Says Trump

REUTERS, Orem

A suspect in the fatal shooting of conservative activist Charlie Kirk at a Utah university has been taken into custody, US President Donald Trump said yesterday, ending an intense manhunt that followed what Trump described as a "heinous assassination."

Kirk's killer has eluded police and federal agents for more than 24 hours after Wednesday's shooting, in which a sniper fired a single gunshot that killed Kirk, 31, during an appearance at Utah Valley University in Orem.

"I think we have him," Trump told Fox News in an interview, adding that a person who knows the suspect had turned him in. "I think with a high degree of certainty we have him in custody."

Trump did not share the suspect's identity. Previously, US investigators said they had found the bolt-action rifle believed to have been used to kill Kirk and released images of a person of interest.

The FBI had circulated grainy images apparently taken from security cameras showing a person wearing a black top, black sunglasses and a dark baseball cap. The long-sleeved top appears to have been emblazoned with an image of a bald eagle flying across a US flag.

Kirk, an author, podcast host and close ally of Trump, helped build the Republican Party's support among younger voters.

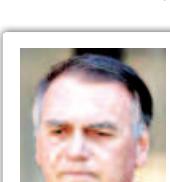
BRAZIL COUP PLOT Bolsonaro given 27-year jail term Trump says he is surprised, unhappy

REUTERS, Brasilia

Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was sentenced on Thursday to 27 years and three months in prison hours after being convicted of plotting a coup to remain in power after losing the 2022 election, dealing a powerful rebuke to one of the world's most prominent far-right populist leaders.

It may further enrage Bolsonaro's close ally US President Donald Trump, who had called the case a "witch hunt" and in retaliation hit Brazil with tariff hikes, sanctions against the presiding judge, and the revocation of visas for most of the high court justices.

Asked about the conviction on



SEE PAGE 9 COL 7



In bamboo shelters, Rohingya women stitch new futures

Amid poverty and patriarchy in Ukhia camps, they turn skills and solidarity into tools for change

NILIMA JAHAN, back from Ukhia, Cox's Bazar

About 34 kilometres southeast of Cox's Bazar, the sprawling Rohingya camps in Ukhia stretch across hills and valleys, their bamboo walls and tarpaulin roofs forming temporary shelters crowded with people and stories too often left untold.

On a humid afternoon in late June, in Block E of Camp 4, light rain glistened on the brick-paved road. Children raced barefoot through narrow alleys, men gathered around makeshift tea stalls, and chickens wandered freely.

Amid all this movement and life, one presence was strikingly absent – the women.

Down a narrow alley, the unseen half of the community began to emerge. Inside a modest bamboo-walled room, 15 Rohingya women sat cross-legged on a worn plastic mat, attending a group session led by Rohingya Women Empowerment (RWE), a local NGO. Clad in black burqas, only their eyes visible, they listened intently while toddlers clung to their arms. Eight of them were married – all as children.

Among them was 21-year-old Asma Bibi, her life shaped by displacement, abandonment and the quiet resilience of single motherhood. "I was married at 16, after coming here," she said. "Two years later, I had my daughter. Then in 2021, my husband left for Malaysia without telling anyone. We never heard from him again."

Nearly four years later, Asma

survives on rations from the World Food Programme while raising her daughter alone. "I never got to study," she said. "But I want my daughter to go to school. I want her to have a life, one that's not trapped here like mine."

While most women remain confined to their shelters by custom and social restrictions, some like Asma are pushing against the walls. She recently completed training in hand-stitching and hat-making through a women's leadership project run by RWE with support

this poverty, even that feels like a distant dream."

Her husband, an NGO volunteer, earns Tk 8,000 a month – barely enough for essentials. Kismat trained in food processing and proudly displayed a jar of homemade pickles, but without capital or freedom to move outside the camp, her ambitions remain bottled.

Income is unstable for most camp families. Men take up day

income is now a way to claim power in their homes. After attending awareness sessions on early marriage, reproductive health and gender-based violence, Somuda said she feels stronger.

"I told my husband -- no more children. And he listened. Before, I wouldn't have dared," she said.

Fifteen-year-old Somira also trained in stitching but lacks a sewing machine. "If I had one, maybe

G, reaching 390 Rohingya women. They discuss leadership, rights and family decision-making.

"Earlier, husbands didn't support these sessions," said Kismat. "But after separate sessions with them, now they do. Now we know -- we won't let our children marry early."

According to RWE programme officer Habiba Nasrin Moni, the transformation has been striking. "In the beginning, they wouldn't even step outside – they'd just peep through the curtain. Now, they speak confidently, attend regularly, and

women could not use their training due to lack of support. "There was a funding issue, but we've addressed it in the extension phase. The necessary materials are expected to be delivered soon."

Outside the camp, the impact of modest support is already visible.

In Samitipara Union, Sabina Banu (not her real name) now runs a tailoring business alongside a grocery shop. Married at 15 to a man twice her age, she was left in debt after he squandered her savings. She eventually divorced him, but he later forced their daughter into early marriage.

"I reported him to the police," she said. "They helped me rescue my daughter. Now she's back in school. My parents married me off under pressure... I won't let that happen to my daughter. I have no dream left for myself – she is my only dream."

Others are moving ahead too. Widowed Sheuly Begum launched a small cake-making business after a short course and a Tk 10,000 seed fund. "I'm managing... but to grow, I need more capital," she said.

In Alley 6, Priyanka Dhar began tending a small plot and raising poultry after livestock training. "I just want to raise my daughters with dignity," she said.

For women like Asma, Kismat and Sabina, the path forward remains fraught with poverty, patriarchy and uncertainty. But for the first time, it is no longer invisible. Once silenced, their voices now drive change – reclaiming power, one meeting and one fearless decision at a time.

I've learned so much, but I can't use any of it. I don't have the materials. If I had just a little capital, I could start working – maybe even earn something.

