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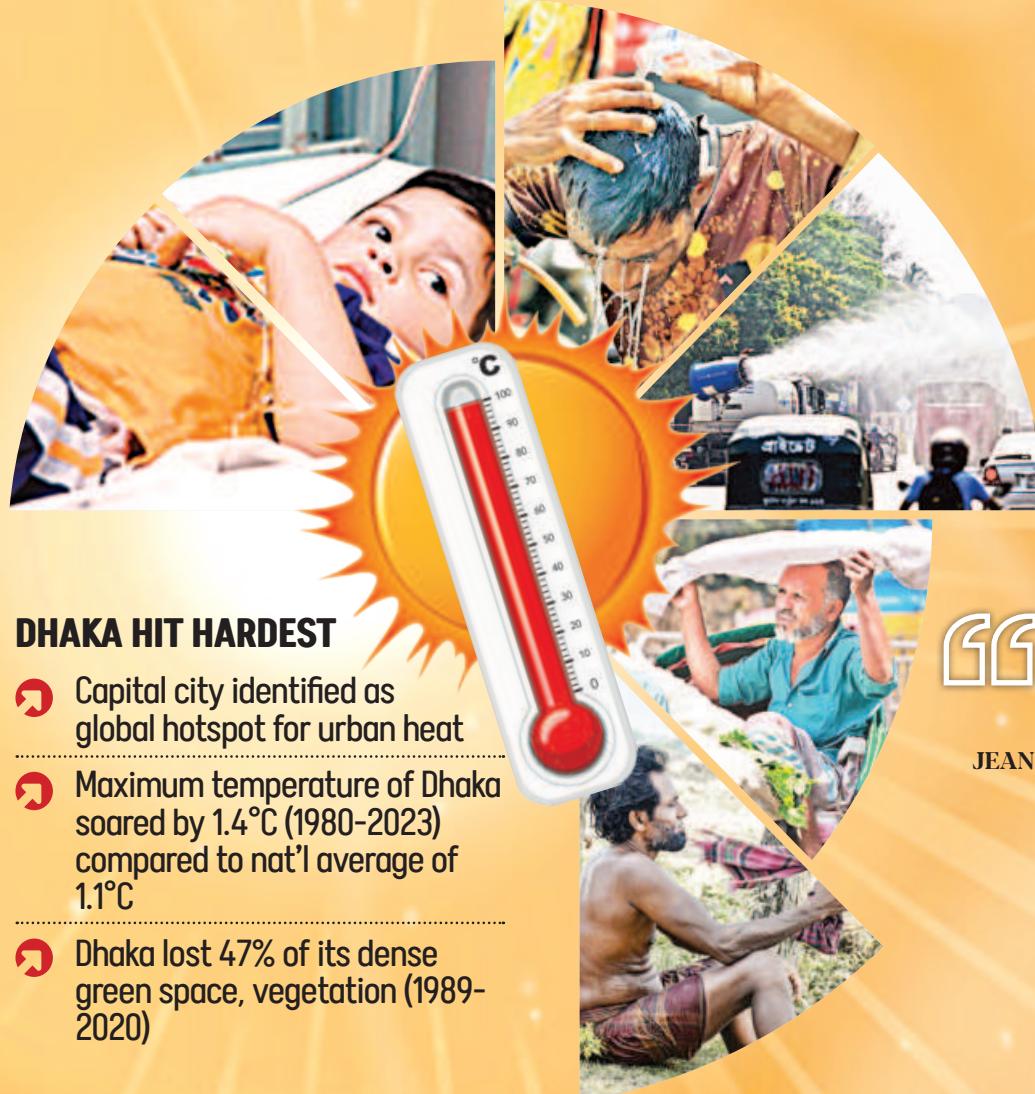
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**EXTREME HEAT TOLL**

- ↳ Bangladesh ranks 2nd in exposure to high temperatures
- ↳ Country lost estimated 250m work days in 2024
- ↳ Estimated economic losses up to \$1.78b

**EFFECTS ON HEALTH**

- ↳ Heat exhaustion highest among working population (36 to 65 years)
- ↳ 6% reported cough in summer; 3.3% in winter
- ↳ Diarrhoea reported by 4.4% in summer; 1.8% in winter
- ↳ Depression reported by 20% in summer; 16.2% in winter
- ↳ Anxiety reported by 10% in summer; 8.3% in winter

**DHAKA HIT HARDEST**

- ↳ Capital city identified as global hotspot for urban heat
- ↳ Maximum temperature of Dhaka soared by 1.4°C (1980-2023) compared to nat'l average of 1.1°C
- ↳ Dhaka lost 47% of its dense green space, vegetation (1989-2020)

## Dhaka edges closer to boiling point

City's heat index 65% higher than national average, WB warns in first report on Bangladesh

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Rising temperatures in Bangladesh are driving a surge in heat-related illnesses, resulting in 250 million lost workdays and an economic cost of up to \$1.78 billion in 2024, according to a World Bank study released yesterday.

Since 1980, Bangladesh's maximum

to the environment, forest and climate change ministry, said the findings provided vital scientific validation. "Now we need to spell out concrete measures for each agency to act on."

As temperatures rise, Bangladeshis face growing health problems -- persistent cough, heat exhaustion, diarrhoea, depression, and anxiety -- according to the report, the first of its kind focusing entirely on Bangladesh.

The study, titled *An Unsustainable Life: The Impact of Heat on Health and the Economy of Bangladesh*, analysed temperature and humidity data from 1976 to 2023, alongside two rounds of household surveys covering more than 16,000 people between January and June last year.

"Extreme heat is not just a seasonal inconvenience. Its impact is far-reaching. As we see in Bangladesh, the rising temperature is affecting our health and productivity, and the country's prosperity."

JEAN PESME, division director for Bangladesh and Bhutan at the World Bank

temperature has risen by 1.1°C, while the "feels like" temperature has jumped by 4.5°C. The country now ranks second globally for exposure to extreme heat.

During the same period, Dhaka's maximum temperature rose by 1.4°C, making the capital one of the world's most significant urban heat hotspots.

Speaking at the report's launch at a city hotel, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser

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## When water becomes poison

### Women bear brunt as Satkhira's salinity crosses WHO limit

TANILA TASnim

Forty-five-year-old Shefali Bibi of Datinakhal village in Satkhira's Shyamnagar spends her mornings pulling fishing nets and collecting grass from a nearby pond. Constantly exposed to its saline water, which she also uses for bathing and household chores, she now suffers from a full body rash.

"I have no other option. I can't sleep at night from the itching. I try not to drink more than a glass of water even when I am thirsty. This shortage of water and the salinity are killing us day by day," she said.

Three years ago, Shefali underwent a uterine operation. Since then, she has been battling fatigue, vertigo, and loss of appetite -- conditions her doctors link to water quality.

The nearest source of drinking water is around three kilometres from her home. High salinity has made river and groundwater unusable, forcing families to rely on stored rainwater or travel long distances. A few water filters exist in the area, but women like Shefali spend hours queuing to collect water.

Hundreds of women face the same ordeal, often resorting to saline river water that worsens health



- ↳ Coastal salinity affects 20 million; women and children worst hit
- ↳ Satkhira's water is up to 30X saltier than WHO's safe limit
- ↳ Women walk kilometres daily for water, losing time and risking harm
- ↳ Freshwater zones in the southwest may shrink by over 90%

problems.

Shefali's daughter-in-law Rina suffers from a waterborne skin disease, the infections so severe they nearly caused tissue to rot -- treatment far beyond the family's means.

Masuma, another resident, walks nearly two kilometres each day for drinking water, losing hours she could have spent earning.

Rising salinity in Bangladesh's southwest has become one of the gravest public health threats, and its impact falls hardest on women.

Participatory Research and Action Network (Praan), a non-profit organisation that works to combat poverty and promote sustainable development through participatory action research, reports that shrinking freshwater sources are pushing saltwater into rivers, ponds, and tube wells, turning once-safe water into a daily health hazard.

Women -- particularly those pregnant or breastfeeding -- are most exposed.

Beyond illness, salinity drives time poverty, lost

## 'Escaping from death towards death'

Many Palestinians refuse to leave as Gaza City 'burning' from Israeli all-out offensive; 106 killed

**AGENCIES**

Israel unleashed a long threatened ground assault on Gaza City yesterday, declaring "Gaza is burning" as Palestinians there described the most intense bombardment they had faced in two years of war.

An Israel Defence Forces official said ground troops were moving deeper into the enclave's main city, and that the number of soldiers would rise in the coming days to confront up to 3,000 Hamas combatants the IDF believes are still in the city.

"Gaza is burning," Defence Minister Israel Katz posted on X. "The IDF strikes with an iron fist at the terrorist infrastructure, and IDF soldiers are fighting bravely to create the conditions for the release of the hostages and the defeat of Hamas."

In launching the assault, Israel's government defied European leaders, who threatened sanctions and warnings from even some of Israel's own military commanders that it could be a costly mistake.

US President Donald Trump sided with Israel, telling reporters at the White



UN rights chief demands end to 'carnage', says 'evidence mounting' of 'genocide'

Countries, EU, slam 'reckless and appalling' Israeli move

UN investigators blame Israeli PM, president for genocide

House that Hamas would have "hell to pay" if it used hostages as human shields during the assault.

In the latest expression of international alarm, a United Nations Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza.

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which does not speak for the world body, found that "genocide is occurring in Gaza and is continuing to occur", commission chief Navi Pillay told AFP.

"The responsibility lies with the State of Israel."

The investigators said explicit statements by Israeli civilian and military authorities, along with the pattern of Israeli forces' conduct, "indicated that the genocidal acts were committed with intent to destroy... Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as a group".

The report concluded that Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog and former defence minister Yoav Gallant have "incited the commission of genocide".

Israel said it "categorically rejects this distorted and false report" and called for the "immediate abolition" of the COI.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that what is happening in Gaza was horrendous and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A man carries the body of Palestinian girl Amal Zakot, who was killed in an Israeli strike on a house, in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## BNP plans image clean-up before February polls

### Countrywide campaign begins next month

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has decided to launch a countrywide campaign in mid-October to improve its public image, counter opposition narratives and reassure voters of its commitment to reforms ahead of the national election scheduled for February.

The campaign aims to build momentum for the election through door-to-door outreach after Durga Puja, to be celebrated from September 29 to October 2.

According to BNP leaders, they will carry out the campaign at the district, upazila, union, and ward levels through meetings, gatherings, and discussions.

The party, which has already prepared a list of possible MP candidates, will soon hold discussions with its allies before making an official announcement.

It is also preparing a draft list of female leaders who can win through direct votes. The party will soon begin preparing its election manifesto based on its 31-point agenda for state reforms.

Furthermore, the party may begin discussing seat sharing with allied political coalitions and parties, including the National Citizen Party (NCP).

These issues were discussed at a meeting of the Standing Committee, the highest policymaking body of the party,

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## Jamaat wants PR system at least once

### Party delegation tells EU team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election under the proportional representation system is necessary to address the political parties' tendency to capture polling centres, said Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday.

"At least we want the PR system in the election for once. If it does not work, this system can be discarded in the following polls," Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher told reporters after the meeting with the visiting European parliament members.

Under the traditional system, elections were not held in a free and fair manner in the last 54 years.

"After so many killings and bloodshed, we are not seeing any change in the mindset of the political parties and the biggest examples behind this are the Duchs and Juchs elections."

Taher went on to cite what transpired at the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union to further his point.

Without mentioning the name of any party, he said: "They participated in these

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## Dhaka's changing conversation on mental health

SHUBHRO HAQUE

When I was a child, a TV commercial declared, "Bishonnota ekti rog." Back then, it sparked public outrage. Viewers accused it of "supporting" mental illness and normalising antidepressants.

How times have changed! We no longer treat people suffering from depression, anxiety disorders, manic depression, or schizophrenia as demons. Although this process of acceptance has been slow, the ripple effects of a mental health care movement are visible across the city.

There is no doubt that psychiatric ailments are still on the rise. With the recent trauma of witnessing a pandemic and a bloody mass movement against fascism, it is evident that a dark cloud hangs over the city's health sector. One newspaper report goes so far as to state that suicide is the second leading cause of death in Bangladesh, only after road traffic accidents. And truth be told, the crowded waiting rooms at the psychiatrist's chamber are a testament to such astonishing claims.

Every cloud, they say, has a silver lining. And what appears to be a hopeless situation when it comes to mental health, in reality shows positive signs, giving hope to those suffering from psychiatric illnesses of a recovery.

Today, Dhaka's own landscape speaks about depression and anxiety without shame. Radio talk shows discuss such topics without hesitation or guilt. Facebook Lives are done by those who suffer, trying to make others going through similar ordeals feel a little at ease. University awareness programmes are now as common as scholarship recruitment events!

From the National Institute of Mental Health in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to the consultation rooms of BSMMU and the growing network of private clinics in Dhamondi, Gulshan, and Banani, Dhaka is no longer a silent spectator to its people's struggles. NGOs and hotlines, born in this city, are offering new lifelines that did not exist



ILLUSTRATION: ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

when I was younger.

As a teenager, when I was first diagnosed with manic depressive disorder, the idea of medication was scandalous to those around me. "It will rattle your brain," they said. Almost thirty years ago, very few in Dhaka understood the effects of psychiatric medication and truth be told, even today, many still do not.

My first visits to a psychiatrist were filled with embarrassment. But with

time, with countless regular visits, now, I feel no different walking into a psychiatrist's chamber than into a cardiologist's.

What has changed is that conversations can now happen out into the open. Acquaintances share their own struggles, making me feel less alone in this city of millions. Dhaka still tests the limits of my patience, but the city also offers me a respite on dull evenings at the shaded paths of Ramna Park.

It is a sigh of relief for me that the bookstalls of Nilkhet now offer self-help books on how to combat mental illnesses, just as it offers guidebooks on science and engineering. And, how the conversation on mental disease is not as awkward as it used to be in office cafés.

The city still rattles me, yes – but it also heals me, slowly teaching me that my struggles, too, have a home here.

## Dhaka edges closer to boiling point

FROM PAGE 1

in climate adaptation and taking a coordinated approach across sectors, Bangladesh can address the heatwave impacts and maintain sustainable growth."

Dhaka has been hit the hardest, with its heat index rising 65 percent higher than the national average. Rapid urbanisation, population growth, and unplanned development, including the large scale loss of green space, are driving the "urban heat island" effect.

The report says Dhaka lost 47 percent of its dense green cover between 1989 and 2020 as land was converted into built-up areas. Urban expansion accelerated after 1999, and by 2020 green spaces had shrunk to 5,600 hectares from 12,745 in 1989.

Between 2001 and 2017, Dhaka's total area grew by 19 percent, but the population rose by nearly 77 percent, sharply intensifying heat exposure. Green spaces, the report notes, are crucial for reducing heat intensity,

efforts. He urged the creation of a comprehensive intervention plan to reduce the health and economic impact of climate change.

### IMPACTS ON HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

The report highlights serious health and productivity consequences of rising temperatures. In summer, cases of diarrhoea and persistent cough nearly double compared to winter.

Nationally, 6 percent of surveyed individuals reported having persistent cough in summer, compared with 3.3 percent in winter. The elderly reported the highest prevalence of persistent cough, followed by those aged 50–65.

Women are disproportionately affected, with higher rates of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Mental health effects are also pronounced. Depression and anxiety rise during hotter months, with depression increasing progressively with age and anxiety peaking among those aged 50–65.

These health effects translate into

significant productivity losses, which are far higher in the hotter months.

"Our analysis shows measurable links between exposure to heat and poorer health outcomes, alongside substantial productivity losses. Like many other countries, Bangladesh faces real risks of lost human capital and productivity," said Iffat Mahmud, senior operations officer at the World Bank and co-author of the report.

The World Bank has called for urgent, coordinated action to protect people, livelihoods, and the economy from escalating heat risks. The report urges stronger national preparedness through a multisectoral approach to heatwave management, upgrades to health systems to treat heat-related illness, and the expansion of urban green spaces.

It also stresses the need for better weather and health data to guide policy and for international public and private financing to help Bangladesh confront the growing impacts of global warming.

FROM PAGE 1 elections until 4:00pm. When they sensed they were losing, they announced a boycott of the polls. From here, we can understand that they don't want fair polls."

Of the 31 political parties, 26 are in favour of introducing the PR system, he said.

Some of the parties want PR in the upper house, some want it in the lower house, while others want it in both houses.

Jamaat-e-Islami wants PR in both houses.

"We told them that we have a special opportunity after 54 years. We, the political parties, are united and sincere

## Jamaat wants PR system

FROM PAGE 1 at its chairperson's Gulshan office on Monday night. Acting chairman Tarique Rahman chaired the meeting virtually from London.

The move comes at a time when the BNP is struggling to rein in its grassroots, as many leaders and activists have been accused of various crimes, including extortion.

The meeting also discussed the decision of Jamaat and other like-minded parties to take to the streets to realise their five-point demand that includes banning the activities of Jatiya Party and the 14-party alliance and holding the election on the basis of the July Charter and under the proportional representation system.

BNP leaders at the meeting termed the demands "illogical" and "delaying tactics".

They believe Jamaat and some other parties are trying to put pressure on the government and BNP, which they think is unlikely to succeed.

The party also worries that Jamaat's programmes may disrupt the electoral process, creating instability and confusion among voters.

According to multiple Standing Committee members, the issue of the PR system for the lower house of parliament never came up for discussion at the National Consensus Commission talks.

Speaking to journalists at his Gulshan residence yesterday, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said, "Demand for the PR system just for the sake of securing a few parliamentary seats goes against national interest and will bring terrible consequences."

