

Two-state solution is non-negotiable

Netanyahu's latest statement may lead to total annihilation of Palestinians

Though he has reiterated this stance many times before, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's latest declaration on Palestine is staggering. It comes in the backdrop of an ongoing genocide in Gaza that has killed nearly 65,000 people, including nearly 20,000 children, and led to massive displacements and casualties by starvation. Adding to this humanitarian catastrophe is the recent bombing of Qatar, a country actively working to broker a ceasefire, which has been rightly condemned by many nations. Despite this, while speaking at an event in an Israeli settlement near Jerusalem, Netanyahu has stated: "We are going to fulfil our promise that there will be no Palestinian state. This place belongs to us."

This position directly contradicts the two-state solution—a long-standing policy backed by the United States, ironically Israel's closest ally. Since the Oslo Accords, which laid the groundwork for Palestinian self-rule, US presidents have supported a two-state solution. President Bill Clinton was the first to endorse it explicitly in 2000. George W. Bush called for a Palestinian state in 2002 and backed the "Roadmap for Peace." Barack Obama strongly supported the solution and criticised Israel's settlement expansion. The Biden administration also continued to endorse it as the only path to lasting peace and security.

During Donald Trump's presidency, however, US support weakened. His administration considered the two-state solution as just one option among others, even proposing US administration of Gaza and Palestinian resettlement—plans that severely undercut the possibility of a Palestinian statehood. Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the relocation of the US embassy there further marginalised the two-state framework.

Against this backdrop, Netanyahu's statement not only defies decades of US foreign policy but also ignores widespread international condemnation. Twenty-one countries, including close allies like the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan, have denounced Israel's plans for a new illegal settlement in the occupied West Bank, warning that such actions render a two-state solution impossible. But Israel continues to violate international humanitarian law with impunity. The world has watched the ongoing genocide, starvation of civilians, and targeted killings of Palestinians seeking food, of children in schools, of patients in hospitals, of aid workers, doctors, and journalists. And yet, the international community has failed to act decisively.

Nations that still offer Israel unconditional support must understand that these actions endanger not only Palestinian lives but the stability and security of the entire region, and the world by extension. They are in direct opposition to the core human values the international community claims to uphold. The two-state solution, therefore, must be urgently revived. At the same time, the world must act to stop the genocide, force Israel to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, and hold it accountable.

A drainage project in shambles

DNCC must finish Kawlabazar-Dakkhin Khan undertaking without delay

We cannot stress enough the importance of timely and well-managed public works. But the ongoing drainage installation work along the 2.5-kilometre road stretch from Kawlabazar to Dakkhin Khan Bazar via Shiyaldanga Road, as reported by this daily, is a textbook case of how not to handle such projects. Instead of improving residents' lives as intended, this DNCC botchwork has left them mired in trouble and disruption.

According to locals, the drainage work has dragged on for two years now. Residents say that only a fraction of the road has been carpeted despite drainage pipes already being laid. The slow pace of work has severely affected small businesses and schools alike. Schoolchildren, for instance, are struggling to walk home on rainy days, while small entrepreneurs say their incomes have dropped by half due to customers avoiding the area. Vehicle owners too have reported disruptions, parking problems, and financial loss.

DNCC officials have cited resistance from residents over vacating occupied portions of the road as a reason for delays. While such barriers may impact work, they cannot justify prolonged inaction or poor project management. The longer the work drags on, the greater the cost to livelihoods, mobility, and public safety. Knee-deep water, loose soil, and unfinished surfaces increase the risk of accidents and diseases.

Across Dhaka, we have seen how such dug-up roads, left by utility providers or city corporations, have become a recurring nightmare. The 2019 Road Excavation Policy clearly states that excavation must be done in small sections, completed within 15 days, and debris cleared within 24 hours. In reality, these rules are seldom enforced, and projects are allowed to stretch indefinitely. This undermines the very goals of such infrastructure works.