Asma Bibi
21-year-old Rohingya mother



PHOTO: COLLECTED, STAR

I always wanted to study. But fate didn't allow it. Still, I want my children to be educated. But in this poverty, even that feels like a distant dream.

Kismat Ara,
19-year-old Rohingya mother

even give speeches on International Women's Day."

But she warned that "training without tools leaves women stuck. They need materials and seed funding to apply what they've learned, she said.

Community leaders also notice the change. "Families are more aware of early marriage, domestic violence, and including women in decision-making," said Salim Majhi, elected leader of Block E.

BNPS project coordinator Md Shafiqul Islam Faraji said many

labour when available – fixing roads, clearing drains, repairing shelters.

When work dries up, they fall back on rations.

"When there's no money, small arguments turn into fights," said 25-year-old Somuda Khatun, a mother of four. "And then it turns violent. It's always the wife who suffers most."

For many women, earning an

I could start earning," she said.

Like her, many unmarried girls dropped out of school after puberty.

"Once we start menstruating, we're told to cover our heads and stay inside," she said.

Though NGOs offer literacy clubs, many families do not allow girls to attend.

Currently, 26 women's groups meet regularly across Blocks E, F and



The weight of UNTOUCHABILITY

Rabidas community in Bangladesh

A female member of the community, who grew up facing discrimination in classrooms, recalls being made to clean classrooms and toilets from time to time, while no one else was ever given this task.

MIFTAHUL JANANT

In the markets of North Bengal, the Rabidas community has long endured prejudice, their cobbler's stools passed from one generation to the next. But when 14-year-old Joy Rabidas was forced to trade his school uniform for his father's tools after a brutal mob killed Ruplal Rabidas on false suspicion, the cruelty of that inheritance became stark. His story is not just about one boy's lost childhood; it mirrors the systemic neglect towards a community defined by untouchability, social exclusion, occupational stigma, and limited access to land, education, and political power — shackling them to the margins of society.

Scattered with fading roots

The Rabidas community traces its lineage to the Chamar caste, historically associated with leatherwork. Though spiritually linked to the teachings of the 15th-century saint Guru Ravidas, who preached equality and inner purity, the



After losing his father in a mob attack, 14-year-old Joy Rabidas had to take up the cobbler's needle to support his family. With support from the government, NGOs, and the community, he is now back in school, aspiring to become a lawyer.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY / THE DAILY STAR

the years, poverty, lack of education, and insufficient support have eroded their identity. Unable to compete with dominant mainstream culture, they are increasingly discouraged from practising their traditions, pushing a rich ethnic identity towards extinction.

Their ancestral homeland is believed to lie in undivided Bengal, Bihar, and parts of Odisha. During British rule, many migrated here for work, gradually settling across different districts, villages, and even tea gardens. Unlike other backward communities, clustering in a specific area would pose a major obstacle to their livelihoods, compelling them to live in dispersed settlements. The largest concentration of the community is in Naogaon's Niamotpur thana, making it home to the highest population. Other districts with significant Rabidas communities include Bogura, Gaibandha, and Habiganj.

"We have around eight lakh Rabidas in Bangladesh, spread across almost every district and upazila," said Shipon Kumar Rabidas, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights

Movement (BDERM) and Founding Secretary of the Bangladesh Rabidas Forum. "Our scattered settlements are necessary for our work. But this also means we are invisible, fragmented, and left behind."

Stubborn face of discrimination

In North Bengal, where the Rabidas are heavily concentrated, the weight of caste remains crushing. Areas like Sundarganj in Gaibandha, Nageshwari in Kurigram, and Lalmonirhat see particularly stark prejudice. "In Sundarganj, the caste-based discrimination is still noticeable," mentioned Shipon. "Our people are avoided in hotels, served in separate cups, and made to feel inferior. Sometimes visiting relatives cannot even dine out without facing humiliation."

In schools too, children have faced stigma. There were incidents between 2012 and 2014 when Rabidas children were asked to sit at the back, clean classrooms, or sweep toilets. "Most Rabidas in North Bengal are engaged in the cobble or *charmakar* profession, which drives the stigma," Shipon explained.

Though the situation has improved now, many students remain isolated, avoided by peers, and weighed down by poverty. The result is a high dropout rate — a cycle that ties generations to shoe repair, bartering, or at best, low-wage municipal jobs such as cleaning or mosquito control.

Labour without escape

For Rabidas families working in the tea gardens of Sylhet, Habiganj and Moulvibazar, caste prejudice merges with economic exploitation. Mohan Rabidas, a human rights activist and descendant of tea garden workers, recalls how untouchability was once rigidly enforced. "We were not allowed in temples or hotels. Things have changed somewhat, but poverty and lack of education keep us powerless."

There are 94 Rabidas settlements within tea estates, where children often drop out to help parents pluck leaves. "Schools in tea gardens are informal and community-based, often accommodating students from classes 1 to 5 in one classroom. Estate owners don't want our children educated, because if they study, they won't work in the gardens," explained Mohan.

He emphasised that education is the community's most urgent need, noting that wherever members have gained access to education and employment, caste-based discrimination has begun to diminish.

Yet, for those who reach higher education, the journey remains uphill. "I, along with a few others, were the first generation in my community to graduate. We had to finance ourselves while supporting families," said Mohan.

When the odds are stacked

A female member of the community, who grew up facing discrimination in classrooms, recalls being made to clean classrooms and toilets from time to time, while no one else was ever given this task. "Even after entering the professional world, you feel the weight of coming from this community," she said.

For progress to take root, she believes, the younger generation needs role models — figures who show them that success is possible. In remote areas

like Gaibandha's chars, opportunities are scarce, and many children end up in their fathers' profession because of financial crisis, limited opportunity and awareness. "Education and visible success stories are vital for our children. They must see that someone from their background can succeed."