"Also, we don't support banning any political party through an executive order; the matter should be decided through judicial proceedings."

"Any political tactic to delay or obstruct the election will be rejected by the people. Because the people have struggled for 16-17 long years for their voting rights, which will only be realised

Appoint religious teachers in primary schools or face demo  
Say speakers at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government's decision to appoint music and dance teachers in primary schools, instead of religious teachers, is "forced and irrelevant", leaders of Islamist political parties and organisations said yesterday.

The seminar, organised by Jatiya Olama Mashayekh Aima Parishad, was held at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh (IDE) auditorium in Dhaka's Kakrail.

Representatives from Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, and Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon attended the programme.

At the event, they said the move is "indirectly connected with an atheistic philosophy to make the future generation faithless and an attempt to destroy schoolchildren".

Emphasising that there is no alternative to religious and moral education, speakers alleged that the current interim government wants to push the nation backwards.

Addressing the event as chief guest, Islami Andolon Bangladesh Ameer (Charmonai Pir) Syed Rezaul Karim said, "When we took religious studies as children, there were separate teachers for Hindus and

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'Personal grudge behind accusing Sheikh Hasina'  
Alleges defence about Mahmudur's statement on BDR carnage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state defence counsel for deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman implicated the former PM and Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh in the 2009 BDR carnage out of personal vendetta.

During cross-examination, defence lawyer Amir Hossain, representing Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal in the crimes against humanity case related to the July uprising, argued that Hasina handled the BDR mutiny "skillfully" and ensured trial of those involved.

He rejected Mahmudur's claim that Hasina harboured resentment towards the army and weakened it, saying instead that she strengthened the force.

Mahmudur responded, "It is not true."

Earlier in the day, Mahmudur concluded the deposition he began on Monday at the

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## Escaping from death towards death'

FROM PAGE 1

that the war in the Palestinian territory was morally, politically and legally intolerable.

"It is absolutely clear that this carnage must stop," United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk told AFP and Reuters.

The UN rights chief stressed that "the people of Gaza cannot sustain yet another intensification of violence and destruction and killings and lack of humanitarian assistance that needs to come."

"I can only think of what it means for women, malnourished children, for people with disabilities, if they are again attacked in this way," he said.

"We see the piling up of war crime after war crime after war crime, of crime against humanity, and potentially even more," Turk said.

"It's for the court to decide whether it's genocide or not, and we see the evidence mounting."

The European Union said the ground assault on Gaza City would worsen an already "catastrophic" humanitarian situation, while Britain said it would bring only "more bloodshed, kill more innocent civilians and endanger the remaining hostages".

Despite the mounting criticism, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday offered robust backing for the offensive and vowed "unwavering support" for Israel.

Rubio's comments came a week before France was set to lead a UN summit in which a number of Western governments, angered by what they see as Israeli intransigence, plan to recognise a Palestinian state.

Yesterday, Luxembourg became the latest European state to announce that it will recognise the State of Palestine.

Gaza health officials reported at least 106 people had been killed yesterday, most of them in Gaza City, as airstrikes struck across the city and tanks advanced.

Where a missile had destroyed two multi-storey residential buildings during the night, people clambered over an immense mound of dislocated concrete to pry out victims, footage obtained by Reuters showed. A woman cried as a small child's body was pulled from the rubble, hastily wrapped in a green blanket and carried away.

Abu Mohammed Hamed said several of his relatives had been wounded or killed, including a cousin whose body was trapped by a concrete block: "We don't know how to take her out. We have

been working on it since 3:00am"

Israel renewed calls on civilians to leave, and columns of Palestinians streamed towards the south and west in donkey carts, rickshaws, heavily laden vehicles or on foot.

"They are destroying residential towers, the pillars of the city, mosques, schools and roads," Abu Tamer, a 70-year-old man making the journey south with his family, told Reuters in a text message. "They are wiping out our memories."

In Brussels, a spokesperson for the EU executive said it would agree today to impose new sanctions on Israel, including suspending certain trade provisions.

Some residents were staying put, too poor to secure a tent and transport or because there was nowhere safe to go.

"It is like escaping from death towards death, so we are not leaving," said Um Mohammad, a woman living in the suburb of Sabra, under aerial and ground fire for days.

The IDF said it estimated 40 percent of people in Gaza City had left. Hamas said 350,000 had left their homes in the eastern parts of the city, heading to displacement shelters in its central or western areas, while another 175,000

people had fled the city altogether, heading south.

Much of Gaza City was laid to waste in the early weeks of the war in 2023, but around 1 million Palestinians had returned there to homes among the ruins. Forcing them out means confining most of Gaza's population to overcrowded encampments along the coast further south, lacking food, medical supplies and space.

The offensive has been launched at a time when the UN last month declared famine in parts of Gaza. Three more Palestinians died of malnutrition and starvation in the past 24 hours, Gaza's health ministry said yesterday, raising total hunger deaths to at least 428. Israel says the extent of hunger has been exaggerated.

Some Israeli military commanders have expressed concern that the Gaza City assault could endanger remaining hostages held by Hamas or be a "death trap" for troops.

Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir, at a meeting Netanyahu convened late on Sunday with security chiefs, urged the prime minister to pursue a ceasefire deal, according to three Israeli officials, two of whom were in the meeting and one of whom was briefed on its details.

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Committed  
to ensuring  
equal rights  
for all citizens

Says Yunus; visits  
Dhakeshwari temple

UNB, Dhaka

Extending advance Durga Puja greetings, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said no government has the right to deny citizens their fundamental constitutional rights.

"We -- the entire nation -- is a broader family. The government is committed to ensuring equal rights and dignity for all citizens," he said, stressing the importance of unity to defeat evil forces.

Prof Yunus visited Dhakeshwari National Temple to witness preparations for the upcoming Durga Puja and exchanged greetings with members of the Hindu community.

The chief adviser, who is scheduled to reach New York on September 22 to attend the UN General Assembly, said the visit gave him peace of mind before leaving Dhaka as he will not be in the country during the festival.

He also urged citizens to remain aware of their

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus visited Dhakeshwari National Temple in Dhaka yesterday to witness preparations for the upcoming Durga Puja and exchanged greetings with members of the Hindu community.

## Govt steps up manpower export to Japan

BSS, Dhaka

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has taken a series of major decisions to expand manpower export to Japan, a market seen as one of the most promising for Bangladeshi workers in the coming years.

The decisions were taken at the

third meeting of the ministry's "Japan Cell" on September 3 with Chief Adviser's Special Envoy on International Affairs Lutfei Siddiqi in the chair, said a press release issued by the Chief Adviser's Press Wing yesterday.

The ministry informed the Chief Adviser's Office in detail about the decisions through an

official letter, the release said.

According to the letter, initiatives should be taken to make Facebook posts, including quotations from Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul and the ambassador to Japan, about the activities of the "Japan Cell"

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Dhaka, Delhi  
should work  
together  
Says Indian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma has said Bangladesh and India should work together to strengthen their interdependencies and transform geographical proximity and growing economic capabilities into new opportunities for mutually rewarding cooperation.

He pointed out that Bangladesh and India, as two important economies of the region, are also important drivers for regional integration under the framework of BIMSTEC, whose secretariat is located in Dhaka and which envisions bridging the growth opportunities of South Asia with Southeast Asia.

The envoy said this as he was invited by the National Defence College of Bangladesh to address the 2025 NDC course participants on Monday, said the High Commission yesterday.

The high commissioner said India will continue to seek a "stable, positive, constructive, forward-looking and mutually

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## PR SYSTEM

'We're against it  
in either houses  
of parliament'  
Says Salahuddin

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said banning any political party through an executive order would be a "dangerous practice" and stressed that such matters must only be decided by courts.

"We do not support banning any party or its activities by executive order. If there are allegations against any political organisation -- such as genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes -- these must be brought to court," he said while talking to reporters at his Gulshan residence.

Salahuddin said only through a judicial process can the fate of a party be determined, and the Election Commission would then be obliged to accept the court verdict.

Referring to demands by Jamaat-e-Islami and some other Islamist parties to ban the Jatiya Party and the 14-party alliance, Salahuddin said such calls should also be addressed through a legal process.

The BNP leader also reminded that in the 2024 election, around 28 registered parties participated. "If bans are sought in the name of fascism or dictatorship, then all 28 parties would need to be banned. Then with whom will the election be held?"

"In this country, those who are now demanding a ban on political parties -- if they later say that they too will not take part in the election, then will there be any election at all? Their purpose behind

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A farmer tends to his cauliflower field at Phulbari village in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi. Farmers are already cultivating winter vegetables including cauliflower and cabbage, hoping to fetch higher prices in the market. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AZAHLA UDDIN

## STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS

42 elected  
unopposed in  
RU hall unions  
CCTV to monitor vote  
counting on election day

NUR AHSAN MRIDUL

A total of 42 candidates have been elected uncontested to hall union bodies of Rajshahi University, as no rival contenders came forward in seven dormitories.

Thirty-nine of these candidates are women.

Among the 42, 29 have secured secretary posts, while 13 will serve as executive members without a single ballot being cast, said Rucusu Chief Election Commissioner Prof F Nazrul Islam.

Although the Rucusu and hall union elections will be held on September 25, election officials on Sunday night declared that candidates standing alone in their races were elected automatically. The final list was published by Chief Returning Officer Prof Md Setaur Rahman.

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1,088 forms  
collected for  
Cucusu, hall polls  
Last day of submission  
today; panels taking shape

SM MAHFUZ AHMED

The distribution of nomination forms for the Chittagong University Central Students' Union (Cucusu) and hall union elections ended yesterday, with 1,088 forms collected over three days.

Of these, 488 were for Cucusu posts and 600 for hall unions.

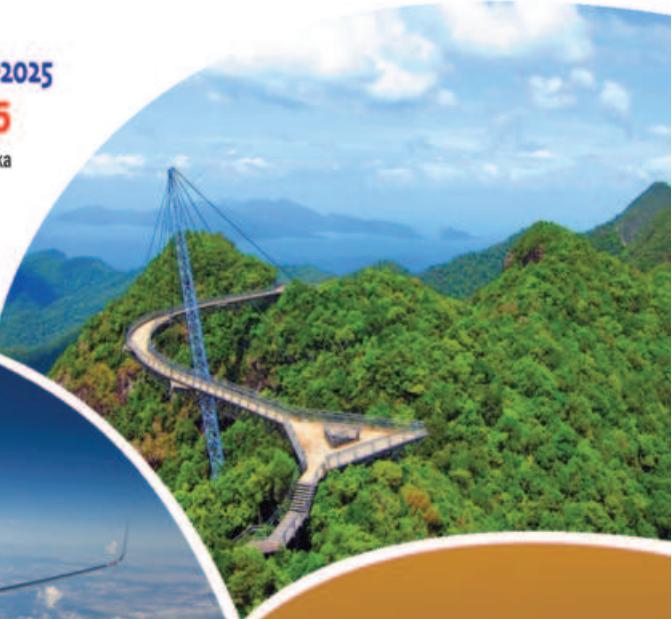
On the final day alone, 391 Cucusu aspirants and 527 hall union hopefuls collected forms, while 19 forms were submitted. The distribution ran from 9:30am to 10:00pm at the CU Election Commission office. However, one form was collected past 10:00pm.

According to the schedule, candidates can submit their nomination forms until September 17 [today], along with their dope test reports. Any candidate

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**Biman**  
12th ASIAN TOURISM FAIR (ATF)-2025  
18-20 September, 2025  
International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB), Dhaka





**Every day Raffle-Draw  
against gate entry ticket:**

1st day round trip couple ticket on  
DHAKA-KATHMANDU-DHAKA

2nd day round trip couple ticket on  
DHAKA-DELHI-DHAKA

3rd day round trip couple ticket on  
DHAKA-GUANGZHOU-DHAKA

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## 'We're against it in either houses of parliament'

FROM PAGE 3  
such demands may be different. Perhaps they want to gain an extra advantage by calling for more parties to be banned," he said.

Salahuddin said the case of the Awami League was completely different, as the party was responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and destroying the country's democratic system.

"We demanded first that the Awami League, as a political party, should be brought to trial. The court will decide whether they can continue in politics or not," Salahuddin said.

On the issue of constitutional reform, he said BNP will not support any "special constitutional order" or "extra-constitutional order" that bypasses Parliament.

"That would create a bad example for the future. Only the Jatiya Sangsad is the proper forum to bring in necessary constitutional amendments."

Salahuddin, however, said their party is open to any lawful and constitutional process agreed upon through discussions.

The BNP leader also warned of a constitutional vacuum if political stability and an elected government are not ensured within the set timeframe. "That vacuum could destroy national unity, open the door to fascism, and even draw in regional or global powers. We cannot take the country in that direction."

Regarding the joint movement by Jamaat-e-Islami and some other Islamic parties demanding proportional

representation and other reforms, Salahuddin made it clear that their party is totally against the PR (proportional representation) system.

"We are against PR everywhere (both the lower and upper house). If any party wants it, they should put it in their manifesto and seek a mandate from the people. If the people support it, only then can they legislate," he said.

The BNP leader also described the three day protest programmes announced by Islamist parties as a possible attempt to derail the polls.

"People have sacrificed too much for the right to vote and for democracy. Any attempt to delay or obstruct the election for narrow political gain will be rejected by the people."

### SC halts

FROM PAGE 5  
Barua, lawyer for the writ petitioners, told The Daily Star.

Deputy Attorney General Khan Ziaur Rahman stated that the chamber judge will hold a hearing on the leave to appeal petition after it is filed and will issue a further order.

Following a writ petition filed by nine academics, teachers, writers, researchers, and environmental activists, the HC on September 10 directed the government not to carry out any construction work in Panthakunja Park and Hatirjheel, or restrict public access to these spots.

The government, on September 11, filed a petition with the Appellate Division seeking a stay on the HC order, stating that it has been carrying out development works for the interest of the people in Panthakunja Park and Hatirjheel, which are public lands.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua appeared for the writ petitioners, while Additional Attorney General Md Arshadur Rauf represented the government.

### Land allocated

FROM PAGE 5  
Iqbal Hossain, former president of Tangail District Bus Coach-Minibus Owners Association.

Mominul Islam Lavlu, general secretary of Tangail District Bus Coach-Minibus Workers Union, said the municipality had declared the old terminal building abandoned 10 years ago.

"It was never rebuilt or renovated and is still in use despite the inconveniences. A modern terminal is badly needed," he added.

Tangail Municipality Administrator Md Shihab Raihan, also deputy director of the Local Government Department in the district, said a tender has been issued to fill the government land allocated for the terminal.

"Once the tender process is completed, work will begin soon," he said.

In the hall elections, indigenous female students at Nawab Faizunnesa Hall declared a full panel, nominating Parmita Chakma for VP, Singnyoi Marma for GS, and May Thui Chit Kheyang for AGS.

Islami Chhatri Sangstha announced a panel for Pritilata Hall, with Misbahul Jannat Tarin as VP candidate, Nadia Sultana for GS, and Afrida Rima for AGS.

This year's Cucusu election, the seventh in the university's history, will be held on October 12.

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Chhatri Adhikar Parishad also formed a panel titled "Cucusu for Rapid Change".

Jatiyatabdhi Chhatri Dal collected nomination forms for its panel but said it may still consider an alliance. Islami Chhatri Shibir also collected forms for its panel, which, according to its president Mohammad Ali, will include female and indigenous students, as well as July Movement activists.

An independent panel has also entered the race, pledging to prioritise frontline participants of the July Movement, including injured students.

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## CITY

SC halts construction at Hatirjheel, Panthakunja

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday upheld, for the time being, a High Court order that barred authorities from carrying out any construction work at Panthakunja Park and the Hatirjheel waterbody in Dhaka.

Chamber Judge Justice Md Rezaul Haque of the Appellate Division of the SC, however, asked the government to file a leave to appeal petition against the HC order.

He passed the order after hearing a government petition filed seeking a stay on the HC order.

"The construction works for the elevated expressway at Panthakunja and Hatirjheel area will remain suspended following the SC chamber judge's order," Advocate Ripan Kumar

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## 2-year-old girl sexually assaulted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A two-year-old girl was sexually assaulted in Sylhet's Moglabaazar area on the night of September 10 after being lured with biscuits, her family has said.

The incident surfaced after the child was taken to a Sylhet hospital on Monday, where doctors confirmed signs of sexual abuse during a preliminary examination.

The family filed a case yesterday with the Moglabaazar Police Station, accusing a 13-year-old boy from the locality. They also alleged police negligence in responding to their emergency call to 999. Officer in Charge Mostafizur Rahman said, "We are trying to arrest the accused..."

## One dies of dengue, 665 get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One dengue patient died while 665 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the latest figures, the total number of dengue-related deaths this year has risen to 156 while the number of reported cases has reached 39,192, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the total infected, 37,180 dengue patients have so far been released from hospitals. Currently, 1,856 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals, 1,145 of whom are from outside Dhaka.

# Nightmare on Khulna-Satkhira highway

Rebuilt at Tk 160cr five years ago, vital route is now a death trap of craters, dust, accidents

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The Khulna-Satkhira highway, one of the most important trade routes in the country's southwest, now resembles a patchwork of broken bricks and gaping craters rather than a road.

In places, it looks more like a flooded paddy field than a national highway. For the thousands who travel this route every day, it has become a nightmare of dust, mud, accidents, and endless suffering.

Around 16,000 vehicles use the road daily, linking Khulna with Satkhira and connecting Mongla seaport and Bhomra land port.