We, therefore, urge DNCC to immediately accelerate the completion of this project. Coordination with local stakeholders should be strengthened, and any land disputes resolved quickly through transparent negotiation. Contractors must be held accountable for meeting deadlines and quality standards. Beyond this, both city corporations of Dhaka must adopt a more disciplined approach to road works, following the excavation policy to the letter. Projects should be planned and implemented in phases that minimise disruption, with post-work restoration given the same priority as installation itself. Without such systemic changes, residents will continue to suffer from unfinished infrastructure projects.

We must professionalise our fight for stolen wealth



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The claims are vast and visceral: billions spirited out of Bangladesh during Awami League's tenure through fraud, over-invoicing, and old-school graft. Some of that money has left footprints abroad. In June, for instance, British authorities froze a large portfolio of UK properties linked to a former AL minister, an unusually muscular signal that destination countries may be willing to cooperate when we show them strong cases. But asset recovery is not a morality play, it is a technical sport with exacting rules. If we want the money back, we must play by those rules.

Let's take a look at the legal playbook. Bangladesh's Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012 empowers investigators and special courts to trace and confiscate proceeds of crime; the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 2012 and its rules provide a channel to request evidence, freezing, and confiscation abroad; and the Extradition Act 1974 offers the framework to bring fugitives back. Internationally, we have a strong normative anchor: the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) makes asset recovery a "fundamental principle" and sets out the methods—mutual legal assistance, freezing, confiscation, and return, including civil actions in foreign courts where necessary. In practice, Chapter V of the convention is where most cross-border cases are won or lost, and it rewards countries that can deliver clean evidence and credible court orders.

But we should be clear about the obstacles, too. The 2013 amendment to the ACC legal framework—requiring prior government permission to file cases against public servants—long crippled case velocity and sent the wrong signal to foreign judges scrutinising our requests. Section 32A, inserted in 2013, was struck down by High Court in January 2014, removing any pre-approval barrier to the ACC filing a case, but it has yet to be formally repealed. The ACC Reform Commission has also recommended repealing Section 32A. If you want other jurisdictions to freeze assets for you, you must show independence at the front end.

Second, beneficial ownership transparency at home remains fragmented. Bangladesh Bank now requires banks to collect ultimate beneficial owner (UBO) data, which helps domestic financial investigations, but we still lack a comprehensive, searchable national register covering companies and trusts across the economy. Without it, we are asking London, Dubai, or Singapore to do due

diligence we have not done ourselves.

Third, we remain outside the OECD's Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, the backbone of modern automatic information exchange (CRS). Staying out deprives investigators of routine cross-border financial data and leaves us reliant on bespoke letters and goodwill. Acceding to the convention should be treated as an urgent macro-reform.

Moreover, our special courts remain

early freezing cases around simple, provable narratives (embezzlement counts, circular trade payments), then widen.