Citing a recent incident where a student from her community nearly lost admission at Jahangirnagar University because he couldn't afford the fees, she urged, "Informal help from well-wishers can't sustain a degree. The government must step in with scholarships and consistent support."

Struggling for dignity and rights

Community leaders have long pushed for legal protections. An Anti-Discrimination Bill (2022) was drafted with provisions to penalise casteist abuse, such as slurs like "son of a cobbler." But in the final version of the draft, the demands were softened. "We wanted abolition of discrimination, but it was rephrased as anti-discrimination," Shipon said. "Our voices were diluted."

Meanwhile, access to higher education quotas remains elusive, as most Rabidas students drop out before HSC. "If scholarships and support were extended earlier, at primary and secondary levels, more would reach university," emphasised Shipon.

A community at the margins

From Naogaon, where 30,000 Rabidas live under one thana, to Dhaka's Wari, where 320 families form the largest urban settlement, the community remains bound by poverty and prejudice. Some have opened small shoe shops or moved into bartering, but systemic discrimination continues to curb mobility. The Rabidas of North Bengal and beyond do not lack resilience; what they lack is recognition, support, and justice. Until the Rabidas are given equal access to education, legal protections, and dignity, the wooden stool will remain heavier than any textbook, and generations will keep inheriting the same burden.

Miftahul Jannat is a journalist at The Daily Star.



With steady hands, he repairs worn soles: a Rabidas elder whose craft is both survival and silent testimony to a lifetime of struggle.

community has long borne the stigma of being "untouchable" due to their profession.

The community has a distinct ethnic identity with its own language, culture, beliefs, social system, and even *puthi* literature. Yet in Bangladesh, they often go unrecognised due to the lack of caste-specific data. Over

the years, poverty, lack of education, and insufficient support have eroded their identity. Unable to compete with dominant mainstream culture, they are increasingly discouraged from practising their traditions, pushing a rich ethnic identity towards extinction.

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OWLS in peril as forests fall

AFRINA MOMOTAJ

When dusk falls over the countryside, a hush settles on the trees. Once, that silence would be broken by the soft "who-who" of a spotted owlet or the eerie call of a barn owl gliding above rice paddies. Now, the night feels strangely silent.

Owls — those mysterious, misunderstood raptors — are vanishing from Bangladesh's landscapes. Their disappearance is not only a cultural loss; it is a warning. The fading of these night hunters signals ecological imbalance and a deepening silence in nature's nocturnal orchestra.

Forests falling, owls fading

Bangladesh hosts more than 20 species of owls, including the barn owl (*Tyto alba*), brown fish owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*), spotted owl (*Athene brama*), and the elusive collared scops owl (*Otus lettia*).

Each species relies on tree cavities, dense forests, bamboo groves, and quiet farmlands to nest and hunt. But rapid deforestation, unplanned urbanisation, and infrastructure expansion are devouring their habitats.

Dr Rafiq Azam, a forest ecologist, notes: "Where trees once stood tall and silent, concrete now echoes. Owls are losing not just their homes, but their very ability to survive in nature."

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that Bangladesh loses nearly 2,000 hectares of forest annually, and this erosion of green cover is directly tied to shrinking owl populations.

Human fear, folklore, and harm

Superstition compounds the problem. In rural folklore, owls are often seen as omens of death or bad luck. Such beliefs fuel needless killings, especially of barn owls,

whose pale face and haunting calls make them targets.

Some species are trapped for the illegal wildlife trade or used in traditional medicine. Others die from electrocution on power lines, collisions with vehicles, or entanglement in barbed wire as they are forced into human-dominated landscapes.

"We have turned cultural myths into excuses for cruelty. Every owl killed by superstition takes away a guardian of our fields," laments wildlife activist Sharmin Jahan.

Pesticides poison the night

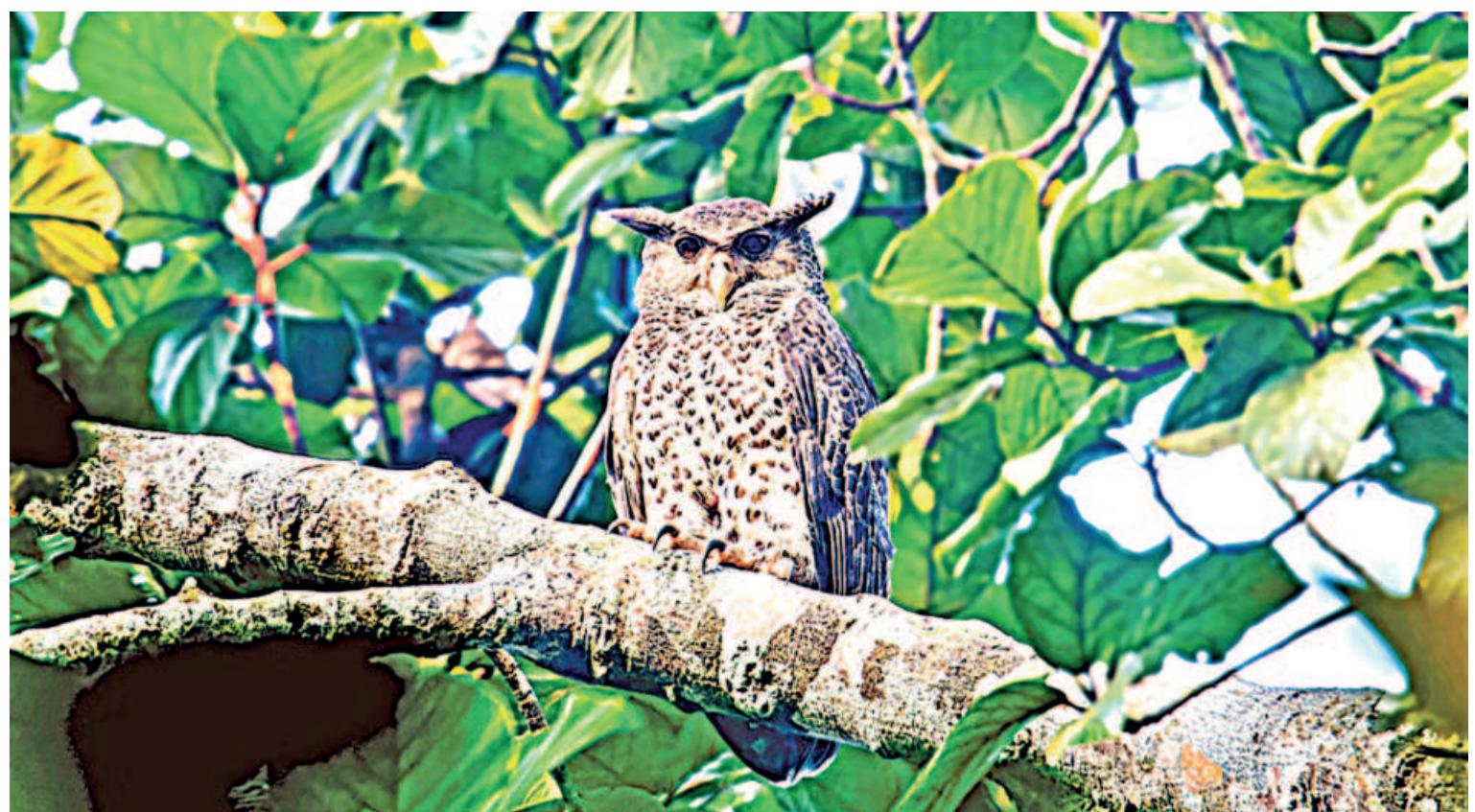
Owls are natural pest controllers, but pesticides have turned their strength into vulnerability. When rats or insects consume poisoned food, owls that prey on them ingest toxins second-hand.