Only five years ago, the 64-kilometre highway was fully reconstructed at a cost of Tk 160 crore. Widened from 18 to 36 feet, the work was completed in June 2020 by contractor Messrs Mozahar Enterprise.

The misery for travellers begins right at Khulna's Zero Point, where craters, broken bricks, and uneven surfaces force vehicles to swerve dangerously. From there to Dumuria's Chuknagar -- a 33-kilometre stretch under Khulna Roads and Highways Department (RHD) -- the road is riddled with hazards.

According to Khulna RHD, the widening and reconstruction began in 2018 and ended in June 2020.

The road was built with an average thickness of three feet, using sand, stone, and other materials. Officials say traffic volume has since increased significantly, particularly with goods transported from Bhomra land port to Dhaka.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

This heavy load, they claim, has worsened the damage.

The Khulna-Satkhira road was long categorised as a regional highway, before being upgraded to national highway status on January 5, 2023. But at the time of its reconstruction, it was still a regional road.

During visits to stretches from Zero Point through Koya Bazar, Gutudia, Dumuria, Karna, Chuknagar, and Atharo Miles, this correspondent found long stretches in ruin.

The five kilometres from Zero Point to Koya were completely broken, riddled with potholes filled with rainwater. From Hogladanga to

Gutudia, the highway alternated between broken patches, scattered stones, and clouds of dust. Only in brief sections did the road appear usable before crumbling again.

Tk 160 crore was spent on the 33-kilometre Khulna portion of the road alone.

Md Shahin Molla, an easy bike driver, said, "Every day rickshaws overturn, people break their arms and legs, and our vehicles are ruined. In rain, it is mud and water; in sun, it is cooking dust. There is no way to travel safely."

Truck driver Rasel Sheikh added, "From Chuknagar to Khulna, the road is a disaster. They are just dumping bricks in the name of repair, but those break down in weeks."

"Travellers avoid this route now. Our income is falling, but expenses are rising because vehicles need constant repairs," said bus transport supervisor Nur Sheikh.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## Govt steps up manpower

FROM PAGE 3  
Co Ltd. through the chief adviser's press secretary, which will be promoted through the chief adviser's official Facebook page.

Regarding the activities of the "Japan Desk" related to the Japanese labour market, the letter said Japan is a potential labour market for Bangladesh.

It is estimated that the working population deficit in Japan could reach 11 million by 2040, as mentioned in a Japan Times report dated March 30, 2024. Japan has the possibility of hiring foreign workers under various visa categories.

At the directive of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, the release said, a comprehensive action plan has been taken to provide training and ensure employment through agreements between the National Business Support Cooperative Federation, Japan Bangla Bridge Recruiting Agency Ltd, and Kaicom Dream Street BD

opportunities, providing language training to employees, digital testing and data collection, ensuring communication and coordination with different agencies in Japan and other foreign offices, and the activities of the ministry's QCS-17 Centre.

About the activities of the "Japan Desk", Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said, "Our manpower export goal is to create new employment opportunities and reduce poverty. Through the 'Japan Desk', we believe we can achieve this target. Having Japanese officials directly involved in the 'Japan Desk' will further boost employment opportunities."

Bangladesh's ambassador to Japan said Japanese authorities are now focusing more on ensuring quality rather than quantity by monitoring the completion of all stages of the Japanese

Language Proficiency Test. For this, mechanical Japanese language training for trainees of the Technical Training Centre by Japanese language trainers and teachers for local technical trainers should also be arranged, the ambassador said.

## Dhaka, Delhi

FROM PAGE 3

beneficial relationship with Bangladesh based on mutual respect and mutual sensitivity, with people of both countries as the main stakeholders in this partnership.

He spoke about India's foreign policy and development strategy, highlighting India's growing engagement with the world to promote international cooperation, reforms of global governance and interests of the Global South, as well as to serve India's quest for inclusive, sustainable and rapid national development.

The high commissioner highlighted the long-term vision of India-Bangladesh relations under India's foreign policy priorities of "Neighbourhood First", "Act East Policy", the MAHASAGAR doctrine, as well as India's Indo-Pacific Vision.

## 42 elected unopposed in RU

FROM PAGE 3  
four posts across four female halls have, however, remained vacant due to the absence of candidates. These posts include the assistant debate and literary affairs secretary at Begum Khaleda Zia Hall, along with one executive member post each at Rokeya Hall, Rahmatunnes Hall and July 36 Hall.

Elsewhere, three candidates from the Sammilito Shikkharthi Parishad were elected unopposed in Tapori Rabeya Hall, while Bijoy 24 Hall saw three Sammilito Shikkharthi Jote candidates secure seats.

At Mannujan Hall, the only uncontested winner was an independent candidate.

Meanwhile, the Rucusu Election Commission has finalised preparations for the Rucusu polls, with 990 booths to be set up across 17 centres in nine academic buildings.

executive member post there remains unfilled.

At Rahmatunnes Hall, nine candidates were elected without contest.

In July 36 Hall, seven candidates were elected unopposed -- six from the Sammilito Shikkharthi Parishad and one from the Chhatra Dal.

The entire counting process will be monitored through CCTV cameras to maintain transparency, he said.

Rucusu CEC Prof Nazrul said results will be announced on election day from Kazi Nazrul Islam Auditorium after vote counting at the Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (Rucusu) treasurer's office.

Earlier in the day, RU Vice-Chancellor Prof Saleh Hasan Naqib inaugurated a media centre in front of the Kazi Nazrul Islam Auditorium to facilitate media coverage.

"Through the media, people will be able to see how the election is conducted and what the atmosphere is like. The media centre has been equipped with internet and other necessary facilities," the RU VC said.

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Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)  
Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Ref: 27.28.8878.101.07.001.19.14.10

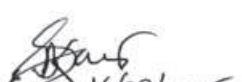
Date: 16/09/2025

## e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	1146294 (Re-Tender of TI-1121878)	Supply of Spare Parts for Different Pumps, Metal Gaskets and Others.	14/09/2025	28/09/2025, 15:45	29/09/2025
2	1138838	Supply of Spare Parts for ST Cooling Tower (Filling Stack, Drift Eliminator, Spray Nozzles)	16/09/2025	12/10/2025, 15:30	13/10/2025
3	1141227	Procurement of HCL and NaOH/25-26.	16/09/2025	08/10/2025, 16:00	09/10/2025

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 System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

  
16/09/2025  
Engr. Brojendra Kumar Sarker  
Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)

Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)  
NWPGLC, Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Memo No. MSR/Chemical Reagent/e-GP/2025-26/2969 Date: 16/09/2025

## e-Tender Notice

An e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following for the FY 2025-2026.

SL. No.	Tender ID No.	Description of work & Package No.	Tender last selling (Date & Time)	Tender closing (Date & Time)	Tender opening (Date & Time)	Estimated cost (Tk)/Remarks
1.	1141082	Procurement of Chemical Reagent Part-1 for FY 2025-26	15-10-2025 10.00	15-10-2025 13.00	15-10-2025 13.00	OTM
2.	1141104	Procurement of Chemical Reagent Part-2 for FY 2025-26	09-10-2025 09.15	09-10-2025 13.00	09-10-2025 13.00	OTM
3.	1141107	Procurement of Chemical Reagent Part-3 for FY 2025-26	12-10-2025 09.30	12-10-2025 13.00	12-10-2025 13.00	OTM

This is 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 System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to banking hour specified in the online tender notice. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) (01762625528-31) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

GD-2020

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Phone: +8802 55067149, Fax: +8802 55067146

E-mail: [nidch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd](mailto:nidch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd)

Committed

FROM PAGE 3

rights. "Keep reminding yourself that you are a citizen of this country, and you must be given the rights and dignity guaranteed by the Constitution."

Prof Yunus said he initially feared missing the joy of Durga Puja celebrations as he would be abroad. "I didn't want to be deprived of this joy, so I came here today," he said.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
SEPTEMBER 17  
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-30 6-09 7-45  
JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 4-45 6-12 8-15  
Source: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION  
GD-2021

## RABNA IN TANGAIL

Land allocated, new bus terminal construction yet to start

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The construction of Tangail's



## Gaza deadliest conflict ever for journos Says UN expert

AFP, Geneva

A UN expert accused Israel Monday of intentionally targeting journalists in a bid to cover up "genocide", warning that the war raging there was the deadliest ever for media workers.

"The way in which journalists are being killed, silenced ... is the cover-up of genocide," Irene Khan, the special rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, told reporters in Geneva.

She said the latest United Nations figure showed that at least 252 Palestinian journalists have been killed in Gaza since Israel's war began on October 7, 2023.

That makes it "the deadliest conflict ever for journalists", Khan said, warning that the number "is of course likely to go up, because every week we hear news of more killings".

Already, "more journalists have been killed in Gaza than in both World



Wars, Vietnam War, wars in Yugoslavia and the war in Afghanistan combined", she said.

By comparison, she said 14 journalists had been killed in Ukraine since Russia began its full scale invasion in early 2022, while the number of journalists killed over two decades of conflict in Afghanistan was in "the dozens".

The expert slammed Israeli "smear campaigns", accusing many of the journalists killed in its strikes of being "terrorist supporters or terrorists themselves" in a bid to "delegitimise and discredit" them and their work.

"So it is not just killing journalists, but (an) attempt is being very clearly made here to kill the story," she charged.

Khan also voiced outrage that Israel has continued to block all access to Gaza for international journalists.

"What is happening in Gaza is extremely unusual," she said. "I cannot recall another situation where a member state of the United Nations has denied access to independent international media for a conflict."

She said a "terrible precedent" is being set for media freedom and demanded international action.

"States must stop Israel before all journalists in Gaza are silenced."



Displaced Palestinians move with their belongings southwards on a road in the Nuseirat refugee camp area in the central Gaza Strip following renewed Israeli evacuation orders for Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'We pulled children out in pieces'

Witnesses tell tales of horror as Israel pummels Gaza City

AFP, Gaza City

As drones buzzed overhead in the morning sun, Palestinians gently lifted from the rubble a blanket holding a body, the latest casualty of Israel's relentless bombardment of Gaza City.

The devastating scene is a familiar one in the Gaza Strip's main urban hub, where Israel has carried out intensifying strikes in the runup to the ground assault it launched yesterday.

Overnight bombing reduced a residential block in the north of the city to mounds of rubble. One man squeezed his head and hand beneath a concrete slab in a desperate search for survivors.

"There were about 50 people inside, including women and children. I don't know why they bombed it," said Abu Abd Zagout, adding that it had housed his uncle's family.

"Why kill children sleeping safely like that, turning them into body parts?" he added.

"We pulled the children out in pieces."

A sea of destruction surrounded the site of the strike, with those aiding the rescue effort dwarfed by mounds of crushed concrete and metal.

One family attempted to load belongings into a car parked on a barely usable debris-strewn road nearby.

"At night they bombed an entire quarter, three houses and the neighbouring houses," said Gaza City resident Mohammed



Al Bardawil.

"All of (the dead) are children, elderly people and women. They are all under the rubble."

Gaza's civil defence agency said at least 12 people, including children, were killed in the strike, with "a large number of civilians" missing under the rubble.

When contacted by AFP, the Israeli military said it would try to look into the report.

Media restrictions in the territory and difficulties in accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify the details and tolls provided by the civil defence agency or the Israeli military.

Israel yesterday said it had launched its ground assault on Gaza City, where it said its troops were moving deeper into the

centre.

The United Nations recently estimated nearly one million people lived in Gaza City and its surroundings, from where Israel has repeatedly warned people to evacuate southwards.

An Israeli military official estimated more than 350,000 people had fled the city ahead of the ground offensive.

Ibrahim Al-Besheiti, a 35-year-old resident of Gaza City's Al-Sabra neighbourhood told AFP the situation was "already catastrophic".

"The sound of aircraft never stops -- quadcopters and warplanes constantly fill the sky. We're extremely afraid, and many people around us have already fled. We don't know what will happen to us," he said.

## KILLING OF CHARLIE KIRK White House vows to fight left-wing 'terror' movement

AFP, Washington

Senior White House official Stephen Miller vowed Monday that the Trump administration would dismantle an alleged "vast domestic terror movement" that he linked to the killing of right-wing activist Charlie Kirk.

Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, made the comments on Kirk's podcast, which Vice President JD Vance hosted on Monday.

"We are going to channel all of the anger that we have over the organised campaign that led to this assassination, to uproot and dismantle these terrorist networks," said Miller. Miller and Vance both alleged the existence of a rising left-wing extremism movement, which they said the administration would now target.

"We are going to use every resource we have at the Department of Justice, Homeland Security and throughout this government to identify, disrupt, dismantle and destroy these networks and make America safe again for the American people," said Miller.

The remarks have sparked alarm among some Trump critics that such a campaign could be used to quash dissent. While Kirk was a vocal conservative, the United States has seen violence targeting members of both political parties in recent years, amid a sharp rise in polarisation and easy access to firearms.

Kirk, a close ally of Trump, was shot Wednesday during a speaking event on a Utah university campus. He was the founder of the influential conservative youth political group Turning Point USA.



Damaged buildings are pictured along the swollen Tamsa river after a cloudburst following heavy rains in the Sahastradhara region of Dehradun, in India's Uttarakhand state yesterday.

## Spain cancels key Israel arms deal Says will boycott Eurovision if Israel takes part

AFP, Madrid

The Spanish government has cancelled a contract worth nearly 700 million euros (\$825 million) for Israeli-designed rocket launchers, according to an official document seen Monday by AFP.

The move comes after Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced last week that his government would "consolidate in law" a ban on military equipment sales or purchases with Israel over its offensive in Gaza.

The contract, awarded to a consortium of Spanish companies, involved the purchase of 12 SILAM rocket launcher systems derived from the PULS platform made by Israeli firm Elbit Systems, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Military Balance.

First reported by local media and the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, the cancellation was formalised on Spain's official public contracts platform on September 9.

Spain will also boycott next year's Eurovision Song Contest if Israel takes part, public broadcaster RTVE said yesterday. While other European nations have threatened to pull out of the contest, Spain is the first of the so-called "big five" nations which provide the most funding for the event to do so.

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the organiser of Eurovision, is set to decide whether Israel will take part in the 2026 edition at its general assembly in December.

## Ozone layer 'healing': UN

AFP, Geneva

The Earth's protective ozone layer is healing and the hole should fully disappear in coming decades, the UN said yesterday, hailing the success of concerted international action.

A fresh report from the UN's World Meteorological Organization highlighted that the ozone hole over the Antarctic was smaller in 2024 than in recent years, in what it said was "welcome scientific news for people's and planetary health".

"Today, the ozone layer is healing," UN chief Antonio Guterres said in the statement.

"This achievement reminds us that when nations heed the warnings of science, progress is possible."

The WMO said as it published its Ozone Bulletin 2024 that the declined depletion "was partially due to naturally occurring atmospheric factors which drive year-to-year fluctuations". But, it stressed that the long-term positive trend witnessed "reflects the success of concerted international action".

The bulletin was issued to mark World Ozone Day and the 40th anniversary of the Vienna Convention, which first recognised stratospheric ozone depletion as a global problem.

That 1975 convention was followed by the Montreal Protocol, signed in 1987, which aimed to phase out ozone-depleting substances found primarily in refrigeration, air conditioning and aerosol sprays.

To date, that agreement has led to the phase-out of over 99 percent of the production and consumption of controlled ozone-depleting substances, the WMO said.

"As a result, the ozone layer is now on track to recover to 1980s levels by the middle of this century, significantly reducing risks of skin cancer, cataracts, and ecosystem damage due to excessive UV exposure," it said.

## Trump may meet Zelensky next week

AFP, Tel Aviv

President Donald Trump will likely meet Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky next week and still hopes to broker a peace deal between Kyiv and Moscow, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday.

Trump has repeatedly threatened sanctions against Russia if President Vladimir Putin does not compromise. But he has not followed through even as Russia ramps up attacks, frustrating Ukraine.

Trump has had "multiple calls with Putin, multiple meetings with Zelensky, including probably next week again in New York", where leaders will gather for the UN General Assembly, Rubio told reporters in Israel.

"He's going to keep trying. If peace is possible, he wants to achieve it," Rubio said. "At some point the president may conclude it's not possible. He's not there yet, but he could get to that point."

The Daily Star | actionaid

# Climate Justice Idea Competition 2025



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

On 23 August 2025, the Daily Star Centre hosted the grand finale of the 4th season of the Climate Justice Idea Competition 2025. The event brought together young innovators, mentors, judges, and partners for a day of urgent conversation and practical hope. The competition was organised by ActionAid Bangladesh and The Daily Star with their civic allies; the finale turned the centre into a busy lab of ideas aimed at protecting people and places most affected by climate impacts.

From 271 submissions across three categories, Green Business, Water Rights, and Energy Transition, there

were nine teams chosen to present their final pitches. Before the finale, each team joined a grooming session where nine mentors offered guidance, helping groups sharpen their plans and strengthen their presentations.

The Daily Star assumed the role of a social doctor, diagnosing problems, pointing to cures, and bringing people, businesses, and policymakers together for action. In previous years, winners of the Green Business and Circular Economy categories have proven their ability to turn ideas into market-ready products that generate income and address local challenges. However,

winners in the Energy Transition category still require stronger policy support, improved financing options, and greater market readiness. The Daily Star remains committed to supporting them by showcasing promising projects to both the private and public sectors.

More than a contest, the finale was a meeting ground where critique met care and urgency met support. Adjudicators raised probing questions, and teams answered with honesty and spirit, showing the real learning that comes when young people are trusted to act. The nine finalists on stage represent many more across the

country: students, entrepreneurs, and community members who refuse to accept the status quo and keep working for safer homes, secure water, and sustainable livelihoods.