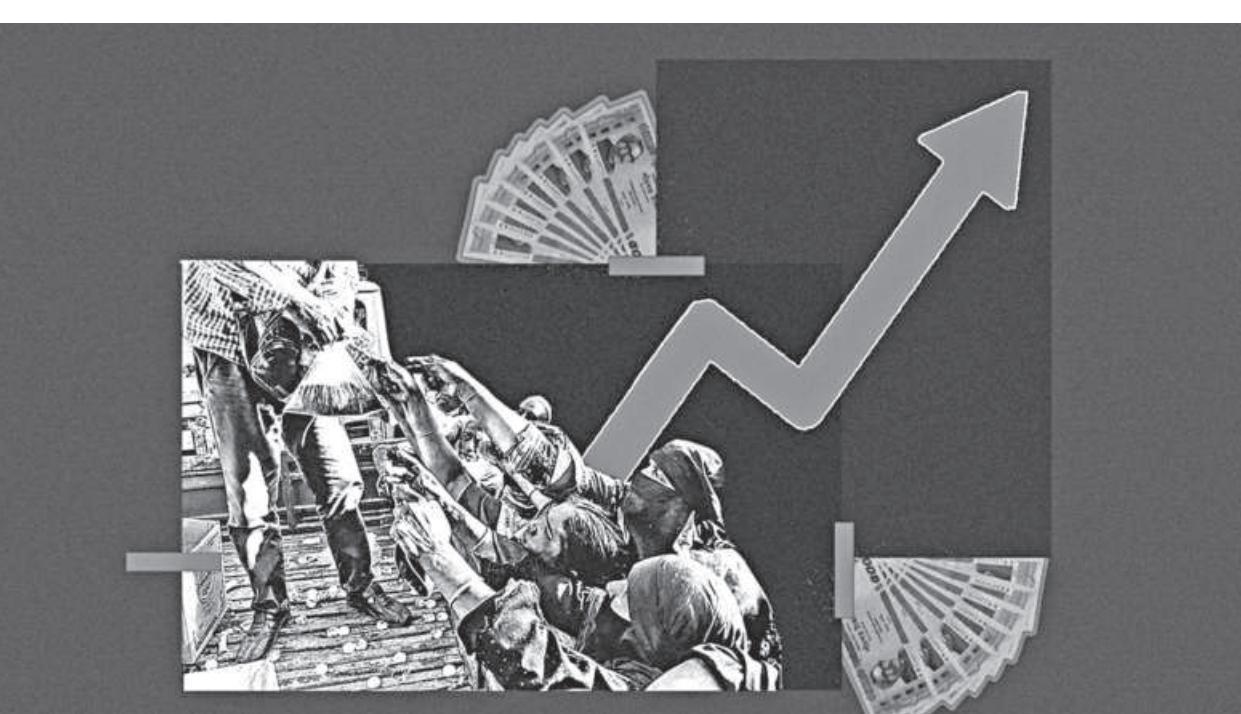
Which agencies matter abroad? In the UK, the National Crime Agency, Serious Fraud Office, and the IACCC hub can be decisive, and the UK's Unexplained Wealth Orders and civil recovery under POCA are tailor-made for suspect real estate. In the US, the Justice Department's Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section (MLARS) still runs civil forfeiture of foreign kleptocracy proceeds—often the quickest way to immobilise assets sitting in Delaware LLCs or New York condos, for instance.

Regionally, Interpol's Global Focal Point Network and the Asset Recovery Interagency Network for Asia Pacific (ARIN-AP) are the fastest bridges for "who do I call" problems. And never ignore STAR at the World Bank/UNODC and the Basel Institute's ICAR for case

peers. And professionalise, then over-resource, the boring bits—translations, forensic accounting, evidence matrices, etc—that foreign judges actually trust.

Tactically, go where the assets are and use the local playbook. In the UK, pair ROE searches with Land Registry data and seek interim freezing orders while preparing civil recovery. In the US, partner with MLARS for 18 U.S.C. §981 civil forfeiture when funds have passed through the US financial system. In the Gulf and Southeast Asia, lean on FIU channels (Bangladesh is an Egmont member) to get bank intelligence before you launch formal requests. File early, precisely, and narrowly, then iterate.

Money does not come home on press releases. It comes home case by case, with quiet diplomacy and implacable lawyering. The promising news is that partners are already moving: the UK freezes show that when we present credible assets of corruption stories, courts will listen;



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

overloaded. Packaging of mutual legal assistance requests (MLARs) is often weak on evidentiary schedules, duration, dual-criminality mapping, and chain-of-custody detail. The Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering's (APG) evaluators flagged this cycle of backlog and strain years ago; that shows up abroad as refusals, delays, or narrow orders. We must remember that asset recovery is like paperwork chess, where sloppy files lose positions.

Now, the international obstacles. Dual criminality still matters. A foreign court will ask whether the conduct you describe is criminal both there and here. Bank secrecy cannot be pleaded to deny MLA under UNCAC, but trusts and nominees still create fog—yes, even in the UK after its new overseas entities register—so you need to combine informal FIU-to-FIU intelligence with formal court tools. A realist's tip: build

mentoring and legislative tuning.

So, what should Bangladesh do? Restore the ACC's operational independence by repealing the 2013 permission clause and insulating appointments and budgets. Establish a permanent Asset Recovery Taskforce, bringing together legal, economic, and forensic specialists. The taskforce should operate under a unified case preparation framework and include a centralised cell dedicated to drafting MLARs. Join the OECD tax cooperation convention and switch on CRS exchange relationships to end the "don't ask, don't tell" era of offshore accounts. Launch a genuine, economy-wide beneficial ownership register, with scope for verification and sanctions for false filings. Write and pass non-conviction based forfeiture and illicit enrichment tools that meet due process standards; both are encouraged in UNCAC practice and widely used by

London's anti-corruption centre is designed for precisely this kind of grand corruption. Bangladesh Bank, for its part, is exploring a litigation funding model to finance complex foreign actions, a sensible move provided that governance and transparency are watertight. The government should lock in those partnerships and publish a quarterly scorecard of requests sent, orders obtained, and sums returned.

Finally, cut the hype surrounding money laundering and asset recovery. The public deserves candour: even well-run programmes take years, and some assets will be unrecoverable. But with a depoliticised ACC, modern transparency rules, serious international cooperation, and a taskforce that treats casework like an export industry, Bangladesh can turn a depressing saga into a rule-of-law dividend. Bring the money home, patiently and permanently.

My DUCSU voting experience: The good and the bad



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As a politically unaware teenager, I observed the events of the 2019 DUCSU election with a mix of fascination and amusement, wondering why a university election received so much media coverage. Now, six years later, as I voted for the first time in an election, the question is more a criticism of our broken political structure. Despite my apprehensions about electoral politics, I was excited to see what changes the DUCSU election brings for the students. For weeks, the candidates campaigned and made many promises, and it was time to test the trust they had accumulated among the students. On the day of the election, the atmosphere around the campus was festive and celebratory. For many students like me, it was their first time participating in an election, and the enthusiasm was palpable as they queued in front of the voting booths at 8am sharp. The unprecedented participation indicated an eagerness for democracy

after a long hiatus.

For years, many remained hopeless about having a fair election. Therefore, everyone in the country was looking forward to the DUCSU polls—a test of the students' political consciousness, an identification of where the political compass reached. And were their hopes met with? I believe it's too early to answer. It was 12pm when I went to campus to vote on the day of the polls. The police had closed off entry points for outsiders, and students with their identification documents were allowed in. It was a slow walk to the voting centre. The scouts and officers on duty helped with directions. What was curious, though, was that many students were still campaigning at the gate of the voting centre despite the official rule prohibiting it. I had three students come up to me with requests that I vote for their preferred candidates in particular ranks.

However, the voting process was

absolutely seamless, and I finished in no time. For the next four hours, I roamed around the campus visiting multiple voting centres at the Teacher-Student Center (TSC), University Laboratory School and College, and the Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban with my friends. The outpouring of students was incredible to witness. Many came from Cumilla and Khulna to show support for their candidates of choice and exercise their rights. While multiple rumours floated around online about voting centres being out of action, the reality was completely different. There was little to no ruckus till the afternoon. On the Senate premises, some people were handing out biscuits and bananas to the students.

At 4pm, I headed home, and when I came back around an hour later through the Nilkhet entry point, the entire road was filled with people. The next few hours on the campus grounds were tense with Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists instantaneously calling press conferences and rumours of vote mismanagement. I heard news of some candidates trying to bypass the rules. Another round of press conferences took place following processions and slogans. There were some complaints regarding the LED screens being turned off during the vote count in multiple centres. With an anxious mind, I came

home around 10:30pm and waited for the election results eagerly, like every other student of DU. The weeks-long anticipation was brought to an end after midnight, when the Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir backed panel won in a landslide victory.

The outcome of the election has brought a myriad of political anxieties for the students and aspirations of the masses. Despite accusations of vote manipulation, the prominent consensus is that democracy was practised in Bangladesh after a long time, and the students were given an actual choice to exercise their rights. What was indeed remarkable was the participation of nonresident students in hordes. Yet there were inadequacies in the administration of the election that must be addressed and criticised. A university election getting special national attention is another aspect of the media and political structure that should be the subject of criticism. As a citizen, I wonder when this dominance-inserting culture of Bangladeshi politics would end—why the sight of RAB, Police and Detective Branch of Police has been normalised in public universities. The horizon for student politics is now ripe with new possibilities, and I can only hope that those elected will serve the students to the best of their abilities. And those who voted for them will hold them accountable.