Modern rodenticides — often anticoagulants — cause internal bleeding. A single poisoned rat can kill an adult owl. Nestlings fed contaminated prey rarely survive.

A recent study in India found rodenticide residues in 60% of barn owl pellets examined — a worrying indicator for



A barn owl, now a rare sight in Bangladesh.



Majestic Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl spotted in Hazarikhil, Chattogram.

neighbouring Bangladesh.

Why owls matter

Natural pest controllers
One barn owl family can consume over 3,000 rodents in a breeding season, protecting rice, vegetable, and grain crops. By reducing pest pressure, owls save farmers money and reduce dependence on toxic chemicals.

Ecosystem balancers

As apex nocturnal predators, owls regulate prey populations. Without them, rodent numbers can explode, leading to crop damage, disease outbreaks, and cascading ecological imbalance.

Bioindicators of ecosystem health

Because owls are highly sensitive to environmental changes, their presence — or absence — reflects the health of ecosystems. A

decline in owls is an early warning of habitat collapse and biodiversity loss.

Cultural and educational value

Despite superstition, owls also appear in Bangladeshi folklore and proverbs, often symbolising wisdom and mystery. Today, they serve as "gateway species" for environmental education — capturing children's imagination and linking conservation with cultural heritage.

As Dr Mohammad Ali Reza Khan, veteran Bangladeshi ornithologist, observes: "Owls are misunderstood protectors. If Bangladesh loses them, it loses an ally in farming, in culture, and in biodiversity itself."

What can be done

In villages and towns

Install owl nest boxes in schools, farms, and homesteads.

Launch awareness programmes to challenge superstition and highlight their role in farming.

Avoid nighttime use of rodenticides, especially during breeding seasons.

In forest and farmland

Conserve large trees and allow deadwood to remain as nesting sites.

Promote owl-friendly farming by encouraging organic pest control.

Train farmers to recognise and protect owl species.

Policy and protection

Enforce wildlife laws to curb hunting and trade of owls.

Integrate owls into Bangladesh's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). Support research and citizen science to monitor owl populations and trends.

A final glimpse

Their eyes shine like moons in the dark. Their wings slice silently through the night. For centuries, owls have watched over our fields and forests — unseen guardians of balance. But now, they are watching us with dwindling numbers, slipping into silence.

If we lose them, we lose not just a species, but an entire night chorus — a silence heavy with meaning. The forests grow darker. The nights grow quieter.

Before the silence deepens beyond recovery, let us protect the owls: wise, mysterious, and vital. For in saving them, we save the night itself.

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

How AI might transform Bangladesh's education landscape

An international study by IDC found that between 2023 and 2024, generative AI adoption surged across sectors, with education among the fastest growing. Usage jumped from 55% to 75%, and for every dollar invested, institutions saw an average return of 3.7 times in value.

SADID HASAN

For Bangladesh, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can revolutionise education for its millions of students. It holds the key to overcoming longstanding challenges and unlocking their full potential by personalising learning, boosting inclusivity, and preparing the next generation for the future. Emerging AI technologies such as adaptive learning platforms, intelligent tutoring systems, and predictive analytics can bridge gaps in access and quality, especially across underserved regions.

Globally, momentum is accelerating: an international study by IDC found that between 2023 and 2024, generative AI adoption surged across sectors, with education among the fastest growing. Usage jumped from 55% to 75%, and for every dollar invested, institutions saw an average return of 3.7 times in value. These numbers signal that AI in education has started delivering real impact.

PERSONALISING LEARNING FOR EVERY STUDENT

One of the most powerful benefits of AI in education is personalisation, as AI can tailor learning to individual student needs.

Adaptive learning platforms: AI-driven platforms can analyse a student's performance in real time and adjust the content accordingly. Such platforms can instantly tailor materials to address each learner's needs. For example, if a student needs more help with English grammar but excels in mathematics, an AI tutor could allocate more time to English and skip ahead in mathematics.

personalised learning at scale.