As the day closed, the mood was not one of endings but of beginnings. The Daily Star will continue to amplify these ideas through reporting, policy conversations, and multimedia work to help link innovators with mentors, funders, and decision-makers. If today proved anything, it is that with guidance and persistence, local ideas can grow into real answers for climate justice and a safer future for our communities.

Bangladesh is at the forefront of climate change, experiencing its most severe effects. Addressing this crisis requires more than funds, as it demands ideas, policies, and decisive action. Sadly, government processes are slow, and global corporate sectors remain fossil fuel dependent, making change difficult. Through this initiative, we are already creating a data bank of innovative solutions for both the private and public sectors. During our recent visit to Satkhira, we found a severe water crisis where families pay Tk 300-600 for unsafe water, and women often drink only after everyone else. The youth's ideas give us hope. We may not have brought about the change Bangladesh needs, but we are here to support you, combining intergenerational learning with your innovation.



FARAH KABIR  
Country Director,  
ActionAid Bangladesh

The future of the nation, whether seen through the lens of sustainability or prosperity, depends on innovation. Climate change remains a major challenge, yet even without it, the country faces structural issues such as population pressure, limited resources, and systemic inefficiencies. The recurrence of preventable crises reflects a lack of fresh approaches and effective solutions. In this context, youth-led ideas offer a pathway to progress. With hundreds of concepts presented, even a few successful ones have the potential to create significant change. The media has an important role to play in amplifying these solutions through reporting, policy discussions, and multimedia initiatives, ensuring that innovative thinking shapes the direction of national development.

## IDEAS

### The Green Business



Neo kagoj

#### CHAMPION

**Neo kagoj**  
Disposable toilet seat covers

**Team members:** Rouzatul Rumman Farabi, Samira Tasneem, Sumiya Tabassum Prova

The initiative developed a disposable and flushable toilet seat cover named "Hyiegard". It is made from recycled paper pulp. It provides users with a hygienic, no-touch, no-mess toilet experience in public spaces. It eliminates the environmental burden caused by non-flushable, plastic-based alternatives. They offer travel-friendly pocket packs and vending machine units for institutions. The product targets working men and women who spend long hours outside and the project aims to address the severe lack of hygienic public toilet facilities, an issue that disproportionately affects women.

tyre rubber into footwear. They aim to provide eco friendly footwear in Bangladesh and, in the long run, replace the entire production chain with sustainable soles made from tyres. The initiative is targeting low-income and vulnerable communities, focusing on RMG workers and the cobbler community. This initiative not only helps reduce tyre waste but also supports small-scale industries.

**EcoNappy**  
Biodegradable baby diaper

**Team members:** Saimon Bin Sadek, Akib Uddin, Shamim Ahmed

The team has developed an eco-friendly and toxin-free baby diaper named EcoNappy. It is an alternative to traditional baby nappies that is biodegradable, sustainable, and promotes optimal health. The biodegradable diaper uses eco-friendly bags made of PLA (polylactic acid) or cotton, biopolymers, and plant-based elastic components and fasteners. They aim to offer a "pocket-friendly" option for parents in Bangladesh. The product minimises the harmful environmental footprint of conventional nappies while ensuring a safer, chemical-free alternative for babies.

#### OTHER FINALISTS

**SusTire**  
Sustainable footwear

**Team members:** Priyam Chakraborty, Tustee Mazumder, Ahad Bin Azad

The initiative focuses on upcycling and recycling discarded tyres into durable and affordable footwear. Their process involves turning used

### Water Rights



Projmono

#### CHAMPION

**Projmono**  
Multi-dimensional water filter

**Team Members:** Mehrabur Rahaman, Rehin Tazrian, Mohammad Abdul Hasib Zehad

Team Projmono offers Project "Nirmol", a multi-faceted survival system for flood-affected communities to address the lack of safe drinking water during natural disasters. It purifies contaminated water while providing real-time safety alerts.

Nirmol can map water quality and mitigate health risks while enhancing community resilience. Project Nirmol promotes public health and sustainable disaster management. It can also be adapted to different local contexts, providing crucial information in Bengali and creating accessible water quality data.

#### OTHER FINALISTS

**EcoHydra**  
Shocco pen & pro filter

**Team Members:** Maria Tabassum, Arif Jami, Iffat Habib Khan

Team EcoHydra has created "Shocco", a sustainable, low-cost water filter that makes brackish water safe to drink. It

cuts Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) from 6,000 mg/L to a safe 200-400 mg/L. The 7-layer family "Pro Filter" and the portable "Pen Filter" for individuals are offered and built from recycled materials, reflecting a circular economy model.

EcoHydra focuses on community trust, partnering with NGOs and schools. With a strong financial plan and community-first approach, "Shocco" could transform public health and climate resilience across Bangladesh.

**Aqua Rights**  
Aquifer storage recovery

**Team Members:** Debadrata Halder, Md. Hasan Sarker, Mairukh Wardi

Team Aqua Rights' idea centres around combating salinity intrusions in coastal areas. They propose an improved Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) system. This system uses solar-powered pumps and biochar filtration to store rainwater underground, creating a freshwater bubble. It provides a reliable source of clean drinking water and encourages the cultivation of saline-tolerant crops.

### Energy Transition



Team Enermical

#### CHAMPION

**Team Enermical**  
Bio-crude oil

**Team Members:** Arafat Islam Alif, Shahana Alam, Aniruddha Das

Team Enermical offers a hydrothermal liquefaction process for waste management entities. It addresses the challenge of non-recyclable plastic waste. It converts rigid plastics into bio-crude oil. By transforming plastic waste into a usable fuel, this process promotes a circular economy and reduces dependence on fossil fuels. It can also be blended with traditional diesel to create a hybrid fuel.

#### OTHER FINALISTS

**Sonali Urja**  
Community-based power plant

**Team Members:** Rownok Jahan, Malik Waziha Mehrin, Sanjida Akhter

Team Sonali Urja offers the "Gold Hub," a decentralized power plant designed for rural communities and others to address energy shortages and manage agricultural waste. It converts rice husks into electricity and biochar fertiliser. It provides a reliable power source and mitigates the environmental impact of crop

residue. The Gold Hub promotes sustainable development and economic empowerment. It also establishes new revenue streams for farmers through the sale of waste and trains local women as "Urja Didis" to operate the plant, creating skilled employment and fostering community resilience.

**Trendsetters**  
Solar power from waste-to-energy  
**Team Members:** Naushin Nuar, Asman Farhad, and Zannatul Ferdous

Team Trendsetters combines solar power with waste-to-energy technology, creating a "Zero blackout" solution and mitigating the risks of power interruptions. It provides a sustainable method for waste disposal. By integrating dual energy sources, the system promotes grid resilience and energy independence. It can be customised by installing solar panels on the rooftops of government buildings, hospitals, and schools. It creates decentralised power hubs that support essential services. Additionally, its waste-to-energy component helps reduce landfill burden, mitigating environmental pollution and transforming waste into a valuable resource.



Group photograph taken following an enriching grooming session with the mentors.

ADJUDICATION PANEL		
NAME	DESIGNATION	ORGANISATION
Ms. Bitopi Das Chowdhury	Country Head, Corporate Affairs, Brand and Marketing	Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh
Ms. Shamima Akhter	Director of Corporate Affairs, Partnerships and Communications	Unilever Bangladesh Limited
Dr. Malika Muzammil	Programme Specialist, Resilience and Inclusive Growth (RIG) Cluster	UNDP Bangladesh
Dr. Mohammad Assaduzzaman	Senior Policy Advisor- Climate	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh
Mr. Nazmul Ahsan	Lead - Youth and Just Society	ActionAid Bangladesh



The distinguished panel of judges in discussion.



A sneak peak into the mentoring session.

# Climate-smart Entrepreneurship Pathways for Youth-led Change

Young entrepreneurs at the forefront of Bangladesh's response to the climate crisis are urging fundamental reforms to overcome significant bureaucratic, academic, and financial barriers that are preventing their innovative solutions from achieving national scale. The call for a more "enabling ecosystem" was the central theme of a round table discussion titled "Climate-smart Entrepreneurship: Pathways for Youth-led Change." The event, jointly organised by The Daily Star and ActionAid Bangladesh, moved beyond competition awards to create a platform for meaningful dialogue between youth innovators and sector experts, aiming to bridge the gap between innovation and policy.

The discussion convened twelve youth innovators, winners from the past four seasons of the "Our Planet, Our Responsibility" national competition, alongside three experts, including a start-up venture specialist and an INGO representative. The dialogue was structured to capture first-hand insights and steer discussion toward practical pathways for scaling green and socially responsible ventures.



award. But ultimately, when I go to open a bank account for my business in my own country, I face problems because I cannot open one without an NID because I am under 18."

The academic system was cited as another significant barrier. Multiple student entrepreneurs reported a lack of institutional support and flexibility. Sumit Anthony Gomes, a student and innovator, recounted advice from his professors, "When we show our interest in idea generation or entrepreneurship, we expect some flexibility from the teachers about exam and submission deadlines. However, they tell us to prioritise our studies first. This limits our ability to pursue passion and education together."

Young people come up with extraordinary ideas to solve community problems or to address the climate change issue. But to nurture these ideas, adequate mentorship is needed. The critical need for specialised, long-term mentorship was also a recurring point that the entrepreneurs pointed out during the discussion. Rozatul Rumman Farabi, Team Neo kagoj, participant of Climate Justice Idea Competition Season 4, mentioned how her team's promising project on an algae bioreactor stalled. "We couldn't find a mentor specific to our idea. Because of this, our idea was not progressing at all," she explained. For their product, Farabi and her teammates had to go

on in-person field visits to source their materials and machinery. But due to social norms regarding young women travelling alone for business, they had to face hurdles there as well.

Oftentimes, innovators face challenges sourcing equipment for their projects. This can lead to a delay of submission for the project; as a result, investors can lose interest in the project. Golam Rubayed Ratul, participant of Youth-led Action Research on Green and Digital Transformation, owns a startup called Firefly. It deploys drones to revolutionise fire response in Bangladesh. The drones provide live feeds and deploy fireballs, capable of extinguishing 20 square meters of various fire classes. Ratul faced challenges sourcing high-tech components and collaborating with authorities. This underscores the need for government support to foster local technological innovation in emergency response.

Social awareness plays a key role in the adoption of any innovation. Oftentimes, innovators come up with their idea, but they see a slow acceptance rate due to a lack of awareness regarding climate change. Kasshaf Ahmed Mugdho and Jahra Nanziba Purna, co-founders of AlgaeLime paints, participants of Youth-led Action Research on Green and Digital Transformation, faced the same issue with their eco-friendly paint that absorbs carbon dioxide from the

air. They shared, "When we go to the customer segment with our climate-smart product, their initial reaction is to compare our product with established brands, evaluating the similarities and dissimilarities between our product and theirs. We are still developing our product to compete with the brands, but people don't seem to consider the fact that ours is an eco-friendly option, whereas brands often use elements like Lead that harm the environment directly."

While innovators shared their unique challenges regarding their production and market feasibility, a primary challenge remains when implementing their projects in the national climate strategy. Fahim Shahriar, CEO of the venture studio SustainLaunch Labs, stated that competition success does not guarantee policy-level adoption. Shahriar said. He further clarified the government's expectations, "The Government wants the ideas to be sustainable, with long-term feasibility. They expect a product to serve the community for more than five years before adopting it in the national policy strategy."

Even though there is a gap between the government's expectations and the entrepreneurs' performance, entrepreneurs keep facing systemic obstacles. Shafayet Rahman, founder of GreenVista, which develops flood resilience systems, described

administrative delays as a major bottleneck. "Due to the bureaucratic red tape, it takes more time to legalise and formalise a start-up." This type of bureaucratic delay discourages the entrepreneurs from carrying on with their core jobs, which is finding solutions to the problems.

Nazmul Ahsan, Lead Youth and Just Society of ActionAid Bangladesh synthesised the discussion, noting that Bangladesh's innovation ecosystem remains underdeveloped. "We are trapped in this early stage of this ecosystem, and for the last 15 years, we have been in this early stage." He proposed that a collaborative effort between the government and the private sector is needed for an uplift. He also addressed the innovators to play the role of advocates now. "It is time for you to take on that role," Ahsan urged.

While Bangladesh possesses immense innovative potential, it remains largely untapped due to a complex web of systemic barriers. Overcoming administrative bottlenecks, modernising legal frameworks to support youth, fostering flexible academic environments, and providing specialised long-term mentorship are not merely desirable improvements but urgent necessities.

The discussion session was moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, In Charge NGOs and Foreign Missions of The Daily Star.

**Social awareness plays a key role in the adoption of any innovation.**  
**Oftentimes, innovators come up with their idea, but they see a slow acceptance rate due to a lack of awareness regarding climate change.**  
**Kasshaf Ahmed Mugdho and Jahra Nanziba Purna, co-founders of AlgaeLime paints, participants of Youth-led Action Research on Green and Digital Transformation, faced the same issue with their eco-friendly paint that absorbs carbon dioxide from the air.**

Participants in the roundtable discussed their experience, innovative practices, and success stories alongside the challenges they faced with their idea, mentorship and implementation of their project. Legal frameworks were also highlighted as being out of sync with the reality of young innovators. Mahmudul Hasan, participant of Climate Justice Idea Competition of Season 3, developed a biodegradable toothbrush, shared his direct experience. "I went to Mongolia to represent Bangladesh and won an

# I dedicate this award to my wife: FS NAYEEM

**Actor FS Nayeem is currently abroad, fully devoted to caring for his father, who is undergoing medical treatment. As a result, he could not attend The Blender's Choice – The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2024, where he was honoured with the Best Actor (Male) award in the Critics' Choice category for his role in "Kaalpurush".**

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Speaking about the recognition, Nayeem shared his overwhelming emotions after watching the ceremony live through a colleague's phone.

"I am so happy and grateful that you have given me such respect and honoured me with this award. My heartfelt thanks go to Blender's Choice – The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards and to the jury for believing that I could be the Best Actor in the Critics' Choice category."

The actor went on to share the joy and credit with those who have shaped his career.

"First of all, it is Rumana Rashid Ishita, who is the reason I am an actor today! Then Channel i, and of course, Syed Ahmed Shawki and the entire team—Film Syndicate, Aunecem, Shubho bhai, Ripon, and everyone who made it possible for me to work on a new platform differently. I am also grateful to Chorki for giving me the opportunity and to Salzar Rahman, the director of the show. I owe so much to all who have appreciated and supported me

throughout my career."

Nayeem made a special mention of his wife, actress Nadia Ahmed, who stood by him during his intense transformation for the role.

"In 18 months, I gained 45 kgs for this role. During this time, Nadia was extremely scared and worried about my health, in case something might happen to me. But by the grace of the Almighty, I am safe. I dedicate this award to her as well."

Concluding his statement, the actor addressed aspiring talents in the industry with a message of perseverance.

"To any rising actor who is reading this—if you are passionate about your work and truly dedicated, you will definitely reach your goals and leave a mark. Always stay true to your craft."



## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### Exhibition: 'Harmony'

Alliance Française de Dhaka presents **Harmony**, a solo exhibition by visual artist Rubayia Saom Dina at Galerie Zoom. Through her use of form, texture, and colour, Dina explores the balance between inner self and the external world, inviting viewers to reflect on nature, memory, emotion, and the coexistence of contrasting forces.

**DATE:** SATURDAY-TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 13-23, 2025  
**TIME:** 3PM TO 9PM  
**VENUE:** ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE DHAKA



Frank Sinatra's 1955 classic *In the Wee Small Hours* will be reissued on November 14 as part of Blue Note's *Tone Poet Audiophile Vinyl Series*, marking seven decades since its original release. Widely described as Sinatra's "melancholy masterpiece", the record was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1984 and is celebrated as one of the first true concept albums in popular music.

Arranged by Nelson Riddle and produced by Voyle Gilmore, the album captured Sinatra at his most intimate and vulnerable, weaving torch songs and ballads

into a cohesive meditation on loss and longing. Its influence has endured, inspiring generations of musicians—from Linda Ronstadt's 1983 collection *What's New* to countless other mood-driven works.

*In the Wee Small Hours* was Sinatra's third release with Capitol Records, following *Songs for Young Lovers* (later added to the National Recording Registry) and *Swing Easy!* (both 1954). Unlike most albums of the era, it was conceived as a unified body of work rather than a set of singles.

**Sinatra's 'In the Wee Small Hours' returns on vinyl for 70th anniversary**



## Aurthohin announces 'Phoenixer Diary 2' ahead of first US concert tour

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Popular Bangladeshi rock band Aurthohin is set to release its long-awaited album *Phoenixer Diary 2* this October, three years after the release of *Phoenixer Diary*.

The announcement was made through a motion poster on Facebook, where a fiery phoenix symbolised the theme of resilience and rebirth.

The upcoming album marks a significant milestone for the band, led by frontman and bassist Saidus Salehin Khaled Sumon, better known as Bassbaba Sumon. While the number of tracks has not yet been revealed, fans can expect a continuation of Aurthohin's signature style of powerful lyrics and layered instrumental.

Aurthohin's *Phoenixer Diary* was released in 2022, featuring eight tracks after a six-year hiatus largely due to

## HBO Max expands to Bangladesh and Asia Pacific

Warner Bros Discovery will roll out HBO Max in Bangladesh and 13 other Asia Pacific markets on October 15, expanding its global footprint to over 100 countries.

The platform will offer HBO Originals, Max Originals, Warner Bros films, and Discovery content, including *Harry Potter*, *House of the Dragon*, *The Last of Us*, and *Superman*.

A key highlight is the October 27 premiere of *It: Welcome to Derry*, developed by Andy and Barbara Muschietti. Family favourites such as *Adventure Time*, *Tom and Jerry*, and *Looney Tunes* will also feature.

Subscribers can stream across devices with customisable profiles, parental controls, and offline downloads. The service will be available via [hbomax.com](http://hbomax.com), with local partnerships to follow.



## S D Burman's ancestral home to be transformed into a musical museum

The government has announced plans to transform the ancestral home of legendary composer and singer S D Burman in Chartha, Cumilla, into a musical museum and cultural complex.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has assigned the Bangladesh National Museum to lead the project, with feasibility studies already underway. The museum will include archives, research facilities, an open-air stage, and a music education centre.

Born in 1905, Burman's music—deeply influenced by Bhatiali and folk traditions—helped define Indian cinema, a legacy later carried forward by his son R D Burman. Similar initiatives are being considered for the home of Ustad Alauddin Khan.



## Muza, Mumzy Stranger featured on EA SPORTS 'FC 26' global soundtrack

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

EA SPORTS has unveiled the official soundtrack for *FC 26*, highlighting a dynamic mix of international stars and emerging talent. The line-up includes Bangladeshi origin singers Mumzy Stranger and Muza with their track *Ki Kori*, alongside UK-born Bangladeshi artiste Joy Crookes, who returns with *Fade Your Heart*.

"Having the first ever Bangla song on *FC 26* is more than an achievement—it's a dream come true. Growing up playing this game, I never imagined hearing my language represented here. To now be part of this milestone is beyond words. This is for Bangladesh, proof that no dream is too big. Huge shoutout to Mumzy Stranger and the Desi Trill team for making this possible," said Muza.

"*Ki Kori* is more than just a song—it's history. To see a Bengali record become the first ever to hit *FC 26* is a proud moment for me, for our culture, and for the entire South Asian music movement," added Mumzy Stranger.

Other notable names on the soundtrack include Zambia-born, Botswana-raised rapper Sampa The Great, Dutch DJ Woodcamp, Jamaican star Original Koffee, and French hyperpop newcomer Sheng. Newcomers making their debut are Myles Smith with *Gold*, BLACKPINK's Jennie with *Like Jennie*, and footballer Moise Kean—performing as KMB—who becomes the first professional footballer to feature on an EA SPORTS soundtrack with his track *Bombay*.

EA's theme, *The Soundtrack Is Yours*, underscores its celebration of diverse global sounds for the upcoming football title.

Sumon's health struggles, including his battle with cancer and multiple surgeries. Their previous full-length album, *Cancer er Nishikabba* was released in 2016, followed by the single *Karon Tumi Omanush* in 2018.

Alongside the album, Aurthohin has also confirmed their first-ever US concert tour. The six-show tour will begin in Boston on October 25, followed by performances in Virginia (Nov 1), New York (Nov 2), Houston (Nov 14), Dallas (Nov 16), and Indiana (Nov 22). Additional dates may be added. The tour is being organised by Music Bangla and Veritas Events.

The band currently consists of Sumon (vocals and bass), Mark Don (drums), and Ehtesham Ali (guitar). According to the band's management, *Phoenixer Diary 2* will be released ahead of their US tour, making October a landmark month for Aurthohin and their fans worldwide.



Britain's King Charles speaks with Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vincent Nichols, with Prince William, Catherine, Princess of Wales, and Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, next to them, at the end of the Requiem Mass, on the day of the funeral of Britain's Katharine, Duchess of Kent, at Westminster Cathedral in London, Britain, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Direct cargo flights from port city

FROM PAGE 16  
carried overland to India via the Benapole-Petrapole border and then shipped worldwide through the Kolkata and Delhi airports, offered faster service and lower costs than the overstretched Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

In lean seasons, as much as 18 percent of Bangladesh's garment air shipments were done through the route, according to industry estimates.

To reassure the jittery garment exporters, the government announced boosting its air cargo capacity by introducing direct flights from Sylhet and Chattogram.

To that end, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) took up a Tk 70 crore project to upgrade the facilities at the country's second-largest international airport.

Under the project, two Explosive

Detection System (EDS) scanners would be procured, a cold storage facility would be built and a modern cargo shed would be set up.

But the airport is yet to acquire the facilities needed for international cargo shipment due to bureaucratic sluggishness. The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the matter.

The authorities have just initiated the tender process for each of the components.

"The tender process is mandatory under the government's procurement policy, so it is taking time," said a CAAB official asking not to be named.

Cargo operations could start from February next year, said Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil, public relations officer of Shah Amanat International Airport.

A Korean company, Young Wang Group, has already expressed interest

in operating direct cargo flights from Chattogram. The Daily Star has learnt from people informed with the proceedings.

The company has assured the CAAB that it will provide an EDS scanner to improve the airport's security.

In addition, a Chinese airline has also shown interest in launching flights. Initially, two weekly cargo flights will be operated that can serve the European destinations via Uzbekistan.

The government's initiative to launch direct cargo flights from Chattogram will undoubtedly open a new door of opportunities, said Khairul Alam Sujan, vice-president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association.

"But to turn this potential into reality, the airport's infrastructure and cargo handling capacity must be enhanced."

FROM PAGE 1  
income, physical strain, and safety risks while travelling long distances.

Stress linked to the crisis is also fuelling household conflict and greater vulnerability for women and girls.

Poor and landless families, adolescent girls, and female-headed households are heavily affected. Salinity also reduces fish biodiversity, cutting off a vital protein source and worsening anaemia, already widespread among women.

Praan warns that women's needs are still overlooked in most adaptation projects and calls for gender responsive safe water and health policies.

The health toll is staggering. A study by Global Health Action, an open access journal, estimates that around 20 million people in coastal Bangladesh are already affected by salinity in drinking water.

The National Library of Medicine, the world's largest biomedical library, links prolonged exposure to cholera, diarrhoea, skin diseases, malnutrition, and hypertension. Pregnant women and children face heightened risks of complications and stunted growth.

"Rising salinity in southwestern Bangladesh is severely endangering health, particularly of pregnant and breastfeeding women," said Dr Monzur-A-Moula, junior consultant at the Maternal and Child Health Hospital and Training Institute.

"Drinking saline water is directly linked to high blood pressure, which significantly raises the risk of

miscarriage, stillbirth, and premature birth. Lack of clean water is also reducing sanitation and cooking standards, leading to diarrhoea, malnutrition, and worsening anaemia.

"Women must travel long distances to fetch water, risking exhaustion, injury, and harassment. In coastal areas like Satkhira, water salinity has reached 5-15 grams per litre -- far beyond the WHO guideline of 0.5 grams. High blood pressure among pregnant women is at least three times higher than in non-coastal regions."

As health risks mount, the climate crisis is pushing the problem further inland. Bangladesh, with two thirds of its land under five metres above sea level, faces intensifying saline intrusion, particularly in the southwest.

Studies warn that freshwater zones may vanish entirely in Barguna, Jhalakathi, Khulna, and Patuakhali, while over 90 percent of freshwater could be lost in Pirojpur, Bagerhat, and Barisal.

Satkhira's Deputy Commissioner Mostak Ahmed said, "There are areas, including Shyamnagar, where saline levels are out of control. But the government and NGOs are working together to resolve the issue. We're monitoring the condition regularly."

"Very recently, the Climate Change Trust proposed a Tk 45 crore project to combat salinity. If approved, we can work on a larger scale -- restoring government-owned ponds, creating new ones, and implementing desalination methods to ensure safe access for local communities."

Jannatul Mouwa, executive director of Bindu Nari Unnayan Sangathan, said their work focuses on tackling salinity and its disproportionate impact on women. "We are reviving community-based water systems to reduce the burden on women walking miles for safe water. We're repairing broken pond sand filters and urging the government to reclaim public ponds leased for fish farming. We also promote community-level reverse osmosis plants. These women-led efforts ensure safe water, with female committees managing filters and addressing gender-based violence risks."

But experts say stronger measures are needed now. Dr Monzur recommended expanding rainwater harvesting, installing deep tube wells, ensuring safe water supply, strengthening maternal healthcare, and raising awareness about saline water dangers.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, stressed the urgency. "Women's health is suffering severely due to this water crisis. Their physical and reproductive health is deteriorating every day, and they face social consequences. Many are abandoned by their husbands and unable to maintain a healthy conjugal life."

"To overcome this situation, we must first acknowledge the problem. Women need strong infrastructural support, and their participation in climate funds must be ensured. Every year, the government undertakes projects to address this crisis, but women are often overlooked."

## Press ahead with economic reforms

FROM PAGE 16  
steadfast support during one of the most critical junctures in Bangladesh's history.

He recalled their first meeting during the UN General Assembly in New York last year, noting that it played a pivotal role in fostering the country's path to economic recovery.

Reaffirming the interim government's commitment to a "timely and credible" election, Yunus said the polls would be held before the holy month of Ramadan in February. He reiterated that he would return to

his previous field of work following the election.

The two also discussed regional dynamics, including the youth uprising in Nepal and Bangladesh's bid to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). Yunus briefed Georgieva on Bangladesh's infrastructure push, with new port and terminal projects designed to bolster regional integration.

The discussions also centred on bank restructuring and strengthening the National Board of Revenue, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed

told The Daily Star after the meeting. "These reforms will also benefit the political government in the future," he said.

"The support the IMF is giving us as budget support, along with their advice, is very important," Ahmed quoted the chief adviser as saying. "We are working on reforms through teamwork."

Asked to comment on any fresh funding package from the IMF, Ahmed said there were no ongoing negotiations. "Let's finish the current programme first," he said.

## Tigers stay alive

FROM PAGE 16  
Having lost their second match against Sri Lanka by six wickets following an opening match win against Hong Kong, Bangladesh went into this do-or-die clash with four changes, with Saif Hassan, Nurul Hasan and Nasum getting a go for the first time and Taskin Ahmed returning to the playing XI.

While Saif made a handy 28-ball 30

opening the innings after Litton Das opted to bat, it was Tanzid's stroke-filled 31-ball 52 that laid a strong platform for Bangladesh. Although the Tigers failed to fully capitalise on the brisk start, handy contributions from the middle- and lower-order helped them post a challenging total of 154 for five.

Nasum, the left-arm spinner, struck with the first delivery of the innings,

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trapping Sediqullah Atal for a duck and then had Ibrahim Zadran lbw in the fifth over. However, Afghans took full toll of Bangladesh's fifth bowling option -- shared by Saif and Shamim Hossain -- plundering 55 runs in four overs to keep themselves in the game, but timely dismissals from Mustafizur Rahman (3-28), Rishad Hossain (2-18) and Taskin (2-34) eventually saw the men in red and green over the line.

With Hitler was not proper. Mahmudur, however, defended his comparison, insisting that what he said was correct.

Speaking to journalists after the court proceedings, Mahmudur said, "Sheikh Hasina was also a small version of Hitler. She did not have the power Hitler had, yet in mentality she surpassed him. Even Hitler never ordered bodies to be disappeared after killings."

He reiterated that Hasina herself ordered protesters to be killed and their bodies vanished.

Citing a UN fact-finding report on atrocities during the July uprising, he claimed that the report confirmed mass killings and crimes against humanity under the direct orders of then prime minister Hasina, ex-home minister Kamal, and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

He said as a senior citizen of the state it is his duty to provide full cooperation to the tribunal in establishing justice and as part of that cooperation, he is giving the testimony.

Mahmudur's cross examination will continue today.

## Appoint religious teachers

FROM PAGE 2  
and Muslims. We studied under them. But now, you want to appoint music teachers? What will they teach? What are your intentions? You want to make our children disrespectful, unruly, and characterless? We will never tolerate that."

He further warned that if the government fails to appoint religious teachers, the "Islam-loving and religion-loving people" of Bangladesh will be forced to take to the streets.

Jamaat-e-Islami central working committee member Khalilur Rahman Madani said, "We are not rejecting the

national education policy. But its anti-Quran provisions must be amended. Otherwise, the ulema will ensure those changes are enforced. We want religious teachers -- not just for Islam."

Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Ahmad Abdul Qader, referring to the new political situation after the mass uprising, called for a complete overhaul of the education system.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Maulana Jalal Uddin Ahmad termed the absence of religious teachers in primary schools "shameful" in a country where 92 percent of people are Muslims.

He said subjects like music and dance should be optional, while religious education must be compulsory. "This is a conspiracy to make the future generation faithless."

In his address, Jatiya Olama Mashayekh Aima Parishad President Maulana Nurul Huda Faizi said, "There is no alternative to Quranic and religious education. We are determined to root out the corrupt culture of song and dance."

Addressing the government, he warned, "If this issue is not resolved while you are still in office, the result will be counterproductive."

A committed environmental activist, Redford also fought to preserve the

## When water becomes poison

FROM PAGE 1  
income, physical strain, and safety risks while travelling long distances.

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## LDC exit may hurt exports

FROM PAGE 16  
graduation by up to six years.

The country is scheduled to graduate in November next year along with Nepal and Lao PDR.

Businesses said this is not the right time, as the economy faces several challenges, including an economic slowdown, a crisis in the financial sector, and inadequate preparation to compete in the global market after graduation.

Bangladesh currently enjoys duty-free export benefits to its major markets, namely the European Union, but its products will be subject to around a 12 percent tariff in the EU zone.

Rahman said the loss of trade

preferences may hurt garment exports and reduce competitiveness.

"Access to concessional loans and aid will shrink, increasing financial pressure at a time when reserves and debts are already under stress," he said.

"Trade privileges afforded by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), including flexibility on subsidies and medicine patents, will no longer apply, raising the cost of essential medicines."

"Export dependency on one sector makes us vulnerable if competitiveness erodes."

He said urgent steps must be taken to ensure that home-grown businesses are not left vulnerable.

This can include diversifying the

## Trials must not halt after polls

FROM PAGE 16  
to be included in the election manifestos of all political parties," he told journalists at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Responding to questions, the NCP leader said, "After the interim government was formed, our first demand was that this trial process be carried out properly."

"I may be the last witness in Sheikh Hasina's case. After my testimony, the case will proceed to arguments. But this is not the only case. Many others involve mass killings, torture,

enforced disappearances and arrests that occurred across the country. These trials will continue for a long time. That is why we have sought a clear roadmap."

He had come to the ICT to testify in the case against Hasina and two of her top aides for crimes against humanity. However, prosecutors said his testimony was deferred as the cross-examination of Mahmudur Rahman, editor of Amar Desh, is still underway.

On the progress of the tribunal, Nahid said, "The trial process is ongoing and moving toward judgment. But proceedings of other cases must

## Cinema legend Robert Redford

FROM PAGE 16  
away on September 16, 2025, at his home at Sundance in the mountains of Utah -- the place he loved, surrounded by those he loved," Berger said.

The tousled-haired and freckled heartthrob made his breakthrough alongside Paul Newman as the affable outlaw in the hippy Western "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" in 1969.

After 20 years as an actor, he moved behind the camera, becoming an Oscar-winning director and co-founding the Sundance festival for aspiring independent filmmakers.

A household name in English-language cinema in the United States and around the world, Redford won a directing Oscar for his 1980 film "Ordinary People", as well as an honorary award in 2002.

natural landscape and resources of Utah, where he lived.

## Stop the chaos over constituency redesign

Electoral boundary disputes must be resolved peacefully

The ongoing unrest surrounding the Election Commission's constituency boundary changes sends a worrying signal not just about the unchecked deterioration of law and order but also about the prospects for a smooth lead-up to the February election in today's charged atmosphere. On September 4, the EC issued a gazette notification redrawing the boundaries of 46 constituencies across the country. Since then, protests, blockades, and clashes have erupted in several districts, including Bhanga in Faridpur, Bagerhat, and Bera in Pabna. Putting aside the more contentious, RPO related developments, if even technical matters such as this one can trigger violent outbursts, what hope is there of maintaining peace during the election itself?

Bhanga upazila has particularly emerged as an epicentre of the trouble brewing over constituency re-demarcation. Opposing the EC's decision to transfer Algi and Hamirdi unions from Faridpur 4 to Faridpur 2, protesters on Monday stormed and vandalised the Bhanga Upazila Parishad complex, Bhanga Police Station, and several other government offices, torching 11 motorcycles and damaging at least five police vehicles. The unrest also left highways connecting 21 southern districts nearly paralysed. Eyewitnesses said over a thousand people, mostly young, took part in the violence, many with their faces covered and some wearing helmets and carrying sticks and machetes. It was a total mayhem, with police officials trying to control the situation forced to take shelter inside a mosque at one point.

While no major disturbance was reported in Bhanga on Tuesday, the possibility of renewed violence remains. Meanwhile, in Bagerhat, the reduction of four parliamentary seats to three prompted marches, sit-ins, and a continuing siege of the district EC office, with two petitions filed in High Court demanding restoration of the previous constituencies. In Pabna's Bera, protesters on Sunday enforced a hartal and blockade of both road and river routes. This was the latest in a series of protests since the EC designated Santhia as the sole area under Pabna-1 while merging Bera and Sujanagar into Pabna 2. These protests, causing significant disruptions to public life, may continue unless the disputes are resolved.

This issue, we must say, is as much political as it is administrative. While the political appeal for a return to the pre-2008 constituency structure may seem convincing in certain cases, the manner in which local political actors mobilised and provoked violence is totally unacceptable. In this regard, we may recall BNP's reported stance to refrain from protests, demonstrations, and blockades opposing the EC's final gazette, but local BNP units, among other parties, have been heavily involved in some of the incidents, raising doubt about the party's commitment or control over grassroots leaders. We urge political parties to strictly enforce discipline so that any grievance is expressed only through lawful means.