AUTOMATING THE BURDEN OF ADMINISTRATION

Beyond direct teaching and learning, AI offers relief in another crucial area: all those administrative tasks that consume teachers' and schools' time.

Automated grading and evaluation:

Marking exams and assignments by hand is time consuming and prone to inconsistencies. AI-based grading systems can drastically reduce this load. Already, machine learning models can grade multiple choice quizzes instantly and even evaluate written answers or essays with reasonable accuracy by analysing content and language structure. AI-based grading can improve accuracy in evaluating assignments and exams, minimising human errors caused by increasing workload and fatigue, while speeding up feedback to students. In Bangladesh, where public exam results often come months after the exams, automated grading could return results within days or even hours.

Smart scheduling and resource management:

Scheduling classes, exams, and teachers' timetables is like a giant puzzle. Many schools in Bangladesh still do this manually, which can lead to errors or suboptimal use of resources. AI can juggle these variables much more effectively. An AI scheduler could ensure that a scarce science lab is allocated optimally across classes, or that two courses needing the same projector are not booked at the same time.

Attendance and student tracking:

In many schools, teachers still take



AI-GENERATED IMAGE

also ethnic minority languages in some regions. AI-powered translation can break language barriers in real time by translating key phrases or lesson content into the student's preferred language. When students need to learn English (crucial for global competitiveness), AI can assist again with translation and pronunciation.

Reaching remote and underprivileged learners:

One of Bangladesh's major challenges is the urban-rural divide in education quality. Top schools in Dhaka or Chattogram boast good teachers and resources, whereas rural schools might suffer from teacher shortages and outdated materials. AI, coupled with internet connectivity, can help democratise access. E-learning platforms infused with AI tutors can reach any village with connectivity. Even offline, if provided on inexpensive devices, AI educational software can benefit students in off-grid areas (for example, through pre-loaded solar-powered tablets running adaptive learning programmes).

Gender and inclusivity: AI technology can also help increase female students' access to education in conservative communities. If parents are reluctant to send girls to distant schools, AI-powered remote learning can bring education to them. Similarly, adult women who missed schooling could use AI learning apps for second-chance education at home, with AI personalising a curriculum to their pace and level.

In essence, AI can act as a force multiplier for inclusivity, providing each student with what they specifically need.

CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD TO AI-EMPOWERED EDUCATION

For all its promise, integrating AI into Bangladesh's education system is not without obstacles. While AI offers immense benefits, its adoption invites



the thoughtful consideration of data privacy, security, algorithmic bias, and fairness to ensure responsible use. Bangladesh must approach the AI-in-education revolution with eyes wide open, addressing key

challenges to ensure technology truly helps rather than harms. Here are the major challenges and considerations:

Data privacy and security:

AI systems in education will manage sensitive student data, including personal details and academic performance. Ensuring the protection of this data is critical. Schools and edtech providers must adopt robust data encryption, secure storage solutions, and transparent consent policies. Bangladesh currently lacks specific data protection laws for the education sector. Developing comprehensive guidelines aligned with global standards such as GDPR will help build trust in AI tools among stakeholders.

Bias and fairness of AI:

AI algorithms can unintentionally reflect biases present in their training data.

on existing infrastructures. It is also critical to plan for maintenance – software updates, hardware repairs, and technical support. Many ICT projects fail not at launch but later, when equipment breaks or software issues arise and there is no support available. Training local technicians and allocating maintenance funds will be important to keep AI systems running in schools year after year.

CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD

So, how can Bangladesh turn the potential of AI in education into reality? The journey will likely be gradual and experimental, but momentum is building. Below are some concrete steps and recommendations derived from global best practices:

Start with pilot programmes: Identify a representative mix of schools – for example, a few urban schools and a few rural schools across various regions – and introduce AI learning tools on a pilot basis. This could be as straightforward as providing tablets loaded with an adaptive mathematics app or a tutor chatbot to a Year 6 class, plus training one teacher in each school to integrate it into their teaching. Monitor results for a semester: Did student engagement improve? How were test scores? Gather feedback from teachers, students, and parents. These pilots will provide local data on what works and what does not, guiding larger rollouts. Bangladesh can also learn from successful pilots in other countries to help inform and design similar programmes.

Public-private partnerships: Leverage the expertise of both sectors. The government can set goals and provide scale, while private (or international) partners can provide technology and know-how. For example, edtech startups in Bangladesh could be incentivised (through grants or awards) to develop AI-driven educational content aligned with national curricula. Telecom companies might collaborate to zero-rate educational data (making access to AI learning apps free of data charges for users, as was done for some educational sites during the pandemic).