At the same time, the EC must try harder to resolve the disputes through better engagement with the aggrieved parties. While electoral boundary changes are normal given the changes in population and other administrative considerations, the commission must be open to revising them so that any adjustments are understood and accepted by local stakeholders. But under no circumstances can violence be tolerated.

## Make the most out of industrial parks

Resolve the issues to make Barishal BSCIC park fully functional

It is an irony that, amid persistent unemployment, an industrial park with the potential to create 50,000 jobs remains underutilised due to decades of infrastructural neglect. The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) estate in Barishal, one of the earliest industrial parks established in 1960, still lacks an industrial gas connection even after six decades. Built on a 131-acre industrial site, the estate comprises 470 plots: 377 allocated to various businesses, and 93 remaining vacant. Of the allocated plots, only 115 have fully active production units. The rest include shuttered factories or ones with limited, intermittent production.

One reason the estate has failed to attract investors is the high production costs. Many factories rely on cylinder gas, which increases production costs. Additionally, the lack of industrial clustering—geographical proximity of interconnected businesses—fails to attract buyers, according to some factory owners. They also point out that the limited number of flights at Barishal airport—only one per day to and from Dhaka—discourages potential buyers. Additionally, businesses have to travel to Khulna for VAT related matters as the divisional office is still located there.

The neglect of this BSCIC park is evident. Until recently, it lacked basic facilities like boundary walls, security services, and a proper drainage system. Media reports from last year also highlighted the lack of an uninterrupted power supply, a dedicated fire service, and a health centre for workers. After the opening of Padma Bridge, which improved road connectivity with the southern part of the country, there was hope that Barishal BSCIC would finally become a vibrant industrial hub. However, the slow pace of infrastructural development continues to be a barrier for potential investors. As a result, new jobs are not being created, and the government is losing crores in potential revenue.

Underutilisation of industrial parks is not new in Bangladesh. Past political governments invested huge sums to build estates without proper planning or supporting infrastructure. For instance, BSCIC has 82 estates with 11,271 allocated plots and 6,200 production units. However, only 4,704 units are in production, employing roughly six lakh people. Given the land scarcity in Bangladesh, the BSCIC should have a higher utilisation rate. Therefore, we urge the government to prioritise the proper development of existing industrial estates before taking on new projects. Businesses should be given appropriate incentives to relocate to these parks. And infrastructure development should generate long-term economic benefits such as jobs and revenue, not just political capital.

## EDITORIAL

## Women's unpaid work deserves respect and fair recognition

Shaheen Anam  
is executive director at Manusher Jonno Foundation.

SHAHEEN ANAM

As per a recent survey report made public on September 9, in Bangladesh, unpaid work overall was valued at Tk 670,000 crore in 2021, which was equivalent to 18.9 percent of the country's GDP. Of that work, women performed 85 percent—equivalent to Tk 570,000 crore or 16.14 percent of GDP. The survey was conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UN Women Bangladesh, with support from the global Women Count programme and technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The survey, the first ever Household Production Satellite Account (HPSA), drew on data from the Time Use Survey 2021 and Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2022.

The report follows on the pledge made by the current government in the FY2025-26 budget to integrate unpaid labour into official GDP calculations. However, this is the result of many years of advocacy and lobbying by women's and development organisations to monetise women's unpaid work and give it a formal recognition. This is a landmark step in favour of millions of women who perform essential services yet remain out of the national accounting system.

Efforts to ascribe a monetary value to women's unpaid care and household work have been a topic of global discussion over the last few decades. An Oxfam report released in 2019, before the commencement of the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting, states that unpaid work done by women across the globe amounts to \$10 trillion a year—43 times the annual turnover of Apple, the world's biggest company!

In Bangladesh, this effort has been spearheaded by researchers and several organisations, such as Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Oxfam, ActionAid, etc. The earliest recorded comprehensive research on women's

unpaid care work in Bangladesh was conducted by M Hamid in 1996, which used the replacement cost valuation method to estimate its economic value. The pilot Time Use Survey was conducted by the BBS in 2012, followed by the first national Time Use Survey in 2021, supported by UN Women.

Meanwhile, the demand grew for not only ascribing monetary value to unpaid care work but for according it a formal recognition by including it in the national GDP calculations. This demand was met with scepticism by economists who explained that GDP is calculated using the international standard method called System of National Accounts (SNA), and products not marketed cannot be included in it.

Meanwhile, a study conducted in 2014 by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) for MJF revealed that, on an average, a female member of a household undertakes 12.1 non-SNA activities, while the corresponding figure for a male member is only 2.7. Using the replacement method, the study goes on to summarise that if women's unpaid work were to be monetised, it would amount to 2.5 to 2.9 times higher than the income of women received from paid work.

In our search to find a solution to the SNA issue, we came across examples from countries such as Mexico, India and South Africa, which have used satellite accounts to calculate women's unpaid care work and have successfully shown its estimation in their GDP calculations.

The BBS survey is a critical effort to give value to women who work

Shekha poster from "My wife does not work" to "Yes, my wife works; in fact, she works more than I do!" The definition of work is that if you get remuneration, it is work, and if you don't, then it is not work but tasks you are supposed to perform. Who performs these unaccounted, unrecognised tasks? Women, of course. As per the Time Use Survey 2021, women spend 7.3 times more time on unpaid household and care work than men. Despite being essential to the well-being of the family, this work has largely remained invisible and outside national accounts.

However, merely calculating the monetary value of unpaid care and household work is not enough. It is only the first step towards the long journey of achieving equal rights and status of women within households and society. The BBS report has put forward a number of recommendations which should be implemented if women are to gain from this pathbreaking survey. First, an inter-ministerial mechanism should be set up to integrate unpaid work into laws and policies, prioritising care in the national budget for sustained financing as well as regular data collection. Most importantly, however, we have to challenge social norms and practices that undervalue household work and sees it only as "women's work." For this, massive campaigns and dissemination strategies are needed to spread the findings of this report and emphasise the contribution of women in all its dimensions. There is an urgent need to recognise, reduce and redistribute care work to free up women to undertake activities and tasks of their choice.

Finally, we indeed want more and more women to develop skills and enter the job market for employment, and that employment has to ensure a living wage, and be decent and secure. However, the reality in Bangladesh, especially the rural areas, is that millions of women will remain at home, either by choice or compulsion, performing essential services, silently, behind the scene, contributing to the harmony and well-being of their families. It is to those women that we pay our respect, and hope this BBS report, through implementation of its recommendations, will succeed in enhancing their status within their families and contribute to creating a more gender-equal and just society.

## How Bangladesh can build its trade negotiation capabilities

Owais Parray  
is country economic adviser of UNDP Bangladesh.

OWAIS PARRAY

International trade has long transcended the mere exchange of goods and services. It has evolved into a powerful instrument for fostering economic cooperation among nations. Today's global trading system, anchored in agreed rules and regulations, provides a framework for countries to engage in meaningful negotiations at bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels. Trade, and by extension trade negotiations, are not purely commercial endeavours; they are deeply intertwined with domestic socioeconomic and political priorities that must be reconciled with mutually beneficial outcomes with trading partners.

Historically, Bangladesh has benefited from preferential, duty-free access to several markets, which limited the need for extensive trade negotiations.

However, as the country prepares to graduate from the group of least developed countries (LDCs) in 2026, there is growing urgency to secure preferential trade agreements, diversify the export basket, and enhance trade competitiveness.

Although preferential treatment will continue for three years after graduation, Bangladesh must proactively pursue trade agreements such as industrial policies in developing countries, that ensure favourable market access while also strengthening its export competitiveness.

The next generation of trade policies must aim to expand Bangladesh's footprint in global value chains and gradually phase out domestic protective measures. Crafting such policies is a demanding exercise—requiring rigorous economic, financial,

and social analysis, clarity of purpose, and a careful balance between technocratic precision and factors of political economy. Trade policy must reflect the realities of a nearly half-trillion-dollar economy, vastly different from the early 1990s when ready-made garment exports started to rise.

Currently, the domestic trade and tariff discourse in Bangladesh remains narrowly focused on immediate concerns, such as tariff reductions and public revenue impacts. While these issues are valid, the policy calculus must also account for potential spillovers—such as financial inflows, technology transfer, and increased competition—that can benefit domestic industries.

Moreover, comparative and competitive advantage analysis should be forward-looking with a view to structural changes in the economy.

All these considerations can shape the contours of future trade negotiations.

Bangladesh must also contend with a resurgence of industrial policies being adopted by emerging and high-income countries to boost competitiveness and advance strategic interests. Although not conclusive, there is evidence that well-designed protection measures, such as industrial policies in developing countries, can be effective, provided these are targeted and time-bound.

A lesson from this growing body of evidence is that industrial policies have a role to play. But these measures should be limited to building domestic productive capabilities, clinically targeted, closely tied to performance, and with a clear exit strategy.

Looking ahead, there is a need

to develop human capital and institutional frameworks that nurture trade negotiation expertise and serve as repositories of knowledge accessible to policymakers for decision-making. Building trade negotiation capabilities requires sustained investment in training and mentoring, equipping future negotiators with a solid grounding in trade theory and

**Looking ahead, there is a need to develop human capital and institutional frameworks that nurture trade negotiation expertise and serve as repositories of knowledge accessible to policymakers for decision-making. Building trade negotiation capabilities requires sustained investment in training and mentoring, equipping future negotiators with a solid grounding in trade theory and**

practice. Trade negotiations demand a mastery of complex rules and a deep understanding of products and services. This is especially relevant given the rise of intermediate goods in global supply chains and the growing importance of services, including digital services that cross borders in virtual space.

Exporters must also meet decarbonisation targets and comply with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards. These, for example, include the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP+). International buyers are increasingly demanding products that meet environmental

and labour standards and are aligned with circular economy guidelines. Technical proficiency in trade analytics alone is not enough. Negotiators must also possess interpersonal skills, including cultural sensitivity, as trade talks often involve engagement with counterparts from diverse backgrounds. Understanding cultural norms and values can be pivotal in building rapport and trust.

Given the complexity of trade agreements, negotiators also require robust support systems to crystallise issues and priorities that can underpin strategy and tactics. The support should come from multidisciplinary teams capable of conducting economic and social cost-benefit scanning. There are analytical tools available that can be customised and used to reduce the burden of extensive research and modelling. As Bangladesh explores new export destinations and deepens its economic diplomacy, trade negotiation capabilities must be treated as a long-term national endeavour that demands investment not only in human skills but also in institutional mechanisms to internalise learning.

A two-layered system comprising a national pool of trade experts and negotiators with representatives from government, non-state actors, such as think tanks, the private sector, and civil society, can serve as knowledge bank. The national pool should have a strong interface with the Ministry of Commerce, which typically leads trade negotiations on behalf of the government. The trade negotiators' pool should receive strategic backstopping through an organisational mechanism, ensuring continuity, coordination, and institutional memory. With the formal launch of the Trade Negotiators Pool, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UK government, Bangladesh is already taking steps to institutionalise national capabilities. This momentous must be sustained.

# Debunking the Starlink paradox in Bangladesh

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is senior programme officer at ARTICLE 19's Global Team Digital working at the intersection of technology and human rights, advocating for rights respecting policies and standards.

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is executive director at Tech Global Institute where her work focuses on rights respecting policies and legislations on privacy and data protection, and artificial intelligence.

**DINAH VAN DER GEEST and SABHANAZ RASHID DIYA**

In May 2025, Starlink deployed its satellite internet services in Bangladesh. This moment was hailed by the interim government, led by Prof Muhammed Yunus, as a major step towards the realisation and promotion of its economic development vision for the country by bridging the digital divide.

An equally important part of the narrative was the promise of an uninterrupted internet connection, given that Bangladesh experienced at least 17 instances of internet shutdowns under the past regime as part of its attempts to silence dissent and provide a cover for violence. The narratives were straightforward and politically convenient for a government seeking legitimacy and under pressure to demonstrate progress.

As the celebratory narrative for Starlink fades, the underlying reality comes into sharper focus, one that raises more questions than it answers. Who will actually benefit from this service? How does the introduction of Starlink sit with concerns about digital sovereignty? To begin answering these questions, we must first challenge some of the prevailing assumptions.

**The promise of a digital leapfrog**  
Starlink's launch is marked by the vision for "digital leapfrogging" that has gained particular traction with the public under the interim government. However, at the heart of the issue is a simple but unavoidable fact: Starlink is prohibitively expensive for those whom the leapfrogging rhetoric claims to serve, particularly rural and low-income urban communities in Bangladesh.

And the financial cost is only a part of the whole story. Equitable access is further undermined by barriers in payment infrastructure. Starlink requires users to

access international financial systems when just over 43 percent of Bangladeshis are currently banked. Strict capital controls and limited cross-border transaction mechanisms form yet another exclusionary layer.

This accessibility and affordability gap raises serious questions about whom the satellite internet is really for. While the narrative of "connecting the unconnected" is frequently invoked, the economic barriers suggest that high-speed satellite access can become yet another luxury good in an already unequal digital landscape.

#### Anti-competition concerns

An important but overlooked consequence of Starlink's deployment and its technological advantage is the impact its entry may have on the market. Local internet service providers (ISPs) may struggle to compete with a well-resourced global provider that may not be subject to strict domestic regulatory frameworks that telecommunication providers are obligated to follow. This development could potentially lead to a concentration of bigger industry actors. For example, Starlink equipment has been set up in 96 percent of municipalities in the Amazon in Brazil, giving it monopoly over the region's internet and information access. Ultimately, such a market shift undermines users' right to access information through affordable and reliable internet services, and highlights the need for regulation to balance innovation with fair competition.

The interim government not only fast-tracked Starlink's licensing application but also actively supported its launch campaign. This blurs the line between public and private interests, raising concerns about the government's ability to hold Starlink accountable. It also sets a troubling precedent: other providers may not receive equal treatment, and the state risks becoming a public relations arm for private technology firms.

Meaningful connectivity is dependent on maintaining a plural and interoperable ecosystem where users have choices in the types of services available to them. It's not just about having internet access, it also means not being reliant on any single company's business model. Instead, adopting and promoting a range of internet services with government investment in the development

of local infrastructure can build a more competitive and resilient market and digital ecosystem.

#### Can Starlink solve internet shutdowns?

Another key narrative is the positioning of Starlink as a form of "resilience," a critical safeguard against potential future internet shutdowns. This framing is of particular importance given the context and history of internet shutdowns in Bangladesh—most recently, the nationwide blackout during the 2024 student-led mass uprising. However, it is important to state that Starlink's ability to provide internet services in the country is still fundamentally tied to government regulations and licensing. Starlink was able

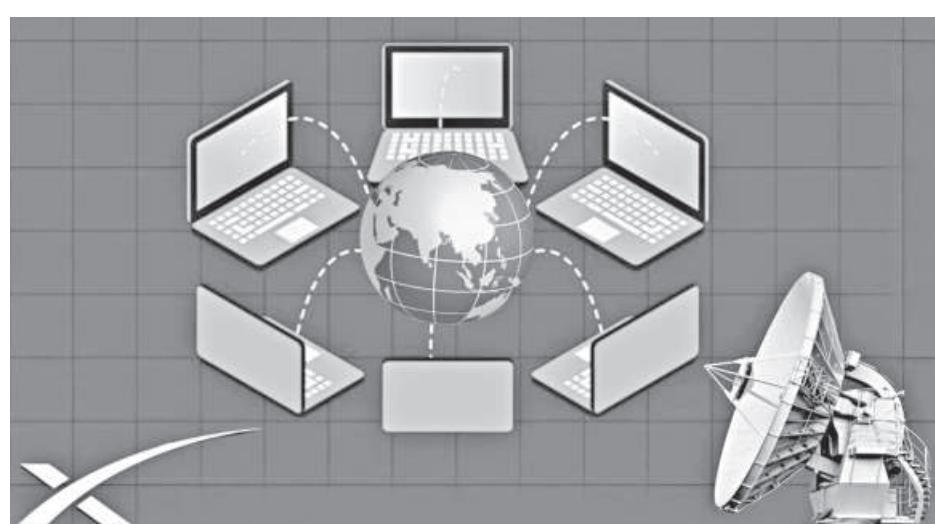
known as the spectrum. Since governments regulate spectrum, they ultimately retain control over these frequencies and, in turn, the deployment of satellite internet services such as Starlink. In other words, despite the promise of technical resilience, Starlink's deployment remains subject to government intervention, which can restrict or block the permission to use the necessary spectrum.

Additionally, despite being satellite-based, Starlink still depends on physical infrastructure. Currently, Bangladesh is working with several companies on establishing ground stations across the country to support Starlink's deployment. And while progress is underway, developing

ability to control its own digital fate; it chips away at its very core, offering only the illusion of autonomy while deepening external dependency.

Relying on a foreign-operated satellite service for critical internet connectivity effectively transfers a portion of Bangladesh's digital backbone to an external private actor, whose commercial and geopolitical interests may at some point diverge from the country's priorities. The 2022 Ukraine example, in which Elon Musk unilaterally decided to restrict Starlink's satellite coverage over Occupied Crimea, highlights the risks of technological dependency that Bangladesh may have to confront in the future, especially amid rising geopolitical tensions and the market concentration of technology companies. If critical decisions about access to internet connectivity—and in this case, about satellites—can be influenced by the personal decisions of an individual, then the myth of sovereignty quickly turns into a liability. Without robust legal safeguards, public oversight, and investment in local infrastructure, Bangladesh may simply be exchanging one form of dependency for another.