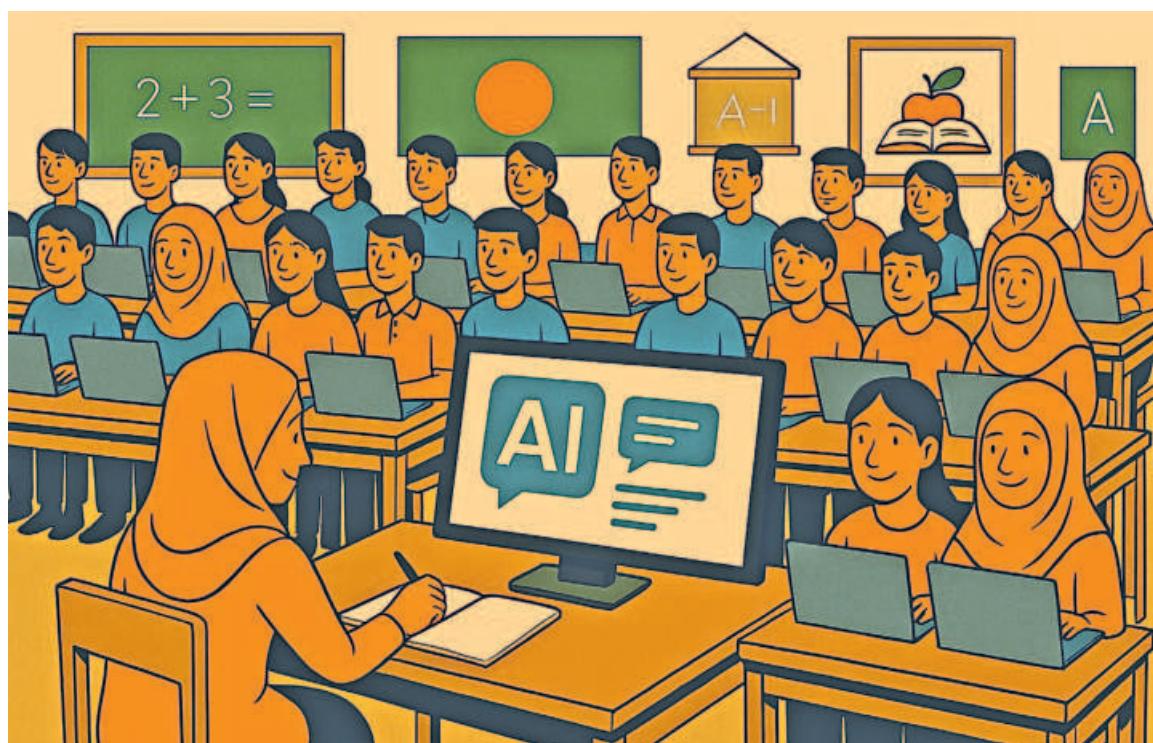
Teacher engagement and upskilling: Teachers are the key stakeholders. The government and training institutes should introduce AI modules in teacher training programmes. Active teachers could undergo workshops demonstrating how AI tools can assist in lesson planning, providing differentiated assignments, or tracking student progress. One approach is to create a network of "AI in Education champions" – tech-savvy Bangladeshi teachers who can pilot the AI tools and then mentor others.

Localised content and research: Encourage development of AI that speaks to Bangladesh's context. This might mean continued funding of research projects at universities on Bangla NLP (natural language processing) for education, or creating large open datasets of Bangla educational materials for AI training. There is already significant progress with training Bangla large language models. Such models can read and understand Bangla textbooks, empowering a host of applications from intelligent tutoring to automated essay grading in Bangla.

Infrastructure investment: The government's ongoing efforts should be expanded with a focus on connectivity and devices. Consider equipping schools with low-cost laptops or tablets. Community-based solutions such as mobile learning labs (buses with computers that travel to villages) could also introduce AI learning to hard-to-reach areas. Meanwhile, continued expansion of internet access will directly support any online AI tools.

Policy and curriculum reform: The education authorities should develop a clear "AI in Education" roadmap. This could outline targets (e.g., "By 2027, all secondary schools will use at least one AI-based tool in teaching or administration"), standards (approved platforms, data guidelines), oversight, and maintenance mechanisms. Including computational thinking and AI basics in the student curriculum is also important; not only will students use AI, but they should also learn how it works. Bangladesh could introduce elective courses on AI at secondary and higher-secondary levels, or integrate topics such as logic, data science, and coding at earlier stages to build foundational skills. This ensures students are not just consumers of AI but future creators as well. Broader awareness and early involvement in AI is also encouraged through participation in global AI competitions organised for high school students. For example, the recent success of Bangladeshi students in the International Olympiad in AI (IOAI) is showing a promising AI-enabled future for Bangladesh.

Cost and sustainability: Introducing AI solutions is not cheap. While there may be free or open-source software available, robust AI platforms or enterprise solutions may carry licensing costs or require custom development for targeted benefits. Bangladesh's education budget is limited, and there are competing priorities (building schools, hiring and training teachers, etc.). Any AI intervention must be cost-effective and sustainable. This could mean starting with open-source or subsidised tools, seeking public-private partnerships (for instance, tech companies piloting solutions in government schools), or piggybacking



Envisioned AI-enabled Classroom in Bangladesh (AI-generated image)

Khan Academy, a global education non-profit, recently integrated an AI tutor named "Khanmigo" into its platform, which can interact with students one-on-one, guiding them through problems with Socratic hints rather than simply giving answers. Such personalised support was once impossible to deliver to millions of users simultaneously, but recent progress in AI makes it feasible.

The curriculum becomes dynamic, moulding itself to the student rather than forcing the student to keep up. This kind of adaptation is like having a personal tutor for every child, a game-changer in large classrooms where providing individual attention is challenging for teachers due to diverse learning needs.

Self-paced, mastery-based learning: In Bangladesh, it is common for students to memorise just enough to pass exams, then fall behind when foundational concepts are not fully grasped. AI-powered learning apps encourage a different approach. Students can progress at their own pace, revisiting concepts they have not yet mastered and moving forward only when they feel ready. This mastery learning model, supported by instant AI feedback, can improve comprehension and retention.

MAKING EDUCATION MORE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE

In Bangladesh, ensuring inclusive education that reaches all students regardless of their background or abilities is both a priority and a challenge. Here too, AI can play a transformative role by removing barriers related to language, disability, and learning difficulties.

Supporting diverse learning needs: Students with disabilities or special needs often do not receive adequate support due to limited resources and trained personnel. AI tools can help bridge this gap. For example, AI-driven software can convert textbooks into audio or Braille for visually impaired students, or use speech recognition to help hearing impaired students by converting teacher lectures into real-time text captions. An AI tutor can also be patient and repetitive in ways a human teacher might struggle with, which is particularly useful for students with autism or attention disorders.

Language translation and multicultural learning: Bangladesh's primary medium of instruction is Bangla, but many higher education institutions use English, and there are

attendance by calling names or maintaining registers. AI vision technology offers a modern solution: facial recognition cameras can log students as present when they walk into class. Such systems are already in use in some countries. They not only save class time, but also alert staff to absence patterns automatically. As an example, an AI camera at the school gate could flag if a particular student has missed three days in a week, prompting outreach. While this raises some privacy concerns (which we shall discuss later), it illustrates how AI can handle routine monitoring. For Bangladesh, where keeping students in school is as important as enrolling them, early warning systems for absenteeism could help reduce dropout rates, which remain a persistent issue, especially at the secondary level.

Engagement through interactivity:

AI tutors and chatbots can make learning more engaging by conversing with students. Imagine an HSC candidate in Dhaka preparing for exams by chatting with an AI bot (in Bangla or English) that quizzes them, answers questions, and provides hints. The conversational style can reduce the intimidation factor of complex topics and subjects. This also frees up teachers' time by letting AI handle practice Q&A, while they can focus on higher-level guidance and motivational support.

Real-world examples illustrate these benefits. Khan Academy, a global education non-profit, recently integrated an AI tutor named "Khanmigo" into its platform, which can interact with students one-on-one, guiding them through problems with Socratic hints rather than simply giving answers. Such personalised support was once impossible to deliver to millions of users simultaneously, but recent progress in AI makes it feasible. Bangladesh already has popular e-learning platforms (like 10 Minute School and Shikho). By incorporating AI tutors similar to Khanmigo, these platforms could dramatically enhance

the curriculum becomes dynamic, moulding itself to the student rather than forcing the student to keep up. This kind of adaptation is like having a personal tutor for every child, a game-changer in large classrooms where providing individual attention is challenging for teachers due to diverse learning needs.

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Language translation and multicultural learning:

Bangladesh's primary medium of instruction is Bangla, but many higher education



THE PEANUT POWER

Groundnuts drive an overlooked ecosystem. From char farmers to street vendors and factories, a small crop feeds many

Once a stand-alone street snack, groundnut has grown into a sought-after crop as food processors diversify its uses in everything from snacks to confectionery. This rising demand has prompted farmers to expand cultivation.

SUKANTA HALDER and S DILIP ROY

Basir Mirza has been selling peanuts for his entire adult life. At around 3:00 pm every day, he sets up his floating cart in front of the playground on Manik Mia Avenue near the parliament building, one of Dhaka's busiest, crowded areas -- a good spot to fetch customers. For nearly four decades, the trade has rewarded him well, and he never considered trying anything else.

"Selling peanuts allowed me to pay for my daughter's education, her wedding, and even buy a small portion of land in my village," the 55-year-old, hailing from Bhairab of Kishoreganj, said as he set up his shop.

Unlike vendors of other goods, Mirza's business has been stable through every political upheaval, economic downturn, and social shift. A handful of peanuts is always cherished by people everywhere, from the posh urban towns to the remote villages.

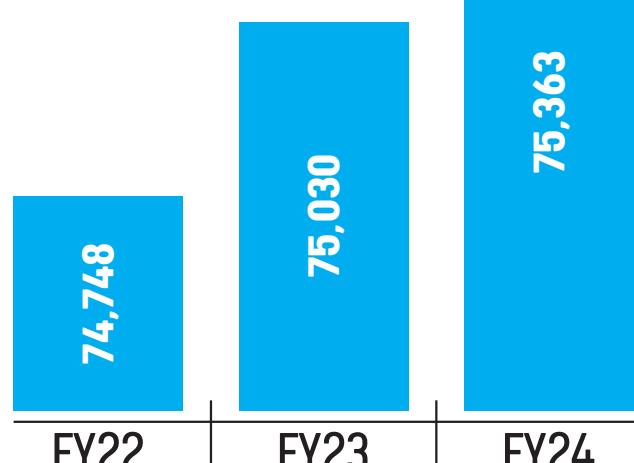
Once a stand-alone street snack, groundnut has grown into a sought-after crop as food processors diversify its uses in everything from snacks to confectionery. This rising demand has prompted farmers to expand cultivation, backed by agri-scientists



Production of GROUNDNUT

In tonnes

SOURCE: BBS



Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Over 200 kilometres north of Dhaka, at Islampur upazila in Jamalpur, farmer Mohammad Kamruzzaman Akand represents the peak of peanut farming success.

"I started from scratch. Now I own a house in the municipal area worth about Tk 50 lakh, built entirely from groundnut earnings. I have also purchased four to five bighas of char land," he said over the phone.

Further north, in Chilmari upazila of Kurigram, 65-year-old Nazrul Islam harvested nuts from eight bighas at Joragach char this year.

"Nothing grows well in sandy char soil except peanuts. For us, this is the crop of hope," he said.

In Kalimati char of Lalmonirhat, another border district, 60-year-old Nurjamal spoke of the crop's value compared with others.

"We turned our fallow land into cultivable land through this oilseed. It has become our main source of income. If the market price holds, peanuts are

significantly.

Government officials say the main driver of the peanut's expansion is its unique ability to grow in fallow lands, especially the chars or sandy riverine islands.

"Peanut is drought-resistant and thrives in sandy and loamy soil. Since char lands do not hold water, yields are usually very good," said Abdulla Al Mamun, deputy director of the DAE in Kurigram.

Mohammad Quamrul Islam Matin, senior scientific officer at the Oilseeds Research Centre (ORC) under the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), added that farmers are steadily expanding cultivation in char areas where land availability and favourable conditions make it viable.

According to SM Sohrab Uddin, director of the DAE's Horticulture Wing, peanuts are now grown in nearly all districts except Meherpur, Dinajpur, and Joypurhat. The northern region alone accounts for nearly one-third of production, thanks to its vast chars.

Once a marginal crop, peanuts are now

production now comes from Noakhali, Panchagarh, Bhola, Patuakhali, Sirajganj, Faridpur, Manikganj, Kurigram, Bandarban, Lakshimpur, and Pabna.

THE KING OF NUTS

At the industry level, the legume's growing popularity is tied to its use in processed foods. While cashews, pistachios, and walnuts are cultivated domestically, peanuts dominate thanks to their affordability and versatility.

Industry estimates put annual demand at 1.40 lakh tonnes. Of this, roughly 1 lakh tonnes are consumed directly or used in snacks and bakeries, with the remaining 30,000-40,000 tonnes processed into industrial food products.

"Consumption has doubled in recent years," said Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director of PRAN-RFL Group, one of the country's largest conglomerates.

"This trend accelerated after the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when people shifted from carbohydrate-heavy foods towards protein-rich alternatives. Among all nuts, peanuts have the highest demand in the local market."

PRAN alone uses about 2,500 tonnes annually for roasted nuts, chanachur, cookies, bars, chocolate, and milk-based drinks. While most supply is domestic, 20-30 percent is imported during shortages.

At the farm level, however, peanuts move quickly.

"Farmers sell right after harvest. Later, when demand rises, prices go up," said Fazal Haque, a trader at Jatrapur market in Kurigram.

Each year, 12 seasonal peanut markets operate along the Brahmaputra during January-February and May-June, each handling 450-500 tonnes. Traders often transport the goods to the mainland on horse-drawn carts.

In Dhaka's Karwan Bazar, wholesale trader Abdul Matin, who has run his stall for nearly 30 years, says peanuts are his top-selling item. His customers range from households to industrial buyers.

In Khatunganj, the country's main hub for essentials, wholesaler Mezbuddin Munna sells about a tonne a week -- roughly 53 tonnes a year. Most of his buyers are shopkeepers, with large volumes headed to Cox's Bazar, where tourism fuels peak demand during winter and festive seasons like Ramadan and Qurbani. Half of his supply is imported from India, and the rest comes from various districts.

HIDDEN POTENTIAL

While peanuts' growth has been lauded, government officials and traders say

there is more to be expected.

Peanut seeds contain 48-52 percent oil, higher than mustard and soybean, and slightly more than sunflower.

"Despite this potential, peanuts in Bangladesh are primarily consumed as food rather than processed for oil," said BARI's Matin.

Farmers also speak of possible expansion, but say the shortage of quality seeds and storage availability remains a big challenge to that end.

Local peanut varieties yield 1,800-2,000 kg per hectare, while the higher-yielding Chinese variety produces 2,500-3,000 kg, said 60-year-old farmer Mahabbat Ali of Jatrapur Char in Kurigram. "Around 60 percent of char farmers now prefer the Chinese variety due to its profitability."

His neighbour, Noyon Islam (50), noted that poor storage facilities, market fluctuations, and lack of training or flood protection hamper growth.

"With better infrastructure, peanut farming could expand even further," he added.

"Peanuts have export potential if better storage and processing technologies are introduced. If developed properly, peanuts could become a major export product, boosting incomes for char farmers," he said.

Government officials, however, say they are making significant contributions.

SM Sohrab Uddin, director of the Horticulture wing at the DAE, said, "Groundnut output grew because of the introduction of improved varieties and rising awareness about nutrition."

BARI's Matin said the ORC has so far developed 12 groundnut varieties, and its efforts are underway to develop shorter duration varieties, reducing maturity from 150 to about 135 days so that peanuts can better fit into existing cropping patterns.

"Currently, BARI Badam 8, 9, and 12 are the main commercially cultivated varieties, with farmers generally preserving their own seeds," he said, adding that the most widely cultivated varieties include Dhaka 1, Maijchar, BARI Peanut-4 through BARI Peanut-9, and BINA Peanut-8 through BINA Peanut-10.

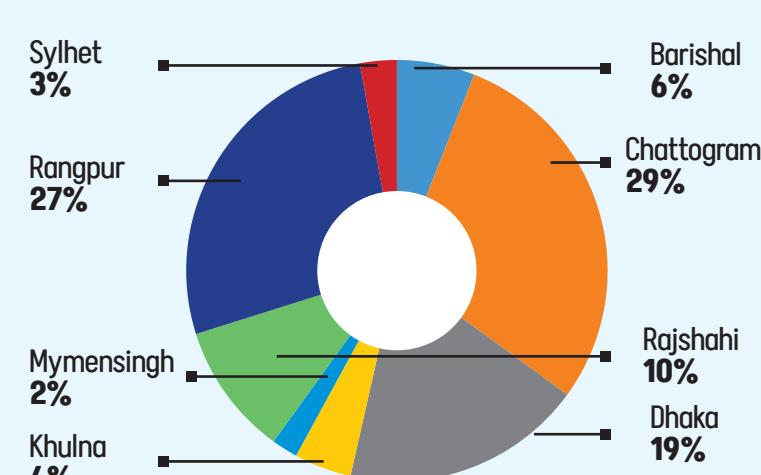
According to Rangpur DAE Additional Director Islam, peanuts are not only strengthening the economy of char areas but also creating employment opportunities.

"With proper marketing and storage, peanut farming can be even more profitable and sustainable."

Kurigram's Ali acknowledges the growth. "This crop is making us self-reliant. Without peanuts, many of us would struggle to survive."

Share of production of groundnut by divisions

Fiscal Year: 2023-24



far more profitable than other crops," he said.

Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics shows wholesale peanut prices more than doubled to over Tk 160 per kg in 2024, up from Tk 62 in 2011.

IT GROWS WHERE NOTHING ELSE DOES

Peanut cultivation in Bangladesh began in the mid-20th century, and production has since expanded

central to the rural economy here.

Sirajul Islam, additional director of the Rangpur DAE, identifies Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur, and Nilphamari as the key peanut-growing districts. "Vast areas along the Teesta, Brahmaputra, Dudhkumar, and Dharla rivers are now peanut fields."

Nearly 90 percent of the output comes from 650 chars.

About 70 percent of domestic