What we see is the contradiction between the promises Starlink offers and the reality it delivers—a paradox. The deployment of Starlink in Bangladesh promises universal access to bridge the digital divide, but the reality is that its high costs and reliance on international payment systems make it largely inaccessible and unaffordable to the people it should serve the most. It promises resilience against shutdowns, but the reality is that through licensing, regulation on spectrum, and mandatory routing through local gateways, it remains subject to the type of centralised government control we have witnessed in the past. Finally, with the deployment of Starlink comes the promise of digital sovereignty, but when the reality comes into sharper focus, we see that we risk outsourcing critical infrastructure to a foreign private company and creating dependencies. If the interim government wants to leverage Starlink, it must develop specific economic, legal and regulatory solutions that actively navigate the complex trade-offs this technology entails in the context of Bangladesh.



VISUAL: MAHIYA TABASSUM

to launch its services after receiving a 10-year operating licence from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). Although the contents of the licence are not public, it reportedly includes strict requirements such as routing internet traffic through local gateways and connecting to government-approved international internet gateways (IIGs). What this means is that by making Starlink route its traffic through local gateways, control remains centralised with the government.

Importantly, in order to operate in Bangladesh, Starlink must also obtain permission to use specific radio frequencies,

the necessary supporting infrastructure remains a significant challenge.

What we see is that satellite internet offers the illusion of resilience without any guarantees. It becomes a narrative of progress that lacks the institutional and technical foundations necessary to sustain access and accountability during moments of crisis.

#### The myth of digital sovereignty

Starlink's arrival in Bangladesh is often hailed as a leap towards "digital sovereignty," but the reality is that it demands a costly trade, exchanging national agency for access. This trade-off doesn't strengthen the country's

## Reimagining education for gender equity

**Dr Rubana Huq**  
is vice chancellor of Asian University for Women and former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

**Sarah Rogerson**  
is director of English & School Education at British Council.

**RUBANA HUQ and SARAH ROGERSON**

In developing countries of the Global South like Bangladesh, education is a multiplier that can change the trajectory of individual lives and entire communities. For girls and young women, especially in under-resourced areas, it is the most powerful tool to break the intergenerational cycles of poverty and social exclusion. Education that is values-driven, holistic, and grounded in local realities can radically shift what girls believe is possible for themselves. It must go beyond test scores to nurture leadership, confidence, and empathy. This is the kind of education that leads to genuine empowerment, and it must begin early and extend far.

Yet the current reality tells a sobering story.

According to a recent report by the Centre for Policy Dialogue, 61.7 percent of the youth of Bangladesh who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) are women. It reflects the systemic barriers that continue to limit women's full participation in society. We have the tools to turn this situation around. For that, education, particularly English education that opens up global access, is key. Communication in English is a skill that unlocks confidence, employability, and international opportunity. When a girl in Kurigram learns to communicate in English, she isn't just memorising the rules of a language; rather, she is beginning to see herself as a participant in a wider world, a world where she can lead.

We often see how women's leadership is underestimated, boxed in by expectations, or treated as an exception. In boardrooms and classrooms alike, women are still required to prove themselves repeatedly. But the truth is, when we give women the tools to lead, they do it often with greater resilience, collaboration, and vision.

This shift in mindset must start with how and where we educate. In many rural areas, formal education remains inaccessible or insufficient for girls. This is where non-

traditional, peer-led learning models can make a powerful difference. Initiatives like the British Council's English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) clubs are helping to bridge the gaps, especially in places where dropout rates are high and role models

#### The connection between education and economic empowerment cannot be overstated. Educated women can more easily contribute to the economy, support their families, and drive innovation in their communities. They are also better equipped to navigate and lead in times of crisis.

are few. In these safe, girls-focused spaces, learning takes on new meaning—girls practise English, grow in confidence, and learn to advocate for themselves and their communities.

The connection between education

and economic empowerment cannot be overstated. Educated women can more easily contribute to the economy, support their families, and drive innovation in their communities. They are also better equipped to navigate and lead in times of crisis.

By investing in girls' education now, we lay the foundation for an inclusive, equitable economy in the future. English language skills, digital literacy, and soft skills like critical thinking and collaboration must be integral to this journey.

The challenges faced by rural girls are often different from those in urban areas—less access to resources, fewer role models, and more deeply entrenched gender norms. Programmes like EDGE demonstrate how localised, stakeholder-driven approaches can create real impact. Rather than imposing solutions from the top down, we must listen, adapt, and co-create with local communities.

What's needed now is stronger collaboration across sectors. Government, NGOs, private institutions, and academia must come together to scale what works and close

the gaps in access, quality, and opportunity. This is not a task for any one group—it is a collective national responsibility.

Finally, we must reimagine the role of the educator not as someone who provides answers, but as someone who sparks curiosity, critical thinking, and empathy. Teachers are change makers, especially when they come from the communities they serve. Investing in women educators from marginalised backgrounds can multiply the impact of our efforts, providing both instruction and inspiration.

Quality education that nurtures leadership, critical thinking, and confidence is not just a human right; it's a foundational step towards gender equity. We should help create and scale educational environments where girls can realise their potential, especially in communities where opportunity remains out of reach.

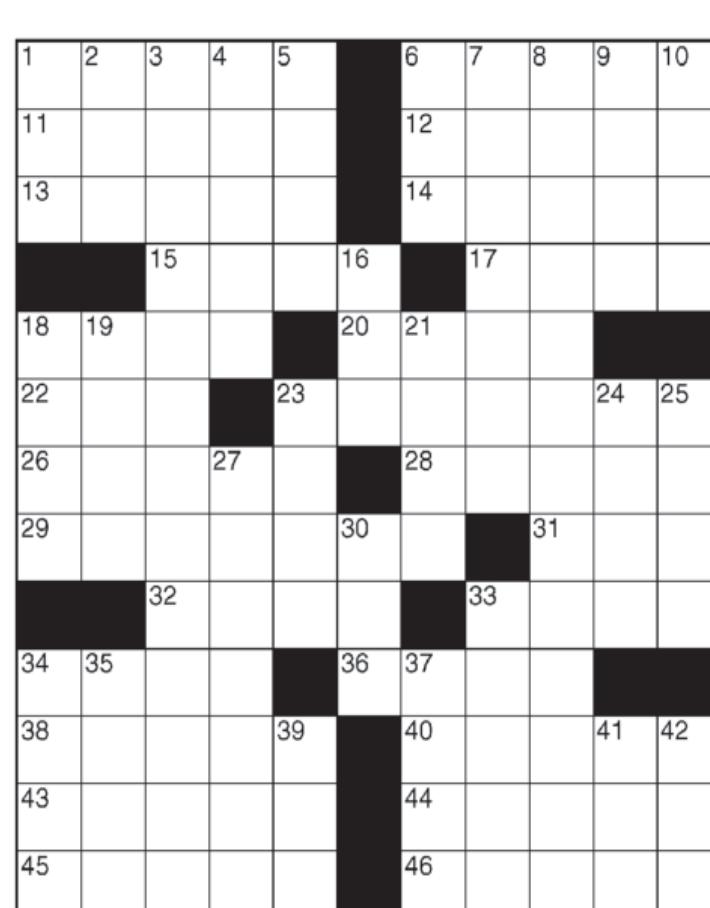
The stories of the girls we work with are powerful reminders of what is possible when we reimagine education as a tool not just for learning, but for liberation. They show us that with the right skills, the right support, and the right spaces, girls can and will lead. All they need is a chance. And it is our shared responsibility to make sure they get it.

**ACROSS**

- Easy wins
- Musical speeds
- Find charming
- Poor sport's cry
- TV, radio, etc.
- Clinic worker
- Poet Pound
- First person
- Course cry
- Past due
- Hold title to
- Largest of the Balearics
- Coarse fellow
- Knight wear
- Multi-screen theater
- Laugh sound
- Flower feature
- Recipe amts.
- Calendar reading
- Blinds piece
- Dwelling
- Bumbling
- Deserve
- Be of one mind
- "Bye Bye Bye" band
- Fit for a king

**DOWN**

- Flock father
- Praiseful poem
- Study of the past few centuries
- Trophy, e.g.
- Blacken
- Light metal
- Earth circler
- Agatha Christie specialty
- Tuscan city
- Article
- According to 18 Indy 500 winner A.J.
- Man - (famed racehorse)
- Trojan War hero
- Lawn burrower
- Brilliant act
- Sacred chests
- Joined a mailing list
- Print units
- Lively dance
- Consign to failure
- Fivers
- Tale teller
- List abbr.
- Pod unit
- Fit for a king



#### SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

M	I	C	E		A	S	T	U	T	E
I	D	O	L		P	E	A	N	U	T
S	E	N	D		S	T	R	O	B	E
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B	A	S	T	E		U	S	E	L	C
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ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

# Dhaka's wetlands and Nature-based Solutions for sustainable future

M. SHAWKAT ALAM, PAUL GOVIND

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) is a term that is increasingly gaining prominence in global climate adaptation discourse. NbS unify existing ecosystem-based strategies emphasising the use of natural processes to manage environmental risks. By protecting, restoring, and integrating natural ecosystems into the fabric of the city, NbS promises not only climate resilience but also social, economic and other environmental co-benefits. However, the critical question for Dhaka (and for many rapidly urbanising cities in the Global South) is whether our planning laws and urban governance frameworks meaningfully support the implementation of NbS?

Dhaka's geography places it at the confluence of multiple flood risks including monsoon rainfall, riverine floods, and drainage congestion. Its urban wetlands, which once acted as buffers absorbing excess rainwater and mitigating floods, have declined by more than 75% since the 1960s. These wetlands are not just passive spaces but living infrastructure. They store stormwater, replenish groundwater, cool microclimates, and provide habitats for biodiversity all critical services in warming, water-stressed future. Land use continues to degrade and, in some cases, remove wetlands that fulfil a necessary planetary function of absorbing water thereby helping to reduce the major impacts of flooding. The biodiversity and ecosystems of wetlands have tremendous ecological value that is instrumental to sustainable development and livelihoods. Yet, in Dhaka, NbS remains more as a trendy policy term than as a guiding urban planning principle.

Notably, Bangladesh has taken significant steps toward integrating ecosystem values into its national development planning, including Five Year Plans (FYP), the National Adaptation Plan to Combat Climate Adaptation (NAP), the Perspective Plan 2041 (PP2041) and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP). These policies consider concepts related to NbS to varying degrees, albeit at a high level. The 8<sup>th</sup> FYP, for example, includes NbS through a solitary reference, indicating that the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) will give priorities in Nature Based Solutions (NbS) and Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EbA). However, the 8<sup>th</sup> FYP leaves NbS undefined and without any guidance in terms of implementation. Similarly, NAP operates to facilitate the integration of climate change adaptation, into relevant new and existing policies, programmes and activities in a coherent manner, in particular development planning processes and strategies.

On the other hand, the 8<sup>th</sup> FYP, connected to the PP2041, includes six core themes, including 'a sustainable development pathway resilient to disaster and climate change.' This is expanded to include a sustainable climate

migration and the need for responsible protection of wetlands in Dhaka that is resilient to disaster and climate change. It also entails sustainable use of natural resources and management of inevitable urbanisation transition. The PP2041 reiterates the need for balance under the vision for achieving safe, climate resilient and prosperous delta. However, there is also a sobering admission that the overall implementation of existing environmental laws and regulations remains a difficult challenge.

The BDP provides the strongest linkage between climate change adaptation, biodiversity, and planning by promoting nature-based management strategies rather than prioritising short term, infrastructure-based solutions. Examples of these practices include the provision for greater flood resilient habitats, natural reservoir restoration and conservation. The BDP also separately mentions the need to manage flood risk and the conservation of ecosystems separately

**Looking from afar, a cultural change is required at the local level that acknowledges the economic benefits associated with ecosystem services and Nature-based Solutions, rather than the sustained, continual deference to the immediate economic returns associated with private property interests and zoning land for purely commercial and residential purposes.**

in Goals 1 and 4. Flooding and subsequent waterlogging are identified as two of the most prominent water related challenges for development. However, the situation is worsened by unplanned urbanisation in illegally encroached floodplains, ineffective drainage infrastructure, encroachment on wetlands in urban and rural areas.

The BDP similarly emphasises strategies such as increasing drainage capacity, reducing flood risk and water logging in urban areas and conserving urban wetlands to strengthen adaptive capacity. Land use planning is integral part of BDP, with the Urban Areas Hotspot highlighting that uncontrolled growth and haphazard development are closely linked to water-related issues. The BDP recognises the relevance of planning law to achieve this strategy, with the BDP calling for the formulation of a *Spatial Planning and Land Resource Management Act*.

Analysing the FYP, NAP, PP2041 and the BDP against Smith and others' four enabling mechanisms for greater NbS implementation, it is evident that Bangladeshi development policy does indicate a greater awareness of ecosystem-orientated interventions, including NbS. However, a synthesis of NbS practices has identified that the lack of guidance documentation, including information on how to measure effectiveness that can be utilised by law and policy makers. To date, the Bangladesh Planning Commission has led a consultation on how to include NbS into development planning, which recommended greater incorporation of NbS into the FYPs, Bangladesh's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC framework, and greater consideration of NbS in government project design guidelines. However, the realisation of greater NbS consideration as development projects requires greater local community participation and engagement that can impart local knowledge and effectively translate the high level NbS concepts into practical guidance. As such, there continues to be a disconnect between high level policy ideas and implementation of NbS at localised levels and contexts.

However, there is no need to start from the scratch. The Hatirjheel project offers valuable lessons for future NbS implementation in Bangladesh. The design of the area demonstrates a policy shift by allowing ecosystem functions to occur and creating urban spaces that coexist with wetlands. However, limited consultation with residents, planners, and waste officials resulted in the inability to identify the lack of waste treatment as potential risks, leading to pollution. Moreover, opaque governance and political influence of illegal occupants enabled encroachment, undermining the original 'blue network' vision.

Whilst the decision from the High Court has reinforced the land tenure held by the DNCC, the real test is whether local planning authorities and regulators can enforce this ruling from the High Court given the lack of administrative capacity and the political environment and influence that illegal occupants hold over local administrative bodies. Looking from afar, a cultural change is required at the local level that acknowledges the economic benefits associated with ecosystem services and NbS, rather than the sustained, continual deference to the immediate economic returns associated with private property interests and zoning land for purely commercial and residential purposes.

*The authors serve as faculty members at Macquarie Law School, Macquarie University.*

COURT CORRIDOR

## Admissibility of recorded statements without examining the makers

RAJIB KUMAR DEB

In Bangladesh's criminal justice system, the admissibility of recorded materials e.g., First Information Reports (FIR), witness statements, confessions, medical reports, and post-mortem findings without examining their preparers is a nuanced legal issue shaped by statutory provisions, judicial interpretations, and procedural safeguards. The governing legal framework primarily comprises the Evidence Act, 1872, and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1898. Courts must balance the importance of admitting crucial evidence, with the accused's right to cross-examination, ensuring compliance with both substantive and procedural requirements.

At the heart of this debate lies a fundamental principle of criminal procedural law—the burden squarely rests on the prosecution to produce all material witnesses, including the officers who recorded statements or prepared reports, before the court. Failure to do so not only weakens the evidentiary foundation of the prosecution's case and may, in appropriate circumstances, result in the acquittal of the accused. The following are instances where such statements may be admitted without examining their maker/s and the conditions to be fulfilled.

To begin with, in General Registrar (GR) cases, which usually commences with the filing of the FIR at the police station, the absence of the informant

**Where it is shown that genuine efforts were made to produce the recording officer, the document appears lawful and authentic, is corroborated by other credible evidence, and the defence suffers no material prejudice, the court may admit such documents in the interest of justice and procedural efficiency without direct examination of its maker.**

(ejaharkari) does not inherently affect the admissibility of the ejahar. The condition is that it is filed by a public servant in accordance with legal procedure. Notably, FIRs are not substantive evidence, and they may be used only for corroboration or contradiction under sections 145 and 157 of the Evidence Act, 1872. Similarly, under section 476 of the CrPC, complaints initiated by a Presiding Officer (PO) regarding offences such as perjury or fabrication of evidence are deemed official acts, and the PO's personal appearance as a witness during the trial is not required.

In case of a confessional statement under Section 164 of the CrPC, the Court may presume its genuineness, if it is found to be duly recorded in compliance with sections 164 and 364 of the CrPC, rules 74, 75, and 79 of the Criminal Rules and Orders, 2009, and conforms to Form No. (M) 84. At the same time, it must adhere to the requirements of sections 24 to 30 of the Evidence Act, 1872. In such circumstances, examination of the recording Magistrate is not mandatory, and the confessional statement may be accepted as genuine and admissible evidence.

On the other hand, sections 509, 509A, and 510 of the CrPC allow courts to admit medical, post-mortem, and chemical examination reports without requiring the testimony of their authors, when their

authors are deceased or unavailable. Such documents are considered public records under section 74(1) of the Evidence Act, 1872 and may be proved under section 78 of the same, subject to compliance with procedural safeguards. Apart from these, there are well-established exceptions where the presence of the recording officer is not mandatory e.g., dying declarations, statements against interest, business records exception, *res gestae*, public documents, cases where the maker is deceased, missing, or otherwise unavailable.

Contrarily, the law obliges examination of a witness in some instances. Section 60 of the Evidence Act, 1872, for example, excludes hearsay evidence unless it falls under a recognised exception or the declarant is available for cross-examination. This hearsay rule is particularly vital in criminal proceedings where the accused's right to confrontation is protected. Additionally, the prosecution must satisfy the requirement of authentication (that the documentary evidence is genuine and accurate), which is often done through the testimony of the recording officer. On the other hand, section 145 of the Evidence Act, 1872 allows cross-examining the maker of the statement made to the police. However, the maker is required to be examined as a witness first. Similarly, sections 241, 241A, and 265B of the CrPC, along with section 136 of the Evidence Act, forms the basis for the accused's right to cross-examine





## what to WATCH

T SPORTS  
Asia Cup T20  
UAE vs Pakistan  
Live from 8:30 pm  
SONY SPORTS 1,  
2, 5  
Champions League

PSG vs Atalanta  
Live from 1:00 am (Thursday)  
Bayern vs Chelsea  
Live from 1:00 am (Thursday)  
Liverpool vs Atletico Madrid  
Live from 1:00 am (Thursday)

## Can Tigresses take inspiration from Miracle at Lord's?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket is gearing up for the ICC Women's World Cup, set to be held in India and Sri Lanka from September 30, and the team received a timely boost of motivation in Dhaka yesterday.

The High Commission of India hosted the Tigresses in a tea party, marking their upcoming participation in the 50-over global extravaganza.

During the event, Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma presented a copy of *Miracle at Lord's* by Srenik Sett to the Bangladesh Cricket Board's women's wing chairman, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim. The book recounts India men's team's sensational journey to the 1983 World Cup triumph, and Verma expressed hope that the Tigresses would draw inspiration from that historic victory.

The gesture comes at a crucial time, with Nigar Sultana Joty and company set to depart for Colombo on September 23. This will be only their second appearance at a World Cup, following their debut in 2022 in New Zealand, and they enter the eight-team tournament with modest expectations, much like India did 42 years ago.

Preparation, however, has been less than ideal. The Tigresses have not played any international

### LEGACY IN THE MUD

Bangladesh football is often caught between nostalgia and ambition, forever chasing its bygone golden era. While lofty plans are made by the local governing body and stakeholders, it is often the trivial realities that reveal the true state of affairs. As one of the local powerhouses, Mohammedan SC should be a picture of professionalism. However, just days before Friday's Challenge Cup final against Bashundhara Kings, images of players slogging through the rain-soaked Palton ground in Dhaka capture the bitter irony. Cash-strapped and facing leadership uncertainty ahead of club elections, the historic club's struggle to provide basic facilities exposes a wider truth about the country's top-tier football: big ambitions, fragile structures.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Deja vu  
danger  
hangs over  
Pakistan

STAR SPORTS DESK

Two-time champions Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates meet today in Dubai for what is effectively a knockout in the Asia Cup 2025.

Both sides have beaten Oman but lost heavily to India, leaving this final Group B fixture as a straight shootout for a place in the Super Four.

For Pakistan, the stakes carry an uncomfortable echo of last year. In the 2024 T20 World Cup, they failed to progress past the group stage after a shocking defeat to hosts USA. Now, once again, defeat to the hosts would mean an early exit, a scenario that would further fuel doubts over their big match temperament.

They arrive under pressure after a chastening loss to India. While their earlier victory and net run-rate advantage provide a cushion, history is also on their side: Pakistan have won all three previous meetings with the UAE, including two recent encounters in Sharjah.

The UAE, meanwhile, view this as a chance to create history. A win today would secure their first-ever Super Four berth -- a milestone moment on home soil.

## NCL T20 mess highlights BCB's lack of foresight

SPORTS REPORTER

Incessant rain has finally forced the postponement of the NCL T20 tournament for an indefinite period, the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) tournament committee confirmed yesterday.

The NCL T20 is the country's second-most important T20 competition, after the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). With the national team still far behind modern T20 standards, the tournament could have been an ideal platform for youngsters to sharpen their skills. However, that opportunity has now been severely hampered due to scheduling complications, largely stemming from BCB's lack of foresight.

Questions have been raised about why the tournament, which carries significant weight for domestic players, was scheduled in September -- right in the middle of the rainy season.

"The way the grounds are at the moment due to heavy rain, even in the next seven days, play was impossible," said a player who traveled from Bogura to Rajshahi for matches before the postponement was announced.

"We just practice and go back to our hotel. We were so excited to play the tournament, but since no matches took place, everyone is frustrated. We don't have any control over the weather, so we're just hoping things improve from here," the player added.

If Bangladesh are to develop T20 capabilities, the tournament must be held under the right conditions. Across the world, good sporting tracks and flat surfaces are the norm in T20 cricket. Even if such conditions were ensured, the rainy season in September



was always going to disrupt proceedings.

When the BPL -- Bangladesh's premier franchise T20 event -- has frequently failed to meet expectations, the NCL T20 had raised hopes among players that it would offer something better.

Last year, the tournament was held in November, with rain not being an issue. That denied the competition to take place in good spirits, giving younger players a chance to showcase their abilities in a format where Bangladesh has historically lagged.

With the T20 World Cup scheduled for February-March next year, identifying new talents to address gaps in the pipeline and keeping players engaged through regular T20 cricket should have been a clear priority.

Sources revealed that ground conditions

in Bogura and Rajshahi were abysmal due to rain, as the venues suffer from poor drainage systems. Since Bogura's Shahid Chandu Stadium was set to host cricket again after a long gap, it would have been more prudent to schedule matches there later in the tournament.

Now, the remainder of the tournament will be played in Sylhet. While there was huge fan interest in Bogura, the same hype is unlikely in Sylhet, which already hosts international cricket regularly.

Bangladesh featured in their landmark 200th T20I last night against Afghanistan in the ongoing Asia Cup in Abu Dhabi. However, back home, BCB is yet to properly organise a tournament that is a potential platform for developing future T20 stars.

The gesture from High Commission of India comes at a crucial time, with Bangladesh set to depart for Colombo on September 23 ahead of the ICC Women's World Cup.

match since the World Cup Qualifiers in April. In addition, two women's teams featuring national players suffered defeats to Bangladesh men's U-15 side in recent practice matches.

Still, the encouragement from the High Commission serves as a reminder that, in cricket, upsets are always possible and that even the underdogs can create moments of history.

Apart from the players, officials, and coaching staff, women's umpire Shathira Jakir Jessy -- poised to become Bangladesh's first female World Cup umpire -- also attended the two-and-a-half-hour programme. The team presented a signed bat, a World Cup jersey, and a crest to the High Commissioner as tokens of appreciation.

"It's a great feeling to be here. Before coming here, we had a luncheon programme hosted by our board president. The Indian High Commission also showcased great hospitality for us. The High Commissioner encouraged our players, and I hope the girls will take inspiration from his words," head coach Sarwar Imran said after the programme.

The event also included several photo sessions with officials of the High Commission of India. One senior official lightened the mood by saying that he expects Bangladesh to win the trophy, adding that he could then claim to have a photograph of the winning team. While far from reality, the remark highlighted the spirit of encouragement and belief that the Tigresses can carry into the tournament.

## Blockbuster night as PSG, Liverpool, Bayern open UCL campaigns

STAR SPORTS DESK

The opening matchday of the Champions League group-stage continues on Wednesday with a mouth-watering set of fixtures. Reigning champions PSG begin their title defence, Liverpool face familiar foes in Atletico Madrid, Chelsea revisit old memories in Munich, and last season's finalists Inter travel to Amsterdam for a historic clash with Ajax. Early in the evening, Olympiacos host Paços, while Slavia Praha take on Bodo/Glimt.

Here's a closer look at the headline fixtures:



due to injuries.

Liverpool vs Atletico Madrid

Liverpool are among the favourites for the trophy but face a stern test against familiar rivals. Since knocking Liverpool out in 2019-20, Atletico have struggled against English oppositions, winning just one of their last eight encounters (D2 L5). Liverpool, by



due to injuries.

Liverpool vs Atletico Madrid

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contrast, have won their last four Champions League group/league matches against Spanish sides, including a double over Atletico in 2021-22. Atletico will be without striker Julian Alvarez, sidelined with a knock sustained against Villarreal, while Liverpool's marquee signing Alexander Isak will have to wait on the bench for his debut.

Bayern Munich vs Chelsea

In a repeat of the 2012 Champions League final -- won by Chelsea on penalties -- Bayern Munich host the Blues at the Allianz Arena. Their most recent meetings came in the 2019-20 round of 16, when Bayern cruised to a 7-1 aggregate win. Chelsea enter the clash as Club World Cup holders but face daunting odds. Since 2003-04, Bayern have recorded the highest win percentage (73%) in the group/league phase of the competition, winning 93 of their 128 matches.

Ajax vs Inter

Two European heavyweights meet in Amsterdam as Ajax take on last season's runners-up Inter Milan. Though the Dutch side boast a storied history with very little to show for in recent years, they have never beaten Inter in four previous Champions League meetings (D1 L3). The fixture is steeped in history as it's a repeat of the 1972 European Cup final. Adding another layer of intrigue, coaches John Heitinga (Ajax) and Cristian Chivu (Inter) were former teammates at Ajax from 2001-03.



### Eight warm-ups lined up for U-21s before Junior Hockey World Cup

The Bangladesh U-21 national hockey team will play four practice matches against Malaysia this month and four more against Austria and Switzerland next month as part of their preparation for the FIH Men's Hockey Junior World Cup in November in India. Head coach Siegfried Gottlieb Aikman is focusing on building defensive discipline and humility within the team, who have been placed in Pool F alongside Australia, France, and Switzerland.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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## Press ahead with economic reforms

IMF chief urges Yunus, praises his leadership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, has urged Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus to pursue deeper reforms as Bangladesh seeks to consolidate its economic recovery ahead of the national election in February.

In a video call from Washington yesterday, Georgieva emphasised the importance of increasing domestic revenue and implementing bold reforms in the banking sector.

"To be in a strong position, reform is inevitable. This is such a precious moment in the history of Bangladesh," Georgieva said.

Yunus outlined key measures already undertaken by his government, including restructuring efforts in the banking sector and initiatives to enhance revenue collection.

"We inherited a devastated and completely broken economy. Some individuals literally stole money in bags from banks and fled the country," he said.

Georgieva praised the Nobel laureate's stewardship since taking office as chief adviser in August 2024, crediting his administration with stabilising the foreign exchange market and rebuilding depleted reserves.

"I am impressed by what you have achieved," Georgieva said.

"You've done so much in such a short time. You took responsibility for your country when the risk of deterioration was very high," she told Yunus, describing him as "the right person at the right time".

Yunus thanked the IMF managing director for her

Kristalina Georgieva  
IMF chief



To be in a strong position, reform is inevitable. This is such a precious moment in the history of Bangladesh



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**RAIN, RAIN, DON'T GO AWAY ...** Two schoolboys are all smiles as a sudden downpour soaks them on their way to school near the capital's Asad Gate yesterday morning, turning their commute into a moment of pure joy.

Initial July 2025 launch missed due to bureaucratic delays

Tk 70cr project taken up to upgrade Shah Amanat airport

Tender process for scanners, cold storage, cargo shed still underway

Korean, Chinese companies show interest in operating flights

Two weekly flights planned, serving European destinations via Uzbekistan

## Direct cargo flights from port city not before Feb

MD NAZRUL ISLAM, Ctg

Direct cargo flights from Chattogram's Shah Amanat International Airport are expected to begin in February next year -- six months later than the initial timeline -- due to bureaucratic sluggishness.

Earlier on April 8, following India's abrupt suspension of transhipment facilities to Bangladesh's export cargo, the government said direct cargo flights would take off from the



port city's airport in July -- an announcement that calmed the nerves of garment exporters.

The route, through which garment consignments were

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## LDC exit may hurt exports

Says Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman, acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has expressed concern over the potential impact on the economy after the nation's graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category.



In a Facebook post yesterday, he said: "Graduation is not just a milestone -- it comes with risks and challenges that we need to be honest about, directly affecting our economy and people."

The BNP is concerned about a multitude of issues if Bangladesh does not proceed with caution, he added.

His comment comes amid repeated appeals from businesses to the interim government to take the initiative to defer Bangladesh's LDC

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## Trials must not halt after polls

Says Nahid on July atrocities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nahid Islam, convener of the National Citizen Party (NCP), yesterday expressed hope that the ongoing trials for crimes against humanity committed during last year's July uprising will not be disrupted after the upcoming national election.



"To ensure that the trial process is not obstructed even after the election, we have demanded that the government prepare a roadmap guaranteeing that the tribunal and other courts continue trying the pending cases. We also expect this commitment

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Bangladesh spinner Nasum Ahmed wheels away in celebration after dismissing Afghanistan opener Sediullah Atal off the first ball of the innings during their Asia Cup Group B match at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Nasum took two for 11 as Bangladesh bowled Afghanistan out for 146 after posting 154 for five, winning the match by eight runs and keeping their Super Four hopes alive.

PHOTO: ACC

Cinema legend Robert Redford dies at 89



AFP, Los Angeles

Cinema legend Robert Redford, a screen great both in front of and behind the camera whose career spanned six decades, died early yesterday at his home in Utah, his publicist said. He was 89.

Redford died in his sleep, and a specific cause was not given, according to a statement by Cindi Berger, the chief executive of publicity firm Rogers & Cowan PMK.

Robert Redford passed

## DELIMITATION ROW Protests flare in Bagerhat, ease in Bhanga

STAR REPORT

Demonstrators in Bagerhat yesterday besieged the election office demanding reinstatement of the district's previous four constituencies.

As per the EC's new gazette on September 4, the number of constituencies in Bagerhat has been reduced to three from four.

From 9:30am, residents gathered in front of the office in processions and blocked the entrance until 1:00pm. Officials and staffers were unable to enter the office premises during the protest, witnesses said.

MA Salam, former president of Bagerhat district BNP, said they would enforce a similar programme today.

Meanwhile, demonstrators yesterday called off their movement against constituency demarcation in Faridpur's Bhanga upazila, considering public suffering and the district administration's request to

the Election Commission to meet their demands.

However, they warned of fresh protests from Sunday if the demand is not met by then. The announcement came a day after violence that left five police vehicles vandalised, 11 motorcycles torched, and four people injured.

Faridpur Deputy Commissioner Md Kamrul Hasan Molla said he sent a letter to the EC on Monday requesting a review of the boundary changes. He expressed hope that the issue would be settled during the hearing scheduled at the EC Secretariat in Dhaka on September 21.

Contacted, Faridpur Additional Superintendent of Police Shamsul Azam said additional law enforcers, along with army personnel, had been deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

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## Tigers stay alive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tanzid Hasan Tamim scored an aggressive half-century while Nasum Ahmed bowled a tidy spell of two for 11 as Bangladesh beat Afghanistan by eight runs in their final Group B match of the Asia Cup at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday to keep their hopes of a Super 4 berth alive.

The win put Bangladesh second in the group on four points, behind Sri Lanka on net run rate and two ahead of the Afghans, who will play the last match of the group against the Lankans on Thursday.

The Tigers will hope Sri Lanka beat Afghanistan in that match or in case Afghanistan win, they win by a massive margin to book a last-four berth.

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## Trump sues NY Times for defamation

Seeks \$15 billion

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump sued the New York Times, four of its reporters and publisher Penguin Random House for at least \$15 billion on Monday, claiming defamation and libel and citing reputational damage, a Florida court filing showed.

Trump has gone after major media outlets in his second term for what he describes as false coverage and has sought billions of dollars in damages from them.

Monday's suit cites a series of NYT articles, one an editorial prior to the 2024 presidential election, which said he was unfit for office, and a 2024 book published by Penguin titled "Lucky Loser: How Donald Trump Squandered His Father's Fortune and Created the Illusion of Success".

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

National Legal Aid Services Organization

Law and Justice Division

Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

www.nlaso.gov.bd

Memo No.: 10.07.0000.002.28.038.16-177

Date: 1st Ashwin 1432  
16th September 2025

## Public Notification

It is hereby notified for the information of all concerned that, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 1 of the Legal Aid Services (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 (Ordinance No. XXXV of 2025), the Government has fixed the **18th day of September, 2025**, as the date on which—

(a) The provisions of section 21kha of the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 (Act No. VI of 2000) will come into operation in the districts of Faridpur, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Satkira, Khulna, Cumilla, Noakhali, Rangamati, Patuakhali, Moulvibazar and Sunamganj.

According to the Schedule of the amended law, it is mandatory to go through mediation process at the Legal Aid Office before filing a case arising under the following 8 (eight) categories of cases:

1. Matters under Section 5 of Family Courts Act, 2023;
2. Disputes under Premises Rent Control Act, 1991;
3. Disputes relating to partition under the jurisdiction of the Assistant Judge's Court;
4. Pre-emption disputes under section 96 of State Acquisition & Tenancy Act;
5. Pre-emption disputes under section 24 of Non-Agricultural Tenancy Act, 1949;
6. Disputes relating to maintenance of parents under Section 8 of The Maintenance of Parents Act, 2013;
7. Complaints regarding dowry under section 3 and 4 of Dowry Prohibition Act, 2018;
8. Complaints regarding dowry-related oppression under Section 11(Ga) of Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000

(b) The provisions of Section 21Ga of the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 (Act no. VI of 2000) will come into operation throughout Bangladesh; under the said provision, every mediation agreement duly certified by the Chief Legal Aid Officer (Judge) shall be final, enforceable, and binding upon the parties and shall be deemed a decree of the Court or, as the case may be, a final order.

For further information, please visit: [www.nlaso.gov.bd](http://www.nlaso.gov.bd)

Executive Director

National Legal Aid Services Organization  
Law and Justice Division  
Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs