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CONSENSUS TALKS

Parties split over referendum and constitutional order

Commission floats new mechanism to implement July Charter provisions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Consensus talks on implementing constitutional reforms outlined in the July Charter remained deadlocked for the third consecutive day yesterday, with political parties failing to agree on how to move forward.

In a bid to break the impasse, the National Consensus Commission proposed issuing a Constitutional Order (CO) and holding a referendum on the order on the day of the next general election.

The BNP rejected the new proposal, warning that it could create "constitutional disorder" and a "bad precedent."

The Jamaat-e-Islami, by contrast, backed the proposal but insisted on a referendum before the polls, not on election day.

The National Citizen Party remained undecided, saying the party would consult legal experts.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Students of polytechnic institutes block a flyover in front of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute in Tejgaon to press home a four-point demand yesterday, including an integrated engineering education model. They later marched to Satrasta, a major intersection, and held a demonstration, causing traffic congestion on several adjacent roads.

Polytechnic students block roads, rails over 4-point demand

Protests in Dhaka, several districts cause traffic chaos

STAR REPORT

Students from polytechnic institutes staged blockades in Dhaka and several districts yesterday to press home their four-point demands, including the introduction of a single-track system in engineering education to eliminate discrimination in jobs.

The blockades on roads and rail tracks for several hours led to long tailbacks in the capital and other major cities and disrupted railway services, causing immense suffering to commuters and passengers.

Many were stranded on roads for hours, while others had to walk several kilometres to reach their destinations.

In the capital, students of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute blocked a road at

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Govt angling for free trade with EU

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh is seeking to sign free trade agreements with the European Union and other major trading partners to retain preferential access after graduating from the least-developed country category in November next year.

The commerce ministry sent a letter to the EU last month expressing interest in an FTA and has convened an internal meeting for September 29 to discuss the issue, Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star over the phone.

"Securing this trade deal is important as two competing countries -- India and Vietnam -- have already signed FTAs with the EU," he said.

Without a similar arrangement with the EU, Bangladeshi exporters will face a 12 percent duty from 2029 as the bloc has granted the country a three-year extension of zero-duty facilities.

The EU accounts for more than \$25 billion in annual shipments from Bangladesh, or over 60 percent of total exports.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has been pushing for EU's GSP Plus status, which requires ratification of 32 international conventions, including four on good governance, labour rights, human rights, and environmental protection.

Since obtaining GSP Plus appears to be difficult now, signing an FTA could be

a possible solution.

The UK has also extended duty-free access for Bangladesh until 2035 under its Developing Countries Trading Scheme, with a 25 percent local value addition requirement. Therefore, Dhaka is not seeking an FTA with Britain now.

Australia, too, has assured duty-free benefits after graduation but requires 50

percent local value addition -- a condition difficult for apparel exporters reliant on imported raw materials.

Rahman said he would write to Canberra next week, requesting the threshold be reduced to 30 percent, in line with the EU.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has concluded the final round of negotiations with Japan on September 13, paving the way for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to be signed soon.

Talks with South Korea are also advancing: the first round of negotiations

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

'Punish those involved in July atrocities'

At ICT-1, Nahid says members of police, military, other forces should be tried along with Hasina, AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nahid Islam, one of the key student leaders who spearheaded the July uprising, yesterday demanded that not only political leaders but also members of the police, military, and other state forces involved in killings and enforced disappearances be punished.

"Just as Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League are being brought to justice, those in the police, military, and other forces involved in the July atrocities and enforced disappearances must also be brought to book," Nahid told reporters after the International Crimes Tribunal-1 adjourned recording his testimony until today.

It must be clear that no one should escape justice simply because they belong to a force, he said.

Nahid, convener of the National Citizen Party and the former chief coordinator of Students Against Discrimination, appeared as the 47th prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case filed against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who has turned approver.

He said justice must be ensured for his "martyred brothers and sisters who were killed, injured, and bled on the streets", adding that justice must set an example that anyone attempting to establish a dictatorship and harm the people must face the consequences.

Nahid recalled how the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) tried to put pressure on student leaders to withdraw programmes and reach a compromise with the government.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1




- BNP rejects proposal, warning it could cause constitutional disorder, set bad precedent
- Jamaat supports proposal, demands referendum before election
- NCP undecided, saying it will consult legal experts

The July Charter, containing 84 reform proposals, many with notes of dissent, was agreed upon in earlier rounds of dialogue. Some of the proposals can be executed through government orders or existing laws, but a significant partition requires changes to the constitution.

After the talks, Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz told reporters that experts had recommended a constitutional order and referendum as possible mechanisms to implement the reforms related to the constitution.

"They have combined these two approaches and provided a comprehensive opinion, which we have presented today to the political parties," he said.

He said several parties supported the proposal while some shared differing views. Previous proposals were also revisited during the discussions.

The commission would maintain informal communication with the parties and reconvene in early October, he added.

THE PROPOSAL

According to the experts' proposal, the interim government may enact a Constitutional Order under the authority of section 22 of the July Declaration, incorporating core reforms from the July Charter.

The CO would take immediate effect and later be put to a referendum, to be held on the same day as the general election.

"If the CO receives the assent of the people through a referendum, it will be validated with effect from the date of its enactment," the proposal stated.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Fakhrul, Taher to accompany Yunus to UNGA

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will travel to New York next week to attend the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain said yesterday.

While briefing reporters at the Foreign Service Academy, Touhid said four senior political leaders -- BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP leader Humayun Kabir, Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb-e-Ameer Syeed Abdullah Muhammad Taher, and National Citizen Party leader Akhter Hossen -- will join the Bangladesh delegation.

He said the chief adviser will leave Dhaka on September 22 and is scheduled to address the assembly on September 26, highlighting the interim government's reform initiatives, the aspirations of the July 2024 mass uprising, and its pledge to hold free, fair, and inclusive elections in February 2026.

Yunus will also hold high-level meetings, including a conference on the Rohingya crisis, and represent Bangladesh at several global events.

This year's UNGA is especially significant for Bangladesh, with the UN hosting its first High-Level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar on

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



PHOTO: REUTERS

Smoke rises from a neighbourhood in north Gaza yesterday as Israeli bombardment continues to pummel the territory.

Outcry grows as Israel steps up Gaza assault

AGENCIES

Dozens of Palestinians were killed yesterday as Israeli troops and tanks pushed deeper into Gaza City on the second day of a ground offensive widely condemned by world powers.

Israel's military also stepped up efforts to empty the city of civilians. It said it was opening an additional route for 48 hours that Palestinians could use to leave Gaza.

Hundreds of thousands of people are sheltering in the city, and many are reluctant to follow Israel's orders to move south because of the dangers along the way, dire conditions, a lack of food in the southern area, and fear of permanent displacement.

"Even if we want to leave Gaza City, is there any guarantee we would be able to come back? Will the war ever end? That's why I prefer to die here, in Sabra, my neighbourhood," Ahmed, a school teacher, said by phone.

At least 51 people were killed across the Gaza Strip yesterday in Israel's latest strikes, local health authorities said, pushing the death toll beyond the 65,000 mark since Israel launched its genocidal assault on Gaza's population nearly two years ago.

The ministry also reported a drone attack on a specialist children's hospital, which did not cause casualties but

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- EU proposes sanctions, curbs on Israel trade ties
- Death toll passes 65,000 mark



PHOTO: MD MONOWARUL KABIR MILON, JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

The city of hardboard dreams

JANNATUL BUSHRA

Dhaka never says no – it welcomes everyone who arrives! The city may not hand you breathing space, but it will always carve out a corner for you – sometimes generous, sometimes barely enough to call a coffin.

Step into one of the countless messes and hostels scattered across Farmgate, Mirpur, Jigatola, or Mohammadpur, and you'll see what I mean. From the outside, these apartments look ordinary – tiled, painted, respectable enough. Inside though, Dhaka's improvisation takes over. Two-bedroom flats, meant for families of four, are carved into human beehives. Brittle hardboards divide rooms into cubicles where thousands of students arrive each year after HSC – like migratory birds carrying suitcases full of ambition.

If luck is on your side, your cubicle has a window. If not, congratulations – you now live in a hardboard coffin with Wi-Fi. Bathrooms are shared by so many people that they start to feel like public utilities. Kitchens are so cramped that you can stir noodles and bump into someone ironing



their shirt at the same time. Silence is extinct. Privacy is optional. Mosquito bats are your most loyal companions because it's a city where dengue seems permanent.

Yet, life blooms in these fragile corners. Shampoos vanish mysteriously. Maggi noodles become communal property. Someone is always frying eggs at 2 AM. Strangers transform into "mess brothers" or "mess sisters" – bound not by blood but by necessity, shared ambitions, and late-night gossip.

Though their parents would faint if they saw the pigeonholes where their "future doctors" or "future engineers" sleep, Dhaka seems to shrug: this is training. Survive this, and you can survive anything.

Fahmida Ahmed Tithi, a software

student, remembers her early years in one of these cubicles: "My mother cried when she first saw where I lived. I was in college. For two years, I stayed in that cardboard-surrounded room. And honestly, I learned more in those two years than anywhere else in my life. I almost befriended those woodlice who helped me stay awake at night."

Now, reading this, Fahmida's mother might shed tears again. But Dhaka's mess life is its own curriculum. You learn negotiation with landlords who charge extra for the privilege of plywood partitions. Diplomacy – with roommates who think one shower a week is enough. Resilience – against cockroaches, bedbugs, heartbreak, and homesickness. These lessons may not appear on

academic transcripts, yet they shape you far more than lectures ever could.

And Dhaka being the hub of everything, this cycle never really seems to stop. Every year, new batches arrive with dreams too big for their cubicles. Every year, apartments are sliced thinner, hardboards multiplied – as if the city itself were expanding just to make room for the dreamers. Some move on – to better flats, better jobs, better lives. Others linger, leaving their cubicles for the next dreamer.

So yes, Dhaka overwhelms – it tests you, it reshapes you, and sometimes, it even bruises you. But it also somehow never abandons you. It welcomes you with open arms, then nudges you into tiny, impossible spaces, yet somehow gives you the freedom to dream beyond the hardboard walls that barely contain you.

Even the flimsiest hardboard cubicles, the ones too small to call rooms, become more than shelter. They bear witness to ambitions that refuse to shrink and hope that refuses to leave, even when the electricity does. Because hey! It's Dhaka, after all!

'Need religion teachers in primary schools, not music'

Says Jamaat; ASK slams demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday threatened to launch tough protest programmes until the government scraps the decision to recruit music teachers at primary schools and instead appoints religion teachers.

"If necessary, the country can be paralysed with larger programmes, but the people cannot be harmed," Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Mujibur Rahman told a press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

The event was organised under the banner of the "All-Party National Committee for the Protection of Islamic Education" to press for the demand.

Mujibur urged all Islamist parties, organisations, and scholars to be prepared for an "all-party movement" in the coming days.

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DELIMITATION ROW Protesters besiege election office in Bagerhat for 2nd day

STAR REPORT

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

Protesters under the banner of the "all-party combined committee" gathered in front of the district election office in Bagerhat town in the morning.

They blocked the main gate around 9:00am and continued their demonstration till around 1:30pm. Officials and staff could not enter the office during this period, said witnesses.

Sheikh Mohammad Yunus, member secretary of the committee and also secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Bagerhat district unit, said, "Until the four constituencies are reinstated, our movement will continue both on the streets and in the court."

MA Salam, co-convenor of the committee and also former president of BNP's Bagerhat district, said they will announce their next course of action today.

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'Punish those involved in July atrocities'

FROM PAGE 1

"On July 17, when universities were asked to vacate dormitories, DGFJ warned us that brutality and oppression on the students would increase if we did not make compromises with the government," he said. But the student leaders refused to hold dialogue, insisting they would not "sit for talks standing on the blood of their brothers already killed".

After the lunch break, the tribunal resumed with Nahid's testimony. Entering the witness stand at 2:45pm, he was greeted by the tribunal chair, "How are you, Mr Nahid?". He replied, "Fine."

His appearance followed completion of cross-examination of Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman by the state defence counsel.

Nahid recounted his activism beginning with the quota reform movement in April 2018. Protesters then faced police rubber bullets and teargas shells, and Chhatra League activists also attacked the demonstrators at halls.

"The movement only intensified after these attacks," he said, adding that Hasina eventually announced abolition of quotas, but it was tactical, a ploy.

His doubts were confirmed in June 2024 when the High Court reinstated quotas by cancelling the government

gazette. After the judgment, students erupted in protests and gave the government an ultimatum until June 30 to resolve the issue. But no response came from the government side.

On July 1, agitation broke out again, leading to the "Bangla Blockade" on July 7. Nahid alleged that the judiciary was "politicised" to restore quotas, and students lost faith when the Appellate Division, on July 10, ordered a one-month status quo rather than suspending the verdict.

As protests spread across the country, Chhatra League activists locked hall gates and cases were filed against the protesters, Nahid said.

On July 14, Hasina branded protesters "children and grandchildren of Razakars". Nahid said the remark "gave a licence for attacks on the protesting students".

The following day, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, "Chhatra League is enough to suppress the movement." Soon after, AL activists attacked students at Dhaka University, where female protesters were brutally assaulted.

Nahid named central BCL leaders Saddam, Inan, Shayon, and Soikat among those leading the attack with hired goons.

Injured students were even beaten up at hospitals and denied treatment, he alleged.

On July 16, violence spread countrywide. Police shot dead Abu Sayed, a coordinator of the quota reform movement's Begum Rokeya University unit in Rangpur, while five others, including Wasim in Chattogram, were also killed.

The next day, students held funeral prayers in absentia and coffin processions across campuses. The University Grants Commission ordered the authorities to shut universities, while police fired sound grenades and rubber bullets at a Dhaka rally, killing one in Jatrabari. Nahid said electricity, water, and food supplies were cut off from halls, and DGFJ pressed them to make a compromise with the government.

That night, they called for a nationwide "complete shutdown" from July 18. Students from private universities, madrasas, and the ordinary people joined the programme, while the leaders hid to avoid arrest.

According to Nahid, repression escalated further. Internet services were suspended on July 18, while police and AL activists fired indiscriminately at demonstrators the next day.

"By July 19, we realised the government had taken full control of the electronic media, and no news of our movement or the casualties was allowed to be broadcast," he said.

Govt angling

FROM PAGE 1

on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was completed in Seoul last month, with the deal expected to follow.

In addition, the ministry sent a proposal to Canada last month to begin FTA talks, though Ottawa has yet to set a date. Officials are in contact with the Canadian High Commission to schedule discussions, Rahman said.

Dhaka has also been lobbying to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the commerce ministry is forming a dedicated trade negotiation team to pursue deals with major trading partners and blocs.

Despite these initiatives, Bangladesh's success in concluding FTAs has so far been limited.

The only signed trade deal is a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan, covering \$22 million in bilateral trade, inked in December 2020.

Negotiations with India on a CEPA were completed more than two years ago but the deal remains unsigned.

The date has not been fixed yet to sign a trade deal with the US as well, the secretary said.

Parties split over referendum

FROM PAGE 1

Section 22 of the July Declaration, announced on August 3, expressed the people's intent to pursue democratic reforms of the constitution and state institutions to ensure good governance, fair elections, rule of law, social and economic justice and prevention of fascist rules.

On September 11, the first day of the third round of talks with parties, the commission presented them with a document setting out possible implementation methods, based on prior consultations with parties and experts.

Earlier, political parties and experts had floated multiple options: a referendum, a Special Constitutional Order (SCO) by the president, enactment through a constituent assembly or the next parliament, designating parliament as a constitutional reform assembly, or seeking the Supreme Court's opinion under article 106 of the constitution.

PARTIES' POSITIONS
Salahuddin Ahmed, member of BNP's Standing Committee, said making a Constitutional Order effective right away will essentially mean that the constitution is amended.

"Who will confer legitimacy on that? Who will approach the judiciary on its basis? Who will govern the state under it?"

"If we approve that legitimacy from this forum, can anyone guarantee it won't be challenged in court tomorrow?" he asked.

This is why the BNP wanted the Supreme Court's opinion under article 106 before introducing any Constitutional Order or any other mechanism to alter the constitution, he said.

Salahuddin also warned that adopting the July Charter through a referendum on election day would reinstate article 142 with provisions for holding referendums on constitutional amendments on fundamental issues.

"So will you go for two referendums? One before the polls and one after the constitutional change? That must be decided," he argued.

He cautioned, "If we place such constitutional disorder and a bad precedent before the nation, today or tomorrow, sooner or later, the same method could be used to repeal, amend, add to, or delete from the constitution. Could you inspire that? If we don't remain within a constitutional process, I apprehend that we are inviting an unconstitutional path."

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad said that a referendum is the strongest mechanism to implement the July Charter. "Legitimacy should be established through a constitutional order, and elections must be held on

that basis."

He also said seeking the Supreme Court's opinion in line with article 106 is not a solution.

"There are possible conflicts of interest involved. Since the caretaker government is being reinstated, a retired chief justice will be part of it. Meanwhile, some may aspire to become president. Therefore, there is a risk as to whether a neutral solution can emerge from this process. We do not wish to cast doubt on the judiciary," he said.

He also backed their demand for a referendum before the election, saying that holding a referendum is a simple process, "just a matter of management".

NCP Joint Convener Javed Rasin said the July Charter should be implemented under the interim government, preferably through a constituent assembly, which could function alongside the next parliament.

While talking about the option to seek the court's opinion, he questioned, "What will happen if the court says this cannot be done?"

Nagarik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna said seeking the court's opinion was still the best option. "The commission has not clarified what the obstacles are in seeking the court's opinion."

He also warned against making haste. "There is no doubt that a deadlock has emerged. We must find a way out, but it cannot be a hasty or careless exit," he said.

MEDIA REGULATION Maldives MPs back controversial bill

AFP, Malé

The Maldivian parliament has passed legislation to regulate journalists and media institutions despite widespread concerns that it would curb press freedom in the atoll nation.

The parliament late Tuesday approved the Media and Broadcasting Regulations Bill, which local and foreign rights groups have described as an attack on free press.

Under the legislation, a regulatory commission would be set up with sweeping powers, including the authority to suspend media outlets and block newspaper websites during an investigation.

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu must ratify the legislation before it takes effect, and could do so as soon as Wednesday.

"The Media Bill has been passed disregarding calls from over twenty organisations, both local and international," the privately-owned Mihaaru daily reported.

Outcry grows as Israel steps up Gaza assault

FROM PAGE 1

forced young patients and their families outside.

Meanwhile, the European Union yesterday proposed curbing trade ties with Israel and sanctioning ministers in its strongest action over the war in Gaza, though reluctance from key member states risks blocking the measures' adoption.

The bloc's executive, however, said it would take immediate action by itself by freezing some 20 million euros (\$23.7 million) in bilateral support for Israel.

The move from the EU's executive comes as pressure has mounted on the 27-nation bloc to take action against Israel over its devastating, nearly two-year-long offensive in Gaza.

"The horrific events taking place in Gaza on a daily basis must stop," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said.

Under its new proposals, Brussels is pressing to suspend parts of a cooperation deal with Israel that allow for reduced tariffs on goods coming from the country.

Officials say that would hit more than a third of Israel's exports to the EU worth around six billion euros, including key agricultural produce such as dates and nuts.

The commission also called for asset freezes and visa bans on far-

right Israeli government ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, whose "extremist" rhetoric is blamed for fuelling the violence.

But opposition from key member states, especially von der Leyen's own homeland Germany and Italy, means they will struggle to get the backing of enough EU countries to go through.

Israel estimates about 400,000 people, or 40 percent of those who were in Gaza City on August 10, when it announced plans to take control, have already fled. The Gaza media office says 190,000 have headed south and 350,000 have moved to central and western areas of the city.

An Israeli official said military operations were focused on getting civilians to head south and that fighting would intensify over the next month or two.

The official said Israel expected around 100,000 civilians to remain in the city, which would take months to capture, and the operation could be suspended if a ceasefire was reached with Hamas.

The prospects of a ceasefire appear remote after Israel attacked Hamas political leaders in Doha last week, infuriating Qatar, a co-mediator in ceasefire talks.

In leaflets dropped over Gaza City,

the military said Palestinians could use the newly reopened Salahuddin Road to escape towards the south and that they had until lunchtime on Friday to do so.

The United Nations, aid groups and foreign governments have condemned Israel's offensive and the proposed mass displacement.

Saudi Arabia yesterday condemned "in the strongest terms" the Israeli ground operation in Gaza City, as Canada slammed it as "horrific".

China also condemned the "escalation" in Gaza and urged for peace.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees yesterday said Palestinians in Gaza are living through "exponential fear amid bombardment and devastation as airstrikes in Gaza City and the north intensify by the hour".

It also reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire.

Pope Leo XVI expressed solidarity with the population of Gaza, saying that civilians had been "once again" forced from their land and were living in "unacceptable conditions".

In a separate response to the Gaza conflict in general, a UN Commission of Inquiry concluded on Tuesday that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza. Israel called the assessment "scandalous" and "fake".

146 land defenders killed globally in 2024, 1/3 in Colombia: NGO

AFP, Bogotá

Nearly 150 land and environment defenders were murdered or disappeared worldwide in 2024, with Colombia accounting for a third of cases, according to a report Tuesday by advocacy group Global Witness.

The global figure of 146 was down from 196 in 2023, said the group, but "this does not indicate that the situation for defenders is improving," with underreporting a problem in many countries.

Global Witness said Latin America had the most killings and disappearances in 2024, with conflict-torn Colombia still the world's deadliest country for environmental defenders.

These can be small-scale farmers, Indigenous people, journalists, lawyers, rangers and others involved in the effort to protect land from invaders or other harms such as illegal grazing or mining.

Colombia – where drug cartels, guerrilla groups and paramilitaries vie for control over drug territory and trafficking routes – recorded 48 killings in 2024. This was down from 79 a year earlier.

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No party
can impose
PR without
people's
mandate

Says Amir Khosru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP
Standing
Committee
member
Amir
Khosru
Mahmud

Chowdhury yesterday said the European Parliament delegation understood that introducing proportional representation (PR) in Bangladesh's elections would only be possible if parliament passed it.

"The people's mandate is needed. A few people sitting around a table, some uneducated political parties, cannot make this decision on behalf of the people in advance," he told reporters at the European Union Embassy in Dhaka's Gulshan.

Khosru made the
SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

A delegation of Members of the European Parliament led by Mounir Satouri meets Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

No security
threat centring
Durga Puja

Says home adviser

STAR REPORT

Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday assured that there is no security threat centring the upcoming Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Bangladesh's Hindu community.

"The law-and-order situation will remain stable during the festivity. No problem will arise," he told reporters after inspecting security arrangements at the Ramna Kali Temple in Dhaka. "Do not pay attention to rumours."

Jahangir said the government has increased its allocation for this year's Durga Puja to Tk 5 crore, up from Tk 4 crore last year. For 15 years prior, the allocation had remained fixed at Tk 2 crore, he said.

Expressing hope that this year's Puja would
SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

JNU'S SECOND CAMPUS

Six years on, project still
stuck in first phase

Authorities blame bureaucratic hurdles, fund delays

RAKIB MADBER

Despite repeated student protests, government intervention, and even army involvement, the long-awaited second campus of Jagannath University (JnU) in Keraniganj has seen little progress, six years after land acquisition began.

The project, once billed as a solution to the chronic space crisis at JnU, remains stuck in its first phase.

Meanwhile, the main campus is supposed to take shape in the second phase of the project, which remains a distant prospect, leaving thousands of students frustrated.

Over the long delay and due to mounting frustration, JnU students launched a protest in January this year, prompting the education ministry to hand over part of the work to the Bangladesh Army, with a revised deadline of

December 2026.

However, eight months have passed since then, but the progress remains minimal.

A recent visit to the site revealed only four visible components – land development, a boundary wall, an engineering building, and



a pond ghat.

Of these, work on the engineering building has been halted over corruption allegations. The boundary wall and sand filling are progressing slowly, while only the pond ghat appears close to

completion.

Students allege that despite army oversight, the same contractor who failed over the past six years still holds the first-phase work order.

"Those who could not finish in six years – how will they deliver in just a year?" asked Adiba Naomi, a student of Mass Communication and Journalism. "Corruption and bureaucratic delays seem to be the main obstacles," she said.

Officials involved in the project pointed to delays in land acquisition and master plan approval as the primary barriers.

They also pointed to administrative red tape, suspension of funds, tender complications, and corruption allegations that stalled the project repeatedly. Even after the army was formally assigned, several

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Kamal Ahmed
joins Star as
consulting
editor

STAR REPORT

Kamal Ahmed, a journalist with over three decades of experience in international and national media, has joined The Daily Star as consulting editor effective from September 16.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said, "His appointment marks a significant step towards strengthening the paper's mission of independent, credible and professional journalism."

Kamal's career includes
SEE PAGE 4 COL 522% of sex trade
victims minors
in Bangladesh

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 22 percent of victims of commercial sexual exploitation (abuse of a person, or a minor, through sexual activities in exchange for money, goods, or other benefits) in Bangladesh are children, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They shared the information at the launch of "Project Shurakha", an initiative of International Justice Mission (IJM) to protect minors from sex trafficking.

At the inaugural event at a hotel in the capital, IJM presented alarming figures, estimating that 20-50 percent of Bangladesh's sex trade involves children.

About 40,000 to 100,000 minors are being involved in such trade in brothels, streets, hotels, spas, massage parlours, and private homes, IJM estimates.

Citing a 2023 report by Trafficking in Persons, IJM said an estimated 30,000 girls were victims of

Fear silences child trafficking victims. They cannot reveal their situation or location. That is why we must identify them properly and take action in the right places.

DAUD MIAH
Director general,
NGO Affairs Bureau

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

RUCSU POLLS

JCD-backed
panel places six-
point demand

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal-backed panel "Oikyabodhho Notun Projonmo" has submitted a six-point demand to the chief election commissioner ahead of the Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (Rucsu) polls.

The memorandum was handed over at around 1:00pm yesterday.

The demands include using transparent ballot boxes, preparing a voter list with photographs to prevent fake or proxy voting, manual vote counting, barring outsiders from entering within 100 metres of polling centres, setting up stronger security to avert chaos, and ensuring a level playing field by curbing black money while monitoring equal enforcement of the electoral code of conduct for all candidates.

During the submission, vice president (VP) candidate Sheikh Nur Uddin Abir said, "I notice a negligent attitude from the administration. I urge you to be more active. We don't want to boycott;

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Deadline extended
by a day for Cucsu
form submission

CU CORRESPONDENT

Despite the deadline for collecting nomination forms for the Chittagong University Central Students' Union (Cucsu) election ending on Tuesday, the authorities extended it by a day, which ended yesterday.

At the same time, the submission deadline was also pushed back by a day and will now end today.

Prof Dr Ariful Haque Siddique, member secretary of the Cucsu Election Commission, confirmed the extension yesterday, saying it was made in response to students' requests.

"Students have spontaneously collected the nomination papers today [yesterday], and they will now be able to submit them tomorrow [today] between 9:30am and 5:00pm," he said.

Earlier, the CU unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal submitted an application seeking a two day extension for collecting and submitting the forms yesterday, which was the previous deadline for submitting nomination papers.

On the extended final day, 40 students collected nomination forms for Cucsu, while 34 did so for the hall unions.

With this, a total of 1,162 forms have been collected so far – 528 for Cucsu and 634 for the hall unions. Of them, 371 nomination papers have already been submitted.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



A flock of pigeons flies over rice-laden boats anchored along the riverbank, creating a lively scene of rural trade and nature. The photo was taken at Balikhla Ferry Ghat in Karimganj upazila of Kishoreganj yesterday.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

Five die of
dengue,
622 get
hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five dengue patients died while 622 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, three of the deaths occurred in areas under

Rajshahi division, and two in Dhaka South City Corporation.

With the new fatalities and cases, the total number of dengue-related deaths has risen to 161, while the total number of cases has reached 39,814 this year.

Of the total cases, 37,688 patients have been released so far. Currently, 1,965 dengue patients are receiving treatment in different hospitals across the country, including 1,236 patients from outside Dhaka.



Mahmudur's testimony 'irrelevant'

Says state defence counsel at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state defence counsel for former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday argued that the testimony of witness Mahmudur Rahman, editor of Amar Desh, is "irrelevant" to the case filed over the July atrocities.

State Defence Amir Hossain said this after concluding cross-examination of Mahmudur Rahman at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

At one stage of the cross-examination yesterday, the defence counsel opposed Mahmudur's statement submitted before the tribunal on Tuesday and said there is no basis for portraying Hasina's regime as a 15-year rule of "extremely corrupt and crimes against humanity".

Such comments are not applicable to accused Hasina and Asaduzzaman, he argued.

10 burnt in gas cylinder blasts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 10 people sustained burn injuries in gas cylinder explosions at a warehouse in Charpara area, on the border of Chandanaish and Satkania upazilas in Chattogram, early yesterday.

According to the Fire Service and Civil

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Raisul Huq Bahar's death anniv today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Today is the seventh anniversary of AKM Raisul Huq Bahar, a freedom fighter and journalist.

Bahar was born on April 1, 1952 at Companiganj, Noakhali.

He died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in the port city on September 18, 2018.

Bahar was a guerrilla commander and led many operations including Kaibalyadham Railway Bridge Operation at Pahartoli, Chattogram in the 1971 Liberation War.

Before joining journalism in 1972, he was an accounts officer of Chattogram Port.

He was the Chattogram bureau chief of The Daily Star (2010-2015). He also served the Suprobat Bangladesh and Dainik Purbokone as associate editor.



Six years on, project still stuck

FROM PAGE 3
months were lost to bureaucratic procedures before implementation could begin.

"The work stalled mainly due to delays in the master plan and land acquisition. Now, the university and the army are monitoring the project jointly. We hope to complete it within the revised timeline [December 2026]," said JnU's Chief Engineer Helal Uddin Patwary.

Earlier, on January 12, students staged a protest, boycotting classes and exams, and went on a hunger strike, demanding that the entire project be handed over to the Bangladesh Army for its speedy implementation.

Consequently, on January 16, the education ministry issued a notice, assigning the work to the army.

According to the government order, the army is tasked with constructing internal and external roads, surface drains, lake protection, an army base camp, and electrical installations.

Meanwhile, the previous contractor would continue

with the other parts of the project under the supervision of the army and JnU authorities.

However, due to a lack of coordination among government offices, alongside financial complications, the work hasn't progressed much.

Contacted, Project Director Lt Col Iftekhar Alam said, "The project will be completed in two phases. The first phase is scheduled to be finished by December 2026. Work on the base camp has already finished, and other works will commence once funds are released."

In 2016, following a series of protests over several years, the then-government pledged a second campus for JnU.

The project received Ecene approval in 2017, with plans for academic and administrative buildings, dormitories, research facilities, and sports grounds across 200 acres.

Although JnU formally received 188.60 acres in early 2020, complications held up the remaining 11.40 acres for nearly five years. Only this June did the university secure the

full 200 acres.

Initially scheduled for completion in 2020, the project has already missed three deadlines. At one stage, the finance ministry even suspended funding, halting construction until student protests reignited pressure.

In this regard, JnU Vice Chancellor Prof Rezaul Karim said, "The project got stuck after missing deadlines, and the ministry stopped funding. However, it has now resumed. We are hopeful that the first phase will be completed in time."

No security

FROM PAGE 3
be celebrated in a more vibrant atmosphere than last year, he urged law enforcement agencies and Puja committees to work hand in hand to ensure peace and order.

He also cautioned against spreading misinformation during the festival. "Durga Puja is a celebration that draws people of all religions, not just Hindus," he said, adding that a new mobile application has been launched to share real-time updates on any incidents.

Encroachment, waste dumping push Burai Beel to the brink

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Burai Beel, a natural wetland located near eastern part of Tangail district town, is rapidly shrinking due to continuous pollution and encroachment.

Once used by locals to travel from neighbouring areas to the district town, Burai Beel also served as a natural reservoir of local fish species, allowing local fishermen earn a living.

For years, Tangail Municipality has been dumping waste water from the eastern and central parts of the town into Burai Beel through various drains. As a result, the wetland's water is heavily polluted and gradually being filled up.

At the same time, a section of influential locals, including politically-backed individuals, are occupying the wetland by filling it with structures and claiming ownership with fake documents.

Now on its deathbed, the wetland can no longer drain the town's accumulated rainwater during the monsoon, causing waterlogging in surrounding areas.

Shafiqul Islam, a resident of Biswas Betka area, said water from the municipality's canal, now the central drain, no longer flows into Burai.

"A section of locals has built structures by filling the canal in various places. As a result, the mouth of the canal has become elevated and the flow of water has stopped. Waterlogging occurs whenever it rains," he said.

Rafiqul Islam, another resident, said, "Just two

Gautam Chandra Chanda, divisional coordinator of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said, "If the boundaries are not immediately demarcated, the illegal structures are not removed and the wetland is not excavated, this important waterbody may be lost

contacted the adjacent Municipal, Karatia and Gharinda union land offices to inquire about the waterbody, the offices could not provide any information.

Tangail Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nahida Akter said she did not know anything about the



decades ago, we used to bathe in the clean water of Burai. Now it is very polluted and dirty. The waterbody was full of native fish and migratory birds used to flock here during winter. Now there is nothing. It is shrinking day by day, and for most of the year there is no water."

forever." Ratan Ahmed Siddiqui, general secretary of Tangail River Canal Waterbody Protection Movement Committee, said they have been demanding protection of Burai Beel for a long time but no action has been taken. When this correspondent

waterbody. She would talk about it later after finding out.

Md Shihab Raihan, deputy director of the Local Government Department and administrator of Tangail Municipality, said the government is actively considering a project to address the issue.

ACC sues S Alam, 42 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed a case against 43 individuals, including prominent business figures and senior officials of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, over the alleged embezzlement of Tk 363 crore from the bank's Gulshan branch in Dhaka.

Among the accused are S Alam Group Chairman Md Saiful Alam, Nabil Group Managing Director and CEO Md Aminul Islam, and former Islami Bank Chairman Prof Md Nazmul Hasan.

The case, lodged yesterday with the ACC's Integrated District Office, Dhaka-1, centres on a fraudulent loan sanctioned in the name of a paper-based company: Naba Agro Trade International.

ACC Director General Md Akhtar Hossain

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

BNP leader's wife hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A local BNP leader's wife was hacked to death in Tangail Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

The deceased, Lily Akter, 40, was the wife of SM Anisur Rahman Uttam, general secretary of Mogra union BNP unit.

Police and locals said like every day, Lily went to her husband's bakery factory in Kuizbari Bazar around 9:30pm when masked assailants attacked her with sharp weapons.

She was declared dead at General Hospital. Her nephew, Mehedi Hasan, told reporters that Anis was not at the bakery at that time. They suspect the criminals came to kill Anis, but killed his wife instead after failing to find him.

Anisur said due to rain he had not gone to the bakery and was at the bazar during the attack.

Tanvir Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said they are investigating the incident.

Kamal Ahmed

FROM PAGE 3
senior editorial roles at the BBC World Service in London, where he served as editor of the Bengali Service and later as senior producer. He produced and anchored news programmes and chaired over 100 editions of BBC Bangladesh Sanglap. He also moderated nationally broadcast mayoral debates in collaboration with the Bangladesh Election Commission.

In Bangladesh, he has served as consulting editor of Prothom Alo, chief sub-editor of The Financial Express, and contributed to leading regional publications, including Himal Southasian. He began his career at Dainik Desh and also worked with The Daily Star, and The Telegraph.

He led the Media Reform Commission under the interim government headed by Professor Muhammad Yunus, delivering a comprehensive reform agenda within five months.

He also played a pioneering role at United Nations Radio, where he launched his first ever Bangla service and produced weekly programmes for nearly a decade. Having studied law and history at Dhaka and Rajshahi universities, Kamal is widely regarded for his investigative reporting, newsroom leadership, and contributions to media policy reform.



Sonali Bank PLC.

Establishment and Engineering Division
Engineering Department
Head Office, Dhaka
Phone: +8802-223351050
Email: dgmeed@sonalibank.com.bd

e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Additional Chief Engineer, Establishment & Engineering Division, Sonali Bank PLC, Head Office, Dhaka for the procurement of following works:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Tender publication date & time	Last selling/ downloading date & time	Tender closing/ opening date & time
1.	1149737	Supply and installation of 115KwP On-grid Solar System (Including net metering unit) at Sonali Bank Staff College, Uttara, Dhaka.	21 Sep, 2025 12:00	06 Oct, 2025 12:00	06 Oct, 2025 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in 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. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd/HelpDesk.jsp>).

GD-2032

Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Local Government COVID-19 Response and Recovery Project (LGCRRP)
205/4, Hall Mark Group (4th Floor), Begum Rokeya Sarani, Mirpur
Dhaka-1216
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.0000.660.07.012.23-8514

Date: 17.09.2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited in e-GP Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Project Director, LGCRRP, LGED for the procurement of:

Sl	Tender ID	Description of items	Publishing date & time	Last selling date & time	Tender closing date & time
1	1153033	Development of Digital Infrastructure for 45 Nos. C Type ULGI (Desktop Computers with UPS, Printer & Scanner etc. for Operating MRAS	18-September-2025, 14:00	05-October-2025, 16:00	06-October-2025, 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and offline/hard copy(s) will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

GD-2036

Sd/-

NSM Zillur Rahman

Project Director

Tele: +880244826494

E-mail: pd.lgcrpp@lged.gov.bd



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sub-Office in Cox's Bazar hereby announces the launch of the following tender:

TENDER NOTICE

TENDER REFERENCE NUMBER	ITEM DESCRIPTION
BGD-UNHCR RFP 1661	REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF SOLAR POWER SYSTEMS FOR GBV FACILITIES AND CFM DESKS IN ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS AND TRANSIT CENTER, UNHCR, COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

Interested and bona fide vendors are invited to participate in this Request for Proposal (RFP) by accessing and downloading the tender documents from **UNHCR Cloud ERP Supplier Portal**.

UNGM Notice Link: <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/276561>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: Please confirm your participation for BGD-UNHCR RFP 1661 by using the "Acknowledge Participation" functionality in **Cloud ERP Supplier portal**. Please indicate whether:

- You are interested in participating in this RFP, or
- You are not interested in participating.

Sending your confirmation above will enable to receive automatic email notifications from UNHCR with information on any changes related to this negotiation.

Site Visit: UNHCR will organize a site visit to Ukhiya camps from 07 September to 10 September 2025 and Teknaf camps on 11 September from 10:00 AM BST. A maximum of two (2) representatives per company are allowed to participate. The names, email and mobile number(s) of the company's representatives must be provided at least two (2) working days in advance, by sending a message using the messaging functionality in this ERP system with the subject "BGD UNHCR RFP 1661" or by sending an email to bgdcosup@unhcr.org (Do not copy any UNHCR staff during sending email).

Pre-bid conference: UNHCR will organize an online supplier pre-bid conference on 16 September 2025 at 10:00 AM BST through Microsoft Teams.

To participate, interested bidders must express their interest using the messaging function in the C-ERP system no later than one working day before the meeting. Please include names and email addresses of your company representatives in the message.

For Meeting link please access: <https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/unhcr/unhcr538.htm>

Instruction to Bidders: To register as a potential supplier, please refer to link as follows: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/guidelines-unhcr-suppliers-how-use-supplier-portal>

Existing suppliers use this link: <https://supplier-portal.unhcr.org/> to log in with your email address and Password. Do not create a new profile if you already registered. Kindly Use the forgotten password feature in case you do not know/remember your password or username from previous registration.

Bid submission deadline: Sunday, 12 OCTOBER 2025 - 23:59 hrs. Bangladesh time.

Kindly note that no hard copy is acceptable. The offer to be submitted only through Cloud ERP portal.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Manikganj
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.5600.000.07.139.25-3665

Date: 17/09/2025

Invitation for Tender (works) e-Tender Notice No.07/2025-2026

e-Tender's is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following packages.

Sl No.	Tender ID & Package No	Name of Works	Tender Method	Tender last selling & Submission Date and Time
1	1152625 GDP-3/MA-32.1 Remaining	Remaining Work Estimate of Construction 90.00m long PSC Girder Bridge on Gujuri Bazar -Mokimpur Latif house Road at Ch.1550m under Upazila : Sadar , District : Manikganj (Road ID.356465041)	OTM	08 October-2025 16:00 & 09 October-2025 16:00

This is online Tender's where only e-Tender's will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. 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 branch. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

GD-2033

Sd/-
(ABM Khorsheed Alam)
Executive Engineer
LGED, Manikganj.

E-mail: xen.manikganj@lged.gov.bd

EU eyes deeper India ties amid tariff concerns

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Commission set out plans yesterday to deepen cooperation with India in fields such as defence, technology and trade despite tensions over New Delhi's closer ties to Moscow.

The European Union and India are in the final stages of negotiating a free trade agreement both sides aim to conclude by the end of the year.

Negotiations, relaunched in 2022, have gained pace since the re-election of US President Donald Trump. Faced with Trump's tariffs, both sides have sought accelerated efforts to foster new alliances.

For Brussels, that means planned trade agreements with Mexico, South American bloc Mercosur, India and Indonesia. India sees promise in the European Union, but also in China and Russia.

India has increased purchases of Russian oil since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In the past month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit in China, and its troops joined a Russian-led military exercise.

On Friday, US officials called on G7 and EU states to impose tariffs on China and India over Russian oil purchases.

In a document released on Wednesday setting out its vision, the Commission said the EU would further engage with India on curbing Russia's military and preventing circumvention of EU sanctions.

Despite the tensions, the European Commission views India as a fellow upholder of the rules-based multilateral order and hopes to benefit from its expected rise to become the world's third-largest economy in 2030.

The EU envisages the two sides negotiating agreements on investment protection and boosting air transport, collaborating on securing supply chains, on green hydrogen, on decarbonisation of heavy industry and on research and innovation.

They could also agree a defence and security partnership, as the EU already has with Japan and South Korea, and cooperate in projects in third countries, particularly in Africa and South Asia.



US President Donald Trump and Britain's King Charles inspect the Guard of Honour as they attend a welcome ceremony during Trump's state visit, at Windsor Castle, in Windsor, Britain, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump begins state visit to UK amid pomp and protests

REUTERS, Windsor

King Charles greeted Donald Trump yesterday as the US president's historic second state visit to Britain began with unprecedented pomp, intense security, technology investments and planned protests.

Trump and his wife Melania arrived at Windsor Castle, the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world and family home to British monarchs for almost 1,000 years, where the royal red carpet treatment includes a carriage procession, gun salutes, a military flypast and lavish banquet.

Britain says it will be the largest military ceremonial welcome for a state visit in living memory.

Trump, an overt royal fan, has made little secret of his delight at being not just the first US leader, but the first elected

politician to be invited by a British monarch for two visits.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer is hoping to use that sentiment to Britain's advantage as his government seeks to cement the two nations' "special relationship", deepen economic ties, secure billions of dollars of investment, discuss tariffs and press the US president on Ukraine and Israel.

The visit has already delivered a new technology pact between the two countries with companies from Microsoft to Nvidia, Google and OpenAI pledging 31 billion pounds (\$42 billion) in British investments over the next few years, in AI, quantum computing and civil nuclear energy.

Starmer also wants further progress on tariffs.

"Basically, I'm there also on trade. They want to see if they can refine the trade

deal a little bit," Trump said when he left the White House for Britain on Tuesday.

But while Starmer is banking on the unrivalled royal allure helping cajole the anglophile president, many pitfalls for British prime minister remain.

Polls show Trump is widely unpopular in Britain and Starmer, faced with plummeting poll ratings of his own and economic woes, will need to show that playing his royal trump card will reap benefits. Awkward questions about late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein could also come to the fore.

Amid heavy security, protesters pulled off a stunt in Windsor on Tuesday. Police said four people were arrested for malicious communications after images of Trump alongside Epstein were projected onto one of Windsor Castle's towers. Large protests are also expected in London yesterday.

Maoist rebels in India 'offer to give up armed struggle'

AFP, Raipur

Maoist rebels in India are suspending their armed struggle and are ready for talks, they said in a statement, though authorities yesterday said they were still verifying its authenticity.

New Delhi has launched an all-out offensive to crush the decades-long conflict, vowing to wipe out the Maoist rebellion by March 2026, with recent fighting concentrated in the battleground state of Chhattisgarh.

The rebels have offered to engage in talks before, including in February when they called for a ceasefire – an offer rejected by authorities.

In a statement issued Tuesday to reporters – via intermediaries who have handled Maoist proclamations before – the Communist Party of India (Maoist) said it would suspend its fight.

"We are ready to start dialogue", the letter read, adding they had decided "to suspend armed struggle".

The Maoist statement said they had shifted their position due to the "changed world order and national situation, and because of the continuous appeals" from New Delhi.

East Timor axes plan to buy SUVs for MPs

AFP, Dili

East Timor's parliament has bowed to public pressure and dropped a plan to buy SUVs for lawmakers in one of southeast Asia's poorest nations, but sceptical protesters returned to the streets yesterday.

Student-led demonstrations against the multi-million dollar purchase drew thousands this week in the capital Dili, with demonstrators and police clashing two days in a row.

Unappealed by the last-minute reversal, around 2,000 demonstrators gathered near the parliament building in Dili for a third straight day yesterday, according to an AFP journalist.

The controversy stemmed from a \$4.2 million budget item, approved last year, to purchase Toyota Prado SUVs for each of the country's 65 members of parliament.

The tender was due to be completed in September, according to an official parliament document.

The plan triggered widespread anger in a nation where over 40 percent of the population lives in poverty, according to the World Bank.

Fakhrul, Taher to accompany Yunus

FROM PAGE 1

September 30. The event, proposed by Yunus last year, follows Bangladesh's "Partners' Dialogue" in Cox's Bazar.

"This unprecedented high-level meeting, together with UN Secretary-General António Guterres' visit to Bangladesh earlier this year, demonstrates that despite multiple global crises, the Rohingya issue remains firmly on the international agenda," Touhid said.

The chief adviser will also attend the 30th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth on September 25, as well as discussions on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

His UNGA speech is also expected to address peacekeeping, climate change and climate justice, the Sustainable Development Goals, illicit financial flows, migration and migrant rights, technology transfer in the age of AI, and a call for a ceasefire and lasting peace in the Palestinian Territory, Touhid added.

Yunus is also expected to attend receptions hosted by Guterres and US President Donald Trump, and hold bilateral meetings with world leaders.

The foreign affairs adviser will represent Bangladesh in multilateral forums, including meetings of the Commonwealth, G77 and China, OIC, BIMSTEC, CICA, and the LDCs.

Touhid said the UNGA offers Bangladesh a vital platform to present its reform process, democratic transition, and national priorities.

The chief adviser will return to Dhaka on October 2.

The UNGA general debate runs from 23-27 and September 29 under the theme "Better Together: 80 Years and More for Peace, Development and Human Rights."

Senior officials, including Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam, Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam, and Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, attended the briefing.

Need religion teachers in primary

FROM PAGE 2

Reading out a written statement, he demanded amendments to the "Government Primary School Teacher Recruitment Rules 2025" to create a separate process for recruiting religion (Islam) teachers.

Candidates with Dawra-e-Hadith degrees from Qawmi madrasas and Fazil degrees from Alia madrasas should be eligible for such posts, he said.

He also proposed a parallel system for appointing religious education teachers for students of other faiths. "If these steps are implemented,

it will be possible to develop a quality religious education system in primary education," he added.

Mujibur argued that the appointment of religion teachers would instill morality, virtues, and values in students.

Meanwhile, rights group Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) strongly criticised Jamaat's demand, calling it "misleading, motivated, and harmful to Bangladesh's cultural rights".

ASK said the call to scrap music teacher recruitment was a "deliberate attempt to spread division and hatred in society," warning that such moves risked creating

a one-sided society with long-term consequences undermining national unity and cultural foundations.

Citing the constitution, the rights body stressed that every citizen has the right to practise culture and participate in art and literature.

In its statement, ASK argued that music education is not merely a source of recreation but a means to foster mental development, moral values, creativity, and tolerance.

It added that cultural education should complement, not replace, religious education in schools.

Protesters besiege election office

FROM PAGE 2

The EC on September 4 issued a gazette notification redrawing boundaries of 46 constituencies across the country. As per the new gazette, the number of constituencies in Bagerhat has been reduced to three from four. People in Bagerhat have been staging demonstrations since then demanding reinstatement of the district's previous four constituencies. Their demonstrations include blockades, sit-ins, and

processions. Meanwhile in Faridpur, police have filed a case accusing former lawmaker Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury in connection with Monday's violence centring constituency boundary demarcation.

Bhanga Police Station's Sub Inspector Md Azaduzzaman filed the case on Tuesday night against 29 named and many unnamed people.

A former independent lawmaker of Faridpur-4,

Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, popularly known as Nixon Chowdhury, was made the prime accused in the case, said the district's Additional Superintendent of Police Shamsul Azam.

As per the EC's new gazette, the Algi and Hamirdi unions under Bhanga upazila were transferred from Faridpur-4 to Faridpur-2 constituency. Residents of Bhanga upazila have been demonstrating since the issuance of the gazette, protesting the transfer.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Public Works Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD E/M Division-6, Dhaka

Memo no: 5-16/715 Date: 16/09/2025

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the national e-GP portal:

Sl No.	Brief Description of the work	Tender ID	Publishing Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
1.	Internal electrical repair work of the wood workshops machines at the Public Works E/M Wood Workshop Sub-Division, Section-6, Mirpur.	1153009	16-Sep-2025	30-Sep-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 portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Mohammad Toriqlul Alam)
Executive Engineer
PWD E/M Division-6, Dhaka

GD-2037

"দেশপ্রেমের শপথ নিন-দুর্নীতিকে বিদায় দিন"

Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Limited
(A Company of Petrobangla)
137/A, CDA Avenue, Sholoshahar, Chattogram

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concerned that the following tender has been published through e-GP Portal:

SL	Tender ID	Description of goods	Tender publication date & time	Tender document last selling date & time	Last date & time for tender security submission	Tender closing date & time	Tender opening date & time
01.	1147842	Procurement of IP Camera & Related Accessories with Installation & Commissioning for 8 Nos. of HP DRS at K.G.D.C.L.	18.09.2025 10:00	08.10.2025 16:00	09.10.2025 14:00	09.10.2025 15:00	09.10.2025 15:00

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. The interested person/firms/supplier may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get details of the tender. 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. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Faruque Hossain
Deputy General Manager
Purchase Department

GD-2030

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নির্দেশক্রমে,
মোঃ জাহাঙ্গীর আজাদ
কোম্পানি সচিব

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
District Primary Education Office
Chattogram
dpc.chattogram.gov.bd

স্মারক নং- ০১.০১.০০০০.০০০.১১.০১১.১১-১৪০৮ তারিখঃ ১৬/০৯/২০২৫ খ্রিঃ

Invitation for Tender

1	Ministry/ Division	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
2	Implementing Agency	District Primary Education Office
3	Project/ Program name	PEDP 4 Project
4	e-Tender IDs	1148690
5	Description of works	Furniture supply under PEPD 4 sub component Named " Furniture for school" at selected 130 schools under 21upazilas in Chattogram district. FY 2025-26.
6	Name, Designation & Address of Official Inviting Tender	S M Abdur Rahman District Primary Education Officer, District Primary Education Office, Chattogram
7	This is online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no off-line/ hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/ Firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd	

S M Abdur Rahman
District Primary Education Officer,
District Primary Education Office, Chattogram

GD- 2031

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Time to re-green our country

Policies, projects that threaten green space must be discarded

The impact of rising temperatures on people's health has been in discussion for quite some time, yet policymakers and businesses have largely remained unresponsive to this threat. In this context, we hope that the World Bank's recent study, which highlights both the health and economic consequences of increasing temperatures in Bangladesh, will finally prompt some meaningful action.

The study estimates that Bangladesh lost 250 million workdays and up to \$1.78 billion in 2024 due to heat-related illnesses. Between 1980 and 2023, the country's maximum temperature rose by 1.1 degrees Celsius, with Dhaka experiencing a 1.4-degree increase, making it a hotspot for urban heat. During the same period, the "feels like" temperature has jumped by 4.5 degrees Celsius. Consequently, during summer, more people suffer from persistent coughs, diarrhoea, depression, and anxiety compared to the winter months. The elderly and women are most affected, but people aged 50-65 within the working age group also report these health problems in significant numbers. The study also found that work absenteeism increases with rising temperatures: at 35-37 degrees Celsius, absenteeism averages 0.8 days, but at temperatures above 37 degrees Celsius, it jumps to 1.4 days. Heat disproportionately impacts informal and unskilled workers and the poor, compared to formal, skilled workers and the wealthy.

These findings should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers and businesses alike. Economic growth cannot be sustained if workers' health continues to decline due to increases in heat and absenteeism. Dhaka's heat report also deserves scrutiny. Between 1989 and 2020, the city lost 47 percent of its dense green cover, while its temperature continued to rise. Dhaka has also frequently topped global lists for the worst air quality. Development—not just in Dhaka but across the country—has often come at the expense of parks, trees, and water bodies. Yet both private commercial bodies and public institutions continued building at the cost of the environment, violating laws under the guise of progress.

The World Bank report presents glaring evidence that such progress will not be sustainable in the long run. Northern Bangladesh is already paying the price of global warming, with ground and surface water declining at an alarming rate. In the south, global warming is increasing salinity. Both phenomena are likely to increase the number of climate migrants to cities. There is no time for the government to wait for donor funds to address these issues. Whatever can be done at the national level must be done first, including increasing green spaces in cities and preserving forest cover across the country. Political parties must also prioritise environmental issues that impact health and wellbeing over populist policies. Finally, we urge the interim government and those about to follow to strictly enforce environmental laws, stop unplanned urbanisation, and treat rising temperatures and heatwaves as climate emergencies within a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy.

Woeful state of a national highway

Weak construction, poor planning turned it into a nightmare

We are concerned about the pathetic state of the Khulna-Satkhira highway. Rebuilt at a cost of Tk 160 crore just five years ago, this 64-kilometre road, according to a report, now mostly resembles a broken patchwork of bricks and craters in many places. The misery for travellers begins right at Khulna's Zero Point. From there to Dumuria's Chuknagar, the road is riddled with potholes and treacherous surfaces that become clouded with dust when dry and waterlogged when it rains, causing accidents, vehicle damage, and frequent traffic delays. Around 16,000 vehicles are said to use the highway daily, with many operators claiming that travel time has doubled and repair costs continue to rise.

Reportedly, this once-regional highway was reconstructed by Messrs Mozahar Enterprise in 2020 and later, in January 2023, upgraded to national highway status. But the fate of the road, and indeed its users, hasn't changed. In their defence, officials say that traffic volume has since increased significantly, particularly with goods transported from Bhomra land port to Dhaka, and that this heavy load has worsened the damage. But this should have been anticipated. Predicting expected traffic volume after the inauguration of a new project is a normal part of planning. Unfortunately, we tend to focus too much on politically enabled firms and their greed, overlooking that public officials responsible for construction are equally to blame. Unfortunately, negligent, inefficient, or corrupt officials behind many such poorly executed projects have rarely been held to account, even after the July uprising. This raises concerns about whether the culture of impunity is still being allowed to persist.

While it cannot be denied that the unanticipated and poorly regulated passage of heavy goods trucks did, and continues to, damage the road, the use of substandard construction materials, so often the hallmark of AL-era projects, seems equally responsible. Funding such shoddy work is the most immediate price we pay as taxpayers, with the subsequent sufferings from hastened road deterioration—caused by the accumulation of dust, mud, accidents, and traffic gridlock—making up the longer-term toll on commuters, businesses, and the broader economy.

We, therefore, urge the government, particularly the departments involved with road construction, to take strict measures in this respect. They must ensure that substandard construction practices are rooted out and that those responsible for poor planning and construction are held accountable. It is also vital that future projects are planned and executed properly. The Khulna-Satkhira highway is one of the most important trade routes in the country's southwest, so pending repair works must be conducted urgently.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix dies

On this day in 1970, American rock guitarist and singer Jimi Hendrix, who fused American traditions of blues, jazz, rock, and soul with techniques of British avant-garde rock to redefine the electric guitar in his own image, died of an overdose of barbiturates in London.

Literacy in Bangladesh is still a distant dream



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and adviser to the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

MANZOOR AHMED

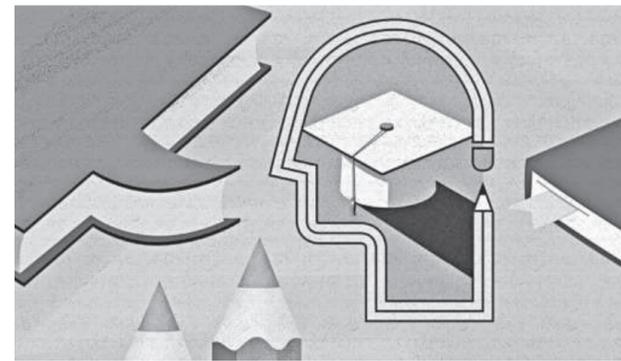
On the occasion of the International Literacy Day on September 8, Primary and Mass Education Adviser Dr Bidhan Ranjan Roy Podder announced that the literacy rate among people above seven years of age, per the Bangladesh Economic Survey 2024, was 77.9 percent—an advance over 76.8 percent in 2022. Interestingly, the adviser was sceptical about the quality of the skills the declared literates actually possessed, and if they could use the skills in their lives. The "functional literacy level" might be much lower, the adviser observed.

Several pertinent questions, then, arise: what really is literacy that is functionally useful in a person's life? How is it measured? And, most importantly, how can it be ensured that citizens, particularly young people, achieve the basic skills that are regarded as the foundation for further learning and success in life?

The conundrum is that, even after completing five years of primary schooling, most children in Bangladesh are not able to read a simple text, write a message, or use the four basic arithmetic rules for calculation, as indicated by the National Student Assessment 2022 data for primary schools. By a World Bank estimate, 51.2 percent of adolescents in the country were in the "learning poor" category in 2024. The lack of ability of 10-14 year-olds to read a short, age-appropriate text is defined as learning poverty.

The Awami League government, during its first tenure (1996-2001), carried out a literacy campaign called the Total Literacy Movement (TLM). People aged 15 years and above were enrolled in courses set up by the politicians' favourite NGOs, and the enrollees were declared to be literate after six months. Quality control and assessment of the skills acquired were ignored. Thus, many upazilas were proclaimed to be free of illiteracy and the official literacy rate increased every year. The TLM project became popularly known as "Total Loss of Money."

The BNP-Jamaat regime of 2001-2006, focused on allegations of corruption and mismanagement of the previous regime, shut down the Directorate of Non-Formal Education, then replaced it with the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE). The bureau reduced authority, staff and



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

budget. New initiatives were lacking. Whatever momentum in non-formal and adult education existed was lost. Some activities continued mainly through the work of various NGOs, which provided literacy and vocational skill training to vulnerable populations.

Assuming power again in 2009, the Hasina government, despite its manifesto pledge of ending illiteracy by 2014, managed to start the Basic Literacy Project by 2018 to teach literacy and life skills to 450,000 people aged 15-45 years in 64 districts. The life skills component was dropped "due to fund crisis." The results remained unclear due to lack of assessment.

The history of literacy education for children and adults in Bangladesh suggests a confusion among some policy and decision-makers about what literacy skills mean and how these are taught, as well as willful denial of the problems. Add to that the absence of political commitment and a culture of impunity to corruption, incompetence and mismanagement.

UNESCO's updated statement (September 2025) about the concept of literacy says, "Literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world." It is a continuum with varying levels of skills ranging from those who can barely recognise letters of the alphabet to those who can use the skills in varying contexts in their life and for further learning.

It is difficult to precisely measure literacy competencies as a multifaceted set of skills. It also may be questionable whether a single statistic can represent the literacy status meaningfully. If a core definition of literacy is taken, the logical approach would be to administer a simple test of one's reading, writing and counting abilities. In practice, a "self-reporting" method is

primary education reform, appointed by the interim government, has made elaborate recommendations on improving students' learning outcome. It has emphasised the importance of language and mathematics as foundational skills, which deserve special attention at the primary stage. The recommendations can be the basis for designing the next phase of primary education development (PEDP5).

Regarding literacy for youth and adults, the BNFE, taking a cautious approach, proposed a second expanded phase of the project called the Skill-Based Literacy for Out-of-School Adolescents (SKILFO), which was recently implemented in Cox's Bazar. It also proposed a three-year project called Alternative Learning Opportunity in one upazila with low literacy rates in each of the 64 districts. The success of these projects will depend on learning and applying the lessons from the long history of past projects that have not produced the intended results.

Recently, a non-formal education development programme was

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formulated by the BNFE, in collaboration with NGOs and academic stakeholders. It anticipated a workable multi-tier partnership model at national, district, upazila and union levels to set up a network of community learning centres and to expand the opportunity for literacy as a first step for lifelong learning. It is premised on a concept of strong partnerships of state and non-state actors; substantial roles for NGOs, community organisations, local government; and supportive and facilitative regulatory processes and mechanisms, along with adequate funding. Ambivalence at the policy-making level about the anticipated strong role of non-state actors appears to have stalled the consideration of the proposal. The political dynamic of policy and decision-making keeps success unattainable in respect of meaningful literacy.

A case for adopting a climate passport



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ZEB FARAH HAQUE

Every year, families in Bhola, Khulna, and Shatkhira lose their homes to floods and erosion. Most move to city slums, where life is extremely precarious. Internal migration is already straining our cities. By 2050, the number of people forced to move due to climate change could reach as high as 20 million. The pressing question is: when lands become uninhabitable and sometimes disappear under water, where do vulnerable people go, and under what law? With rising seas displacing millions, Bangladesh must push for a climate passport to secure dignity and justice for its people.

The climate passport is a proposed legal instrument to protect those displaced by climate change. It would function much like the historical Nansen passport issued to stateless people after World War I, granting them legal status and the right to cross borders. Scholars suggest embedding such a system into existing frameworks like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Platform on Disaster Displacement, and the Global Compact for Migration.

The strength of the idea lies in tackling a critical legal vacuum—the 1951 Refugee Convention does not

cover climate displacement. Though International Human Rights Law offers some protections, it does not include the right to migrate across borders when homes are lost to the sea. Without a legal remedy, millions will be trapped in limbo—neither secure at home, nor recognised abroad.

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the right to life (Article 32), protection of law (Article 31) as well as the right to a healthy environment (Article 18A). Moreover, the Supreme Court, in cases such as *Dr. Mohiuddin Farooque v. Bangladesh* (2003) and *Rabia Bhuiyan, MP v. Ministry of LGRD & others*, has interpreted that Article 32 and 31 also include the right to a healthy environment. But when entire coastal regions like Shatkhira or Khulna become uninhabitable, Dhaka and other cities cannot endlessly absorb these populations. Constitutional protections under such dire circumstances cannot remain confined within shrinking borders. Safeguarding life and dignity then requires pursuing mobility rights beyond the state's territory. Without legal recognition abroad, displaced citizens risk becoming invisible—neither refugees nor secure residents at home.

In this sense, climate displacement

is not only a humanitarian crisis—it is a constitutional and legal obligation. Bangladesh, as both a frontline victim and a moral voice in climate diplomacy, has a duty to articulate this case internationally.

According to experts, with rising sea levels, Pacific small island states, like Kiribati and Tuvalu, will be the first ones to go underwater. Threatened by the same fear, in February 2025, Nauru announced a controversial "climate citizenship" or "golden passport" scheme to raise funds for adaptation and potential relocation. Critics view it as selling nationality, but its message is vividly clear: when territory is at risk, mobility and identity become questions of survival, not of choice. Similarly, climate activists and legal scholars have revived the idea of a climate passport as a structured, rights-based solution. Bangladesh's plight mirrors theirs, though ours involves millions of people under the threat of climate displacement, rather than thousands.

The answer to the question of why a climate passport matters is—(1) Justice: Bangladesh has contributed less than 0.5 percent of global emissions, yet faces devastating consequences. The environmental principle of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) demands that high-emitting nations take on a fair share of responsibility, including supporting climate mobility; (2) Order: A climate passport would ensure legal, predictable, and dignified movement, avoiding chaotic displacement and irregular migration; (3) Dignity: Migration should not strip people of their rights. A climate passport would ensure that losing land does not mean losing their identity, culture, or

protection.

Bangladesh has long led global climate advocacy, chairing the Climate Vulnerable Forum and championing the Loss and Damage funding. The same can be done for climate mobility by pushing internationally for recognition of climate passport at the UNFCCC and within the Global Compact on Migration. Building alliances with small island states and other vulnerable countries to demand minimum standards for recognition is also important, along with preparing domestically by documenting displaced populations, investing in skills training, and negotiating bilateral labour agreements with potential host countries.

Framing the climate passport not as charity but as a legal necessity rooted in human rights and international law will strengthen Bangladesh's case.

The history of global dialogues suggests that wealthy nations are unlikely to agree, but the alternative to not trying is far worse: millions trapped in disaster zones, or uncontrolled flows into overstretched cities. However, experiments like Nauru's golden passports or scholarly proposals for a Nansen-type travel document show that law is already bending under the pressure of rising seas.

Bangladesh cannot stop the Bay of Bengal from advancing towards itself, but it can help reframe global law so that when our people move, they carry not only their belongings but also their rights and dignity. A climate passport is not a utopia. It is an essential beginning to stop the worst nightmare from coming true, and Bangladesh should be at the forefront of making it a reality.

An intellectual by instinct, a revolutionary by choice

This tribute was first published by The Daily Star on January 3, 2022 celebrating the 90th birthday of acclaimed scholar and political commentator Badruddin Umar, who passed away on September 7, 2025. We are republishing the piece in his memory.



Dr Ahrar Ahmad is professor emeritus at Black Hills State University in the US.

AHRAR AHMAD

Badruddin Umar may not necessarily be a very popular person. That statement is a little ironic for two reasons. First, he is the pre-eminent “popular” (people’s) scholar, and second, given his tastes and preferences, he would probably wear that judgement as a badge of honour.

However, he is certainly one of the most revered intellectuals in the Bangla-speaking world—and perhaps beyond. This was made possible both by an oeuvre of research and publications that is celebrated for its lucidity of exposition, sophistication of analysis, and richness of substance, as well as by the life of moral clarity and ideological consistency that he exemplified. This essay will briefly refer to a little of his early academic contributions, a few of his political engagements, and some personal qualities.

His first book, titled *Sampradayikota (Communalism)*, published in 1966, followed by *Sangskritir Songkot (The Crisis of Culture)* in 1967, and *Sangskritik Sampradayikota (Cultural Communalism)* in 1969, heralded the arrival of an iconoclastic thinker—unambiguously progressive, fiercely independent, and totally unafraid to speak his mind.

In this trilogy, he argued that “communalism” was a manufactured construct. It was deliberately contrived and manipulated by those in power to divide and distract the public as part of its strategy to protect and advance their interests. If, as Marx had said, religion was the “opium of the people,” then communalism in Bengal, in Umar’s reading, would be the drug cunningly peddled by the ruling classes.

He made no judgements about faith or religiosity, but referred only to the cynical uses and abuses to which they were put. Indeed, he pointed out that there was no relationship between religion and communalism; while the first could be individual, ritual-oriented, and other-worldly in its objectives, the second is reductionist (human beings identified merely in terms of a narrow group membership), self-consciously judgemental, and this worldly in its ambitions. He also noted that some of our national identity issues—particularly the false dichotomy between being a Muslim or Bangalee that continues to haunt us—are not only irrelevant, but mischievous as well.

While these books certainly gained him recognition as a scholar with a nimble mind and a radical orientation, it was *Purbo Banglar Bhasha Andolon o Tokalin Rajniti (The Language Movement in East Bengal and Contemporary Politics)* published in 1970 that established his presence in the intellectual and cultural landscape of the country. The crisp language, the keen analysis and, beyond everything else, the evidentiary scaffolding of citations and references on which it rested, made this the most substantive and indispensable “intervention” in terms of explaining that consequential “moment” in our history.

Moreover, on the assumption, if not the argument, that this “moment” was neither sudden nor isolated, he provided the larger context of popular struggles and debates within which the “language question” was situated. As National Professor Abdur Razzaq had noted, if he (Umar) published nothing else in his life, he would stand tall as a scholar based on this book alone. Happily for us, Umar did not heed that advice.

Free of sentimental froth, rhetorical

hyperbole, and hero-worshipping sycophancy, this book was remarkable for the tone of detachment and objectivity it displayed. This was difficult to maintain for two reasons. First, he himself was a participant observer and, thus, emotionally exposed (he obtained his MA from Dhaka University in 1955). Second, it incorporated materials from various interviews with people directly involved in the movement, and thus partially relied on memories and recollections that, as researchers well know, can often be selective, tricky and treacherous. But he navigated through this terrain with admirable skill and methodological integrity, and made sure that all claims and assertions were verifiable.

In 1972, the publication of *Chirosthaiy Bondoboste Bangladesher Krishak (The Permanent Settlement Act and the Bengali Peasants)* solidified his standing as a scholar firmly grounded in the framework and categories of Marxist historiography. He pointed out that what was ostensibly an effort in 1793 to systematise and enhance land revenue collections by the East India Company (it had received the *Dewani* in 1765) had a profound impact on the condition of the peasantry, the formation of classes, and the

language issue and assembled extensive documentation relevant to it, mostly official and public but some personal (such as diary entries, most notably of Tajuddin Ahmad), which were also published later in two volumes (in 1984 and 1985). The first book was also significantly expanded both in terms of historical scope and analytical focus, and eventually came to occupy three substantial volumes: the second published in 1975 and

years. All this demanded his time and attention.

While society did not completely lose a scholar, it did gain a dedicated activist. He was willing to sacrifice his academic future, his material security, and even the comforts of his family life for the purpose of advancing the cause of establishing economic justice and human freedom, which would be impossible within the constraints and contradictions of

participating in progressive activism?

Some people simply failed to understand—let alone appreciate—the sheer honesty of his position, the selflessness of his actions, or the high values and ideals that he was trying to uphold. It is important to realise that he was not flaunting his sacrifices for others to see, or setting an example for others to emulate. He was doing all this for himself, his personal dignity, his stern moral discipline.

In this context, it is absolutely necessary to emphasise the importance of the support of his wife throughout his life. Suraiya *chachi* (as I called her) was an elegant, gracious and infinitely patient lady who remained the one constant in his life of professional and intellectual turbulence. They were married in 1959, but instead of being the spouse of a university teacher with the creature comforts and social status it provided, in less than 10 years, she became the partner of a man who did not have a steady source of income, or the hope of ever finding one. She joined Eastern Banking Ltd, became its first female executive, and eventually the manager of its Ladies Branch. She fulfilled her professional responsibilities, tended to all her duties as a wife and a mother, and met various family obligations, with quiet grace and humour.

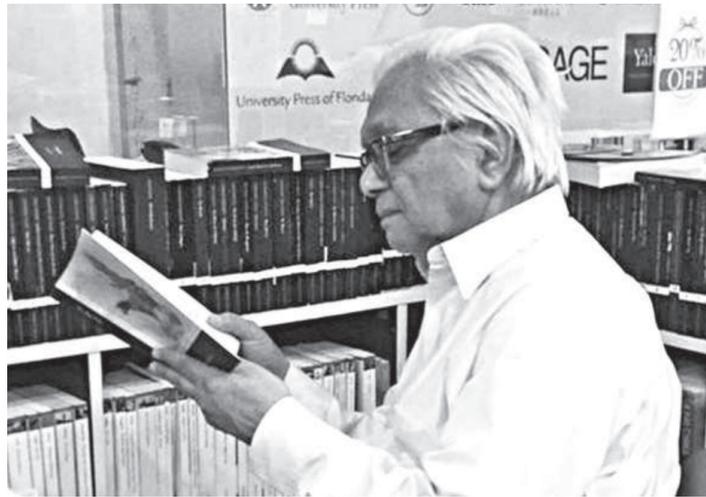
It is possible that some people probably perceived Umar to be rather prickly and forbidding, and some of his pronouncements may have been construed to be a bit too “candid,” alienating or impolitic. It is perhaps correct that he did not suffer fools gladly, and was seldom restrained by the ancient Hindu wisdom which had advised that while everything that is said must be true, not all true things must be said. Hence, he did not hesitate to speak truth to power, or gleefully slay sacred cows and puncture self-inflated balloons, even at the risk of being “politically incorrect.”

And then, there was the “other” Umar that could be witty, sensitive, playful, warm and charming, a delightful raconteur, and a Renaissance man with a wide range of interests and curiosities. He was as comfortable reciting Eliot, Shelley, or Langston Hughes, as Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bishnu Dey, or Faiz Ahmed Faiz; as easily conversant with the pretensions and decadence of the *bhadralok* classes in Bengal as he was with the history of Roman architecture; as eager about the communist movement in Albania as he was with Sukumar Ray’s *Abol Tabol*.

Some may have found his presence to be a bit intimidating. But he could also giggle like a small child, find delight in a butterfly, or be overwhelmed at seeing the Barakor dak bungalow after many years as an adult (a building in Bardhaman which carried fond childhood memories). He would genuinely enjoy those around him—not merely political friends and followers, but members of his extended family whom he remembered and embraced in much tenderness, pride and gratitude (as abundantly revealed in his five-volume memoirs). Also, for a person who usually expressed himself with such confidence and authority, it is remarkable that he pursued the dialectics of personal growth and discovery through a process of constant questioning and self-criticism.

He has lately lamented the fact that he has been ignored in Bangladesh. Not everyone will necessarily agree with that characterisation. It is true that the mainstream media and the dominant patterns of discourse and narration that has developed around current political realities may find him a bit of an irritant. But all truth-tellers are annoying to any insecure person or regime.

On the other hand, many students, fellow travellers and comrades, and a substantial part of the educated public in Bangladesh today have been enlightened by him, inspired by him, and grateful to him. I was in awe of him as a child. I remain so even today.



Badruddin Umar is certainly one of the most revered intellectuals in the Bangla-speaking world.

PHOTO: ARCHIVE

Some people simply failed to understand—let alone appreciate—the sheer honesty of Umar’s position, the selflessness of his actions, or the high values and ideals that he was trying to uphold. It is important to realise that he was not flaunting his sacrifices for others to see, or setting an example for others to emulate.

the third in 1986. There were several other collections of essays and reflections around related themes published in the 1970s and 1980s.

Since then, though there were some commendable academic efforts that carried the impress of his research instincts and erudition, he gradually began to veer towards commentary and criticism and emerged as a feisty polemicist and an astute observer of contemporary society and politics. He never abandoned his scholarly roots, but this newer manifestation was compelled by two factors.

First, it was consistent with the theoretical position that pedagogy can never be ideologically innocent, and that the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is located within a “false consciousness” based on (perhaps unintended) myths and mystifications of the Enlightenment project. On the other hand, activist scholarship rests on the proposition that knowledge must be deployed and practised as part of a repertoire of engagements, with the purpose of raising the emancipatory consciousness of the masses, as well as in ensuring that the communist “line” does not suffer from drift and deviation (as Lenin had done so adeptly).

Second, on a more practical level, Umar became directly involved in organisational activities. He joined the CP-MIL in 1968, became embroiled in intra-party tensions and debates, led the formation of the Committee for Civil Liberties and Legal Aid in 1974 (which challenged the government’s decisions and won the release of some activists who had been incarcerated and tortured) as well as the Famine Resistance Committee formed to combat the devastations of the famine in 1974. He presided over the platform of progressives assembled under the Lakhok Shibir (1981-86), edited the communist weekly *Gonoshokti* (1970-71), *Naya Padaddhani* (1980s), and started to edit the progressive journal *Sangskriti* in 1974 (and continues to shepherd it even today) and, for very small remunerations, was a regular contributor to the weekly *Holiday* and the daily *Pakistan Observer/Bangladesh Observer* for several

capitalist production and exchange relations. The only hope, therefore, would be to expose and defeat that order, and he remained steadfastly focused on that objective. As the old spiritual goes, he kept his “eyes on the prize,” and never blinked.

To that end, he arrived at a dramatic decision. He chaired the departments of political science and sociology at Rajshahi University (which he had joined in 1957), where he was known as a charismatic, articulate and organised classroom instructor, and deeply committed to improving the academic quality of the departments, particularly through expanding course offerings and infusing new and progressive content into the syllabi. He was admired by his students and colleagues, and respected by the university administration. The path to professional success was guaranteed and beckoned seductively. But he decided to forsake it all. He resigned from the university in 1968 to devote himself to “full-time” party work and attendant engagements. He climbed down from the proverbial “ivory tower” and joined the people.

Unwilling to accept any salaried position after that, he also decided to reject any honours and recognitions that could have given even the remotest impression that he had compromised or “sold out.” Thus, he refused *puroshkar* from Adamjee, Phillips, Bangla Academy, and Bangladesh Ithas Parishad, and the Ekushey Padak from the government. There were significant monetary components to these awards apart from the high prestige they carried. But preserving his autonomy and upholding the courage of his convictions were obviously more important to him.

These choices also generated some criticism in certain quarters. Weren’t all these decisions a bit selfish, irresponsible, and unnecessary? Did he think of his family (after all he had several children), and didn’t this impose some uncertainties and privations on them? Was he mocking those who continued to teach, or who accepted various awards and recognitions, and claiming some kind of a superior virtue? Is choosing to embrace relative poverty a necessary condition for

political forces that evolved.

First, the peasants faced cruel, often inhuman, exploitation because of the arbitrary rack-renting practices of the new landowners (*zamindars*) and various layers of middlemen who became part of the colonial apparatus. Second, new class formations evolved not through the organic unfolding of historical phases, but as an abrupt and artificial consequence of colonial exigencies and interests through the new layers of landed and comprador dependencies it created. Third, it led to periodic revolts of the peasants against the practices and prejudices of the oppressors, and also presaged a communal divide in the population, because most peasants tended to be Muslim, and landowners Hindus. This presumably led to different strategies of mobilisation and organisation that both confused and corrupted the crystallising of political solidarity among the people, and distorted the region’s future.

Thus, in just six years, between 1966 and 1972, he had published five hugely influential and widely acclaimed tomes of research and scholarship, and justly earned his well-deserved reputation as one of the most productive and provocative scholars in the country.

He continued his explorations on the

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Grassy expanse
- 6 Repair bill line
- 11 Directional sign
- 12 Wed in haste
- 13 Alpine heroine
- 14 Of yore
- 15 Concur
- 17 Finish
- 18 Numbered rd.
- 19 Rx amounts
- 22 Cart puller
- 23 Unambitious goal
- 24 Short skirts
- 25 Take part
- 27 Shop tool
- 30 Ran
- 31 Greek vowel
- 32 Play division
- 33 Drool
- 35 Use the rink
- 38 Clarifying words
- 39 Spanish snacks
- 40 Like Loki
- 41 Some coasters
- 42 Miser’s problem

DOWN

- 1 African expanse
- 2 Gains by force
- 3 Comes up
- 4 Went cycling
- 5 Approaching zero
- 6 Summer sign
- 7 Totality
- 8 Grocery store
- 9 First game
- 10 Tears
- 16 Canadian coins
- 20 Taking in
- 21 Crunch targets
- 24 Hamm of soccer
- 25 Wolf’s cousin
- 26 Recorded
- 27 Stringent
- 28 Not nervous
- 29 Cautioned
- 30 Ship staffs
- 34 Love, Latin-style
- 36 Young fellow
- 37 Snaky shape

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35			36	37		38			
39						40			
41						42			

YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

R	O	M	P	S		T	E	M	P	I
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	S	T	E	M		T	S	P	S	
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M	E	R	I	T		A	G	R	E	E
N	S	Y	N	C		R	O	Y	A	L

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

'Barir Naam Shahana' to release in theatres tomorrow

Barir Naam Shahana, directed by Leesa Gazi, will be released in Bangladesh on September 19. Produced by Goopy Bagha Productions Limited and Komola Collective, it marks Gazi's first full-length feature.

Based on a true story, the film follows Deepa, a woman in 1990s Bangladesh who defies family and societal pressures after separation to live life on her own terms. Most of the shooting took place in a Bangladeshi town, with some scenes filmed in the UK, using on-location sound instead of dubbing for authenticity.

Anan Siddiqua stars as Deepa, alongside Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Lutfor Rahman George, Iresh Zaker, Kazi Ruma, Kamrunnahar Munni, and others.



CHAYANIKA CHOWDHURY 24 years and still going strong

MAISHA TASNIM SRESITHA

In 2001, Chayanika Chowdhury hadn't gone to "Light & Shadow" to direct – she had simply dropped by to collect a payment for another project. On that same set, a new script was being discussed, and she casually asked producer Mujibur Rahman about who would be directing it. His answer startled her: "You." The old saying "Think before you act" never suited her. "I act first and think later," she laughs. "Within two seconds I said yes." That impulsive decision became the first step of a filmmaking journey she has now pursued relentlessly for twenty-four years.

On October 28, 2001, at exactly 8:40pm on BTV, she debuted with her directorial drama, *Ek Jibone*. Actress Tamalika Karmakar served as executive producer, and Zaydan Rabbi backed the project under the AdMedia banner. "There wasn't really a budget," Chayanika remembers. "I carried everything from home—costumes, candles, even a blower to fake rain."

Music threaded through those early

"We speak of who is worthy, but worth becomes visible only after a platform allows you to show it. Recognise the space that extended that first opportunity, it is consequential. I intend to validate each opportunity through my craft, but the opportunity itself must first be offered."

plays. Bappa Mazumder and Fahmida Nabi would hand her unreleased songs before the albums even came out. There was no YouTube, no instant metrics. "Today, we celebrate a million views," she smiles. "Back then, nine crore people tuned in at the same hour; no repeats—miss it and it was gone."

Her big test arrived with *Tomake Chuye*, an NTV Eid special that

reunited Bipasha Hayat and Shomi Kaiser on the same screen after a decade—a pairing audiences had not seen together in years. She took on the challenge and brought them back for the drama in 2005.

Speaking of platforms and worth, the director remains pragmatic. "Someone has to create the opening," she says. "We speak of who is worthy, but worth becomes visible only after a platform allows you to show it. Recognise the space that extended that first opportunity, it is consequential. I intend to validate each opportunity through my craft, but the opportunity itself must first be offered."

After twenty-four uninterrupted years, she rejects any notion of completion. "I once thought this span was enough," she admits. "Now I feel there's far more to do." Her signature love stories, she says, belong on OTT for a new generation to measure. All these years in filmmaking, she finds herself more determined than ever, certain that her story as a director remains very much unfinished.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Abul Foyez appointed Director General of Shilpakala Academy



Abul Foyez Md Alauddin Khan, Additional Secretary (Administration) at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, has been given additional responsibility as Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The post had remained unsettled since August 5, last year, after Liaquat Ali Lucky resigned following the fall of the Awami League government.

Subsequent appointees, including theatre director Syed Jamil Ahmed and acting DG Mohammad Wares Hossain, also left the role.

Nearly six months later, Abul Foyez formally assumed office this week. In his first meeting with staff, he urged employees to view their work not merely as a job, but as a "mission and vision," emphasising the Academy's vital role in promoting cultural practices, harmony, and aesthetic values nationwide.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Monkey Trial'

Batighar Theatre presents its silver jubilee production of *Monkey Trial*, a play inspired by the 1925 Scopes Trial in the United States. Through the story of a teacher convicted for teaching evolution, the production explores enduring conflicts between science, religion, and freedom of thought, raising urgent contemporary questions.

DATE: FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 19, 2025
TIME: 7:15PM TO 9PM
VENUE: EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE HALL, BSA



NEWS

Expansion okayed

FROM PAGE 12
THE APPROVAL PROCESS

The HSD approved the expansion of the nine health facilities on September 4 and wrote to the director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and civil surgeons of the nine districts, seeking proposals for manpower recruitment and purchase of furniture and equipment within 15 days.

Explaining the expansion process, a top DGHS official said that when a medical facility sees a rise in admissions or the occupancy rate, it usually applies to DGHS for increasing the number of beds.

Upon receiving the application via DGHS, the health ministry verifies information before giving approval, said the official seeking anonymity.

In reply to a query, the official said the duration of the approval process depends on the persuasion and efforts of officials at a given health facility.

Once the ministry approves the application, it seeks proposals from the facility over manpower recruitment and equipment purchase.

Another DGHS official said it usually takes around 60 weeks – from submission of a proposal for equipment purchase to the installation of the devices at a facility.

The official noted that the process of recruiting manpower takes at

least two years, as it involves several agencies. However, in the meantime, the health authorities can temporarily assign doctors to any facility to address manpower shortage.

MANPOWER CRISIS

All nine health complexes are operating with fewer doctors and nurses than the approved number of posts, according to upazila health and family welfare officers (UHFO) in the nine upazilas.

At Nikli Upazila Health Complex, there are only four doctors against 17 sanctioned posts, Sajib Ghosh, UHFO of Nikli, told this correspondent on September 8.

He further said the facility in the haor area has 24 nurses against 29 sanctioned posts. Around 500 outpatients receive treatment, while 45 to 50 patients are admitted to the health complex every day.

Replying to a question, Sajib said he wrote five times to the authorities over the past three years, seeking the facility's expansion.

In Jashore's Chowgachha Upazila, only 10 doctors are working against 32 sanctioned posts at the health complex there.

About 700 outpatients are treated and around a hundred inpatients are admitted to the facility daily, said Ahsanul Mizan Rumi, UHFO of Chowgachha.

At Balaganj Upazila Health Complex, only six doctors and 11

nurses have to deal with 300 to 350 outpatients and around 50 inpatients daily, Happy Das, UHFO of Balaganj told this newspaper.

A similar situation prevails in the other six health facilities.

Acknowledging the manpower crisis, Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said, "It is true that some health facilities did not receive the required manpower even five years after the approval of their expansion."

"However, the manpower crisis is likely to ease within a year," he told The Daily Star on September 8.

The process of appointing 3,000 doctors is underway, and they are expected to join the service within two months, he said.

Sayedur further said the ministry has recommended recruiting 2,000 more doctors through a special BCS examination. Besides, around 3,800 doctors are expected to be recruited through three regular BCS examinations.

"We hope that the entire recruitment process will be completed within a year."

Asked whether any lobbying influenced the approval of facility expansions, he said such practices may have taken place during the past government's tenure, but not under the current administration.

Free, fair and festive polls

FROM PAGE 12
The chief adviser said public enthusiasm was rising, particularly among young people, as student body elections had resumed in universities after long intervals, some returning after more than three decades.

"Bangladesh will witness a new beginning through the February election. The general election will be peaceful, clean, transparent, and festive," he said.

He expressed confidence that record numbers of young voters would turn out, many casting their ballots for the first time in over 15 years.

During the hour-long meeting, the two sides discussed the interim government's reform agenda, the

European Union's continued support for Bangladesh's development and democratic transition, and the ongoing Rohingya humanitarian crisis.

The MEPs expressed optimism that the upcoming election would prove a pivotal moment for the country.

A Dutch MEP observed that Bangladesh may be among the few countries where "things are moving in the right direction."

Yunus thanked the EU for its steadfast support and urged increased funding for the more than one million Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh. In particular, he sought assistance to help reopen schools in the refugee camps, which were recently shut down due to an aid shortfall.

Pak qualify

FROM PAGE 12
just around 7:00pm (Bangladesh Time) yesterday

Just before the delayed start of the Pakistan-UAE game, the PCB released a statement saying that Pycroft "apologised to the manager and captain of the Pakistan cricket team", having termed the incident a result of a "miscommunication".

Earlier, the Pakistan camp claimed that Pycroft requested their captain Salman Ali Agha to not shake hands with India skipper Suryakumar Yadav during the toss for their Group A match last Sunday.

Suryakumar avoided shaking his Pakistani counterpart's hand at the toss and he and his team did not shake hands with the Pakistan players after the match as well, later saying that it was done in alignment with the BCCI and the Indian government.

Govt to reclaim khas land to save farmland

FROM PAGE 12

He said, "We have made a decision today that a large amount of government khas land remains unused. This information will be kept centrally. Whenever a new project is undertaken and land is required, the nearby khas land will be used first."

Wahiduddin said, "There is now serious concern that with increasing urbanisation, industrialisation, and government activities, many projects are being approved at the expense of farmland while plenty of khas land remains unused. Why should farmland be taken instead of that land?"

The Ecnc yesterday approved 13 projects with a total expenditure of

Tk 8,333 crore.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the country lost one percent of its net cropped area, falling to 19.83 lakh acres in 2023 from 20.08 lakh acres in 2020, the largest decline in a decade.

The net and gross cropped areas have both been shrinking in recent years as farmland is steadily lost to housing, roads, infrastructure, and industrial expansion, raising concerns among officials and experts about future food security.

Wahiduddin also expressed concern about the low implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in the current fiscal year.

Act now to stop Gaza genocide

FROM PAGE 12
emphasising that Israel's actions meet the criteria.

Tarique said a new UN commission report is detailed and direct in concluding that Israel is responsible for this crime against Palestinians in Gaza.

"No more excuses or hiding behind

propaganda can continue. History teaches us many lessons about acting morally and bravely, even when it may not be the easiest path. We cannot stand by when the very existence of Palestinians is at risk," he said.

Tarique called upon Bangladeshis around the world, whether at home or abroad, to use their collective voice

Implementation in the first two months has reached its lowest point in at least 16 years, with about Tk 5,715 crore being spent during the period. At the same time of the last fiscal year, ADP implementation was about Tk 7,143 crore.

Wahiduddin said the political situation is calm in the current fiscal year. "We had expected that the pace of ADP implementation would accelerate from the very beginning of the fiscal year, because the previous excuses will no longer hold," he said.

An inter-ministerial meeting with all ministries and divisions has been called next week to discuss ways to speed up implementation.

Polytechnic students block roads

FROM PAGE 1
Satrasta intersection in Tejgaon, triggering traffic congestions on adjacent roads.

Witnesses said students gathered on the campus in the morning before marching towards Satrasta around 11:15am.

They continued the blockade until 2:30pm and left after announcing fresh protest programmes for today.

Mashfiq Islam Dewan, president of Technical Students Movement of Bangladesh, said they would wage a tougher movement until their demands were met.

"Today [yesterday], students of all polytechnic institutes across the country staged sit-ins, demos, and blockades at key points in their respective districts. Tomorrow [today], we will paste the unjust three-point demands of the BSC engineering students on scarecrows across polytechnic institutes and set them on fire as a symbolic protest,"

he said.

The four-point demand of protesting diploma students includes ensuring the maximum punishment for those who, under the banner of the Engineering Rights Movement, threatened them; immediately stopping all state activities in support of what they termed the "unreasonable" three-point demand of BSC engineering students; fully implementing the six-point demand framework and recommendations raised by the Technical Students' Movement of Bangladesh; and introducing a one-channel education system in engineering.

Similar rail and road blockade programmes were observed yesterday in Kushtia, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Tangail, Pabna, Bogura, Cumilla, Barishal, and Gazipur.

The conflict between polytechnic (diploma) students and BSC engineering students has been going on for a long time. Polytechnic

students have been waging protests to press home various demands, including converting the diploma engineering programme into a full four-year course, and ensuring that only diploma holders can apply for the post of deputy assistant engineer (Grade-10) and equivalent positions.

On the other hand, BSC engineering students' three-point demand includes recruitment for Grade-9 (assistant engineer or equivalent) posts based on competitive examinations with a minimum qualification of a BSc in engineering; scrapping the existing 100 percent quota for diploma holders in Grade-10 (sub-assistant engineer or equivalent) posts; and allowing BSc and MSc degree holders to apply for those positions as well.

On August 27, the government formed an eight-member committee, headed by Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan, to examine the demands raised by graduate and diploma engineers.

REFLECTIONS

Exploring the modern concerns in 'Homer's epic' in light of Nolan's adaptation



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

ZARIN JUNAINAH ANAM

My love for the *Percy Jackson* series transformed reading *The Odyssey* from an academic obligation into an act of curiosity. The internal and physical battles, the poetic descriptions, and the vivid imagery sustained this interest. Composed in the late eighth century BC, Homer's epic follows Odysseus as he struggles to return to Ithaca, a journey that takes 10 years after the Trojan War. Meanwhile, his wife Penelope fends off suitors vying for her hand and the throne, while their son Telemachus searches for news of his missing father. Today, this classical mythos has reentered modern discourse as anticipation grows around Christopher Nolan's forthcoming adaptation of *The Odyssey* (slated for release in 2026), raising questions about whether his reimagining will remain faithful to the heart of the story.

Nolan's style of storytelling is often fragmented, as he explores themes of memory, identity, and the passage of time. This approach resonates with Homer's use of medias res and flashbacks, which bring Odysseus's trials into focus and reestablish his strength as both warrior and strategist. These flashbacks do more than narrate his fall from divine

grace; they also evoke the post-traumatic memories of the Trojan War, positioning the epic as a meditation on loss and isolation rather than a straightforward heroic voyage. Similarly, Nolan's films, renowned for their cerebral complexity, often chart the psychological depths of a protagonist across long stretches of time. Yet, as in Homer's epic, intellectual engagement must remain balanced with emotional resonance, which is inseparable from the divine and unseen forces that shape the narrative.

The beauty of *The Odyssey* lies in the dynamic presence of the Greek gods, who intervene in Odysseus's life while still leaving room for human choice and consequence. Athena's guidance and protection contrast sharply with Poseidon's vengeance, which is provoked when Odysseus blinds his son, Polyphemus. The hero's arrogance in taunting the Cyclops heightens this tension between predestination and free will. A film adaptation that leans too heavily toward mythic determinism or human agency risks collapsing the ambivalence that lies at the core of the story.

This concern extends to Nolan's cinematic techniques. His long runtimes and large-scale format seem well suited to capturing the grandeur of an epic, yet

his preference for realism and minimal CGI may undercut the mythical creatures and fantastical landscapes that define *The Odyssey*. The poem is not only philosophical and intellectual but also a tapestry of imagination, and downplaying its chimerical elements would diminish the folkloric traditions that enrich its narrative.

Beyond imagery, *The Odyssey* also foregrounds cultural codes such as xenia, or guest-friendship, which functions as a moral test. The Phaeacians' generosity secures their role in Odysseus's safe return, while Polyphemus's cannibalism brands him as uncivilised. Yet, Odysseus's invocation of Zeus to demand hospitality from the Cyclops reflects a colonial mindset, as he projects his own cultural norms as universal truths. A literal translation of this episode risks portraying him less as a clever strategist and more as an ethnocentric figure blinded by hubris.

Equally significant is the portrayal of women in the epic. While figures such as Athena, Calypso, and Circe wield considerable power, mortal women remain confined to the margins of the narrative. Penelope, though praised for her intelligence, is celebrated primarily for her chastity and her role as the faithful wife to be reclaimed by Odysseus. Even her

weaving trick to delay the suitors functions as evasion rather than authority, and her true moment of intelligence occurs only within the domestic sphere, when she tests Odysseus's identity. Strikingly, she is entirely absent from the climactic battle, comically asleep while violence unfolds around her. Nolan's history of underdeveloped female characters raises the question of whether he will reinforce this masculine focus, reducing women to passive figures or objects of voyeuristic pleasure.

Ultimately, *The Odyssey* is not solely the story of Odysseus. Its epic quality emerges from the breadth of its poetry, shaped by an omniscient narrator and multiple perspectives. While Homer's structural devices align closely with Nolan's stylistic techniques, the filmmaker's treatment of the epic's philosophical, religious, and mythical dimensions will determine whether his adaptation succeeds in honoring the spirit of the poem or reduces it to a spectacle stripped of its depth.

Zarin Junainah Anam is an English Literature major and a day-dreamer. She also writes at *Cha-time with Junta on Substack* because life's always better with a little drama, a little bit of sarcasm, and far too many cups of tea.

WHAT WE'RE READING THIS WEEK

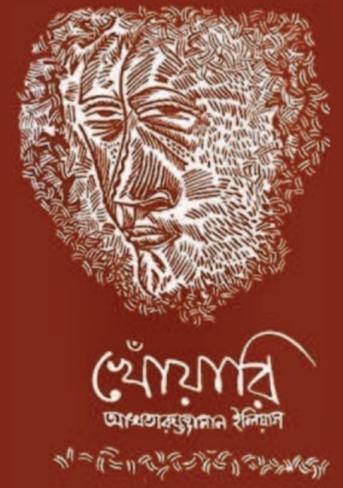
MAISHA SYEDA

Khoari (first published in 1982) Akhteruzzaman Elias
Akhteruzzaman Elias needs no introduction. *Khoari* is an anthology of four short stories by the prolific writer of novels like *Chilekothar Shepai* (1987) and *Khwabnama* (1996). In this collection, the writer explores not only universally resonant and time transcendent themes like sexuality, old age, lust, and death but also postcolonial ones like race, occupation, displacement, and sense of belonging. The titular story "Khoari" revolves on a house of a local Hindu family in old Dhaka, which was looted and grabbed by the Biharis in the war of 1971. The occupants then disappear after the Pakistan army's defeat, but soon after, a new conflict emerges: the liberation forces who had led the war to turn their attention to the same house, attempting to seize it from the family under the pretext of supervising the area "properly."

In the typical style of Elias, he uses colloquial language and hones in on intricate cultural connotations in the collection to bring forth the horrors of human life, especially in the context of occupation and war, with little to no resolution to these conflicts.

At a time when genocide is unfolding across Palestine and Gaza remains under occupation, the world watches—some helplessly, and others, complicit in benefiting from the atrocity. In this moment, *Khoari* feels especially resonant, reminding us of the urgency to take a bold and unambiguous stand against the oppressors.

Maisha Syeda is a writer, artist, lecturer at North South University, and sub-editor at Star Books and Literature.



BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Is this the end of growth as we have known it?

Review of 'Growth: A Reckoning' (Penguin Books, 2024) by Daniel Susskind

THEODORE GRIFFIN

The world only began to experience notable economic growth in the late 19th century. Even then, it was the reserve of heavily industrialised nations. Thanks to the mercantilist policies of Europe's empires, this meant that territories like the Bengal weren't merely prevented from industrialising, but deindustrialised.

Meanwhile, sooty corners of northern Europe and America steamed ahead, eventually spewing their expansionist economic systems onto the rest of the world. Yet measurements of gross domestic product wouldn't appear until almost a century later. The boom-and-bust years of the 1870s-90s came and went with nobody any wiser as to their causes. Whether our economies were growing or shrinking, we simply had no clue. Having a means to calculate GDP had therefore become desirable.

Even as late as the Great Depression in 1929, world governments still lacked any means to measure GDP. American President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was largely a statistical groping in the dark. In fact, the American economy wouldn't fully recover until 1942, when investment and production soared to meet wartime demands.

It was during the Second World War that precise methods to measure GDP were established. At this time, John Maynard Keynes in his book *How to Pay for the War: A Radical Plan for the Chancellor of the Exchequer* (Macmillan and Co., 1940) began to define the way we

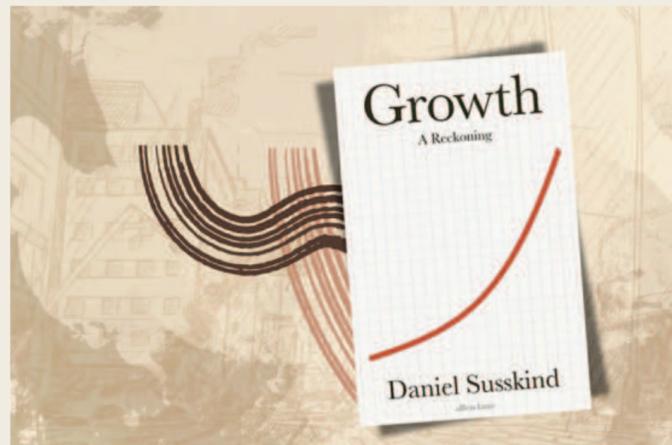


ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

would do so for years to come.

The Cold War, too, was as much a race of production as it was a scramble to out-spy and out-contain hostile ideologies. Nikita Khrushchev declared in 1956 that it was the USSR's imperative to eclipse the world's capitalist nations in per capita output. The Marshall Plan, which lifted America's allies from their post-war squalor, stipulated that recipients must calculate and report their GDPs. This placed growth centre stage.

The immense growth that followed postwar reconstruction in Europe coupled

with the Keynesian statism shaped in their wartime economies. This led to the creation of expansive welfare, healthcare, and education systems.

But now that it is faced with the longest period of stagnation since the beginning of the postwar period, the rich world is scrambling for answers that may keep its expensive social models alive.

King's College London's Daniel Susskind duly enters the debate with *Growth: A Reckoning*. In it, he reminds us that growth has been associated in every country with

higher living standards and longevity. In 1950, two thirds of the world lived in extreme poverty. Now only one tenth does.

Yet economic growth is also bringing upon us an ecological disaster of Biblical proportions. The imposition on certain developing countries of free market policies has encouraged cash cropping and, at times, stagnation. Highly globalised economies have also seen disruption to their traditional communities. As economist Joseph Stiglitz said, "in the quest to increase GDP we may end up in a society where citizens are worse off."

One touted solution is that of 'degrowth': deliberately shrinking the economy. But Susskind states that this would involve plunging the vast majority of the world's population into poverty. Current provisions of healthcare and education, already deemed globally inadequate, would necessarily shrink. For Susskind, this amounts to throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

After all, those who support degrowth believe that there will be an eventual recession anyway, due to the excesses of current growth. It's dissonant to then claim that we need to instate it now, Susskind argues. The difference, a 'degrowth' might respond, is that their scenario tries to steer us away from systemic ecological collapse. The alternative doesn't.

It's the enormity of the climate crisis that *Growth* frustratingly fails to address. In its very short history, vast economic growth has already set us on a path of utter self destruction. The nations who have

benefitted least from growth are also the most vulnerable. This truth overshadows any celebration of the reduction in world poverty that we have achieved over the past few decades.

For Susskind, though, there's no reason to believe that future economic growth needs to be associated with greater emissions. Many countries have managed to grow their economies while reducing emissions, including the United States and many European states. But that is not to say that their economies have become remotely sustainable.

By extension, why should we believe that the 'decoupling' of emissions and growth can surpass the point at which we are able to avoid climate catastrophe? Susskind admits to there being a trade-off. Tackling the USD 1 trillion the world spends on subsidising fossil fuels could be a start.

Growth is a comprehensive guide that initiates the reader into the silently existential issue of our age. Making sense of the dilemmas levied in the book will be key to our survival.

Susskind writes in an approachable way. He guides uninitiated readers through important contemporary ethical problems related to growth, its history, and potential future. This should be considered required reading for all those struggling to understand where the climate crisis, social problems, and world's economy intersect.

Theodore Griffin, a student of philosophy, languages, and politics, splits his time between France and Scotland.

RIVALRY DECIDE TIGERS' DESTINY

EKUSH TAPADER FROM ABU DHABI

As the Asia Cup group stage draws to a close, Bangladesh find themselves in an all-too-familiar position: waiting on others; calculators and equations in hand.

Their narrow win over Afghanistan on Tuesday kept hopes alive, but their fate in the eight-team competition no longer rests in their own hands. To reach the next round, Super Four, the Tigers must rely on Sri Lanka, a side who beat them convincingly earlier in the tournament.

Since 2018, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have forged a modern-day rivalry, fiery on the field and spiced off it with the famous "Nagin dance" exchanges. Yet today, all that matters for Bangladesh is that the islanders prevail against the Afghans in Abu Dhabi.

If Sri Lanka win, the calculations end there. If they lose, only a heavy defeat will give the Tigers the door to sneak through.

Yesterday afternoon, the Bangladesh players set out on their 150-kilometre journey from Abu Dhabi to Dubai. Some carried their



Sri Lanka and Afghanistan squared off in eight T20Is, with the Lankans winning five and the rest three going in the Afghans' favour.

Sri Lanka, however, lost their recent T20I clash against Afghanistan -- a three-run defeat in Dambulla in February last year.

Meanwhile, in Asia Cup T20 contests, both teams have one win each in their two meetings so far.

Interestingly, Afghanistan have never won chasing 150-plus against any Test-playing Asian nations in T20Is.



like this is tough. We've been here before. Our fate is in our own hands," he said.

That's what makes the Abu Dhabi fixture one of those rare moments multi-nation tournaments produce. Two sides fighting for survival, while a third watches nervously from afar. The stakes ripple across borders -- Bangladesh contingent and fans in Dubai; their fans back home; even neutrals following the drama of the Asia Cup.

For now, Bangladesh's hopes ride on their rivals. It is a strange alliance, but cricket often serves up such twists. Should Sri Lanka win, Bangladesh will live to fight another day -- and perhaps even meet the islanders again in the Super Four.

One day of friendship. The next, back to claws and fangs; courtesy for competition. The irony isn't lost. A team humbled by Sri Lanka earlier in the tournament, and who would normally relish seeing them stumble, are now forced to pin their hopes on those very rivals.

Like a T20 match, the colours keep changing.

favourite meals for the ride; a brief pause that felt like the interval of a movie -- the audience spilling into the lobby to grab popcorn before the story resumes.

Around the hotel, Sri Lankan players could be seen in relaxed mood before their practice session. Former all-rounder Upul Chandana, now their fielding coach, shared a few smiles and words with the Bangladesh players; a fleeting moment of warmth between rivals.

Whether Bangladesh will train in Dubai on September 19 or fly back home will largely depend on the Sri Lankans. The players have tried to sound indifferent, but the tension is clear.

Spinner Nasum Ahmed said, "What's meant to be, will be." A neat line, though beneath the calm words lies quiet anticipation.

Meanwhile, news has reached Charith Asalanka and his teammates that Bangladesh

fans will temporarily support Sri Lanka. A Sri Lankan journalist said the players find it rather amusing. Sri Lanka captain Asalanka himself was in a jovial mood yesterday, a light-heartedness Bangladesh will be hoping survives the contest.

Afghanistan, for their part, know only one thing matters: victory. All-rounder Gulbadin Naib admitted the challenge but embraced the pressure. "Every match in tournaments

TIGERS' SUPER FOUR EQUATION

A win for Sri Lanka against Afghanistan at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi tonight will ensure Bangladesh's progress to Super Four of the Asia Cup as runners-up from Group B. Sri Lanka would qualify as group champions

However, in case of an Afghanistan victory, the margin would need to be a big one for Bangladesh to progress alongside Rashid Khan and Co.

If Afghanistan bat first, they would need to beat the Lankans by 65 or more runs to help the Tigers' cause.

If Afghanistan chase, then Bangladesh's only hope would be if Afghanistan reach the target with 50 balls to spare, as that would push Sri Lanka below the Tigers in net run rate.

However, just a victory for Afghanistan would mean Sri Lanka and Afghanistan progress.

Nasum soars under pressure

EKUSH TAPADER FROM ABU DHABI

On Wednesday, security guards at Abu Dhabi's Park Rotana Hotel, where the Bangladesh players are residing, did not allow media lenses inside. While the touring journalists were wondering what to do, Nasum Ahmed, the Tigers savior from the night before against Afghanistan, appeared outside on the roadside with a bandaged thumb.

Bangladeshi cricketers are often heavily influenced by social media, and Nasum is no exception.

Just before the Asia Cup, discussions around his personal matters on social media were troubling him. As one-sided comments fueled a social media trial against him, he expressed his frustrations to close ones but chose to respond with silence.

Upon arriving in the UAE, he threw

In an international career spanning four-and-half years, Nasum feels he has already written a few comeback stories.

himself into training, knowing fully well that he will not get picked in the XI from the start, but whenever the chance came, he had to give everything as failure would only worsen the trolling.

He walked onto the field against



Afghanistan on Tuesday for his first match in this year's Asia Cup, carrying a mountain of pressure. For the Tigers too, it was a do-or-die contest as a defeat would seal their exit from the tournament.

Defending 154 runs, the left-arm spinner bowled the first over and gave Bangladesh an ideal start. His first delivery skidded a bit, the seam making it look like a pacer's in-swing, and struck left-hander Sedikullah Atal on the pads, who didn't even bother to review after being adjudged LBW.

Nasum then bowled five dot deliveries on the trot to turn it into a maiden wicket over, putting the Afghan batters under

pressure straight away. He ended the night with two wickets for just 11 runs in four overs, earning the player-of-the-match award.

The 30-year-old had hurt his right thumb while trying to stop a ball in the match. That same finger was wrapped in a temporary bandage the next day. When asked about his condition before leaving for Dubai, he said, "Yes, there was pain, but now it's okay. Hopefully it won't be a problem."

During the ICC World Cup in 2023, his name got tangled in an incident involving head coach Chandika Hathurusingha. Since then, his white-ball career has drifted off a bit, him getting called up for one series but getting discarded in the next.

In an international career spanning four-and-half years, Nasum feels he has already written a few comeback stories. But considering the context and circumstances, this one felt extra special. "No, there were quite a few like this before. But yesterday was a little more special. Yesterday was a do-or-die match for us. That's why it feels extra special."

He has to live with the constant uncertainty of being in and out of the squad. If the team doesn't play an extra spinner, he usually doesn't get into the XI. For Nasum, the challenge has always been to stay ready. "To tell the truth, I'm always prepared to play. Whenever the chance comes, I try to give my best. Alhamdulillah, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but for this I give countless thanks to Allah that I could perform like this."



U-17s start SAFF campaign against Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's bid to regain the title of the regional youth championship begins today in Sri Lanka, where the men in red and green will face Nepal in their opening group match of the SAFF Under-17 Championship in Colombo, with the match kicking off at 7:30 pm (Bangladesh time).

Since their triumph in the U-15 youth championship in 2018, two-time champions Bangladesh have remained trophyless despite reaching the finals of both the U-16 and U-17 championships in 2023 and 2024.

Nepal began their campaign strongly, securing a 2-0 victory over Sri Lanka on the opening day of the tournament on Monday.

In previous youth tournaments, Nepal have had a slight edge over Bangladesh, beating them three times, losing twice, and drawing once in six meetings. Therefore, this encounter will not be an easy task for Bangladesh, a fact well recognised by captain Nazmul Huda Faisal.

"Nepal are always strong opponents but we are ready and committed to giving our 100 percent."



Jayasuriya's calm vs Bangladesh's coaching void

EKUSH TAPADER FROM ABU DHABI

Sanath Jayasuriya's transformation from explosive opener to calm, measured coach has reshaped Sri Lanka's dressing room. His adaptability, once seen in the way he revolutionised ODI Powerplay batting, now shows in the freedom and confidence he instills in his players. Under his guidance, youngsters like Kamil Mishara are thriving with clarity and assurance. In stark contrast, Bangladesh continue to search for such leadership among their own coaches. Despite figures like Mohammad Salahuddin earning domestic acclaim, no local coach has truly impacted the national side. Even after 25 years of Test status, Bangladesh's coaching void remains unfilled.

****Read full story on The Daily Star's website**



Dusan Vlahovic celebrates after scoring Juventus' second goal in their Champions League opener at home against Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday. The Serbian striker and English defender Lloyd Kelly scored in stoppage time to inspire a dramatic Juventus escape as they secured a 4-4 draw, with all eight goals coming in the second half. The hosts trailed 4-2 when substitute Vlahovic grabbed his second of the night in the fourth minute of stoppage time, before he set up Kelly two minutes later to secure a point.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Haaland eyes fastest UCL 50, Newcastle brace for Barcelona

STAR SPORTS DESK

Matchday 1 of the Champions League group stage resumes on Thursday with another round of high-profile clashes across Europe. Manchester City's meeting with Napoli and Newcastle's showdown against Barcelona headline the night, while elsewhere Sporting CP host Kazakhstan's Kairat Almaty and Frankfurt face Galatasaray. Early kick-offs see Club Brugge welcome Monaco and Copenhagen take on Bayer Leverkusen

Manchester City vs Napoli

All eyes will be on Erling Haaland as Manchester City prepare for their Champions League opener against Napoli. The Norwegian has scored 49 goals in 48 appearances in the competition and is on the brink of becoming the 10th player to reach the landmark of 50 goals, potentially the fastest ever, beating Ruud van Nistelrooy's record (62 matches).

Haaland arrives in red-hot form, having netted five goals for Norway

during the international break and following it up with a derby brace in City's 3-0 win over Manchester United. The 25-year-old already has five goals in four Premier League games this season.

City are unbeaten in their last 21 home group-stage matches (W18 D3), scoring three or more in 13 of their last 16. Pep Guardiola, however, has a negative record against Napoli coach Antonio Conte, losing four of their seven managerial meetings.

The night will also mark a poignant return for Kevin De Bruyne, who left City this summer after a decade of service, joining Napoli on a free transfer. The Belgian racked up 108 goals, 170 assists, and 16 major trophies in 422 appearances during his time in Manchester.

City have the upper hand historically against Napoli, winning both games in 2017-18 after going winless in their first two meetings in 2011-12. Napoli, meanwhile, have never won away to an English club in European competition (P12 W0 D3 L9).



Newcastle vs Barcelona

At St James' Park, Newcastle return to Champions League action without former star Alexander Isak, who moved to Liverpool in the summer. Eddie Howe's side lack proven firepower at this level, with only Joelinton, Dan Burn, and Fabian Schar among their current players to have scored in the competition.

Summer signing Nick Woltemade has offered early promise, scoring the winner against Wolves at

the weekend. Youssef En-Nesyri and Anthony Elanga could also be decisive additions, although injuries persist with Jacob Ramsey sidelined.

Barcelona, meanwhile, arrive without teenage sensation Lamine Yamal, who suffered a groin injury on international duty. Alejandro Balde, Gavi, and Marc-Andre ter Stegen are also absent, though Frankie de Jong is fit.

Despite the setbacks, Hansi Flick's side retain attacking menace. Raphinha, who was involved in a competition-high 21 goals last season (13 goals, 8 assists), will be central to Barca's chances. Striker Robert Lewandowski has scored nine goals in his last seven appearances in the league phase of the Champions League, while Raphinha found the net 16 times in his last 16 games in this competition.

Newcastle have managed just one win in their last eight Champions League outings (D3 L4), while Barcelona look to lay down an early marker in their quest to reclaim European glory.



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Free, fair and festive polls in February

Yunus assures European Parliament members



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday reaffirmed his government's commitment to holding a free, fair, transparent, and festive general election in early February next year, ahead of Ramadan.

He gave the assurance during a meeting with a delegation of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), led by Mounir Satouri, at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka.

"We have already announced the timeline for the election. It will be held in early February, just before Ramadan," Yunus told the visiting delegation.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Farmers passing busy days harvesting paddy that has started to ripen in Rajshahi's Barind region. The photo was taken in Chhoyghati village of Godagari upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Act now to stop Gaza genocide

Tarique urges world leaders

STAR REPORT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has called upon the international community to take immediate and decisive action against what he terms the Israeli genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

"The world must now take immediate action to take genuine steps enshrined in international law and human morality against the Israeli genocide," he said in a statement on his verified Facebook page early yesterday.

The BNP leader also urged the international community to use all economic, political, and diplomatic avenues to ensure an immediate and lasting ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, reports UNB.

Citing the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), he pointed to the definition of genocide as "the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group,"



SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Govt to reclaim khas land to save farmland

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken an initiative to identify and reclaim khas land across the country in a bid to stop the use of agricultural land for infrastructure projects.

Future government projects will be implemented on nearby khas land instead of farmland, with priority given to preserving cultivable areas, said officials.

The decision came at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) yesterday, chaired by the chief adviser.

The meeting also formed a high-level advisory



Many projects are being approved at the expense of farmland while plenty of khas land remains unused. Why should farmland be taken instead of that land?

Wahiduddin Mahmud, Planning Adviser

committee led by Ali Imam Majumder to oversee the process.

The committee has been asked to identify and document khas land in the country and submit a report within the next two months, detailing the quantity, status, and use of public land, including the amount that has been illegally occupied.

Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud shared the development while talking to reporters after the weekly meeting in the capital.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

9 UPAZILA HEALTH COMPLEXES Expansion okayed without solving manpower crisis

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The health authorities have moved to expand the capacity of nine upazila health complexes in as many districts to cope with the growing number of patients, without addressing the existing shortage of manpower at the facilities.

Early this month, the Health Services Division (HSD) approved raising the number of beds in eight complexes to 50 from 31 each, and up to 100 from 50 in the remaining one.

However, patients are unlikely to benefit anytime soon, as it will take at least two years to complete the process of recruiting additional manpower and procuring equipment at the nine facilities, officials said.

The facilities are already facing a manpower shortage, casting doubts on the implementation of the initiative to expand their capacity.

They are located in Indurkani of Pirojpur; Kawkhali in Rangamati; Ramu in Cox's Bazar; Balaganj in Sylhet; Baraigram in Natore; Shajahanpur in Bogura; Niklin in Kishoreganj; Nawabganj in Dinajpur; and Chowgachha Upazila Health Complex in Jashore.

Of the health complexes, the one in Chowgachha will be turned into a 100-bed facility.

The country now has 432 upazila health complexes that play a vital role in providing healthcare to hundreds of thousands of rural people. However, a long-standing shortage of health workers, including around 8,000 doctors, has been seriously affecting their services, forcing many to seek treatment at district and divisional hospitals.

The country now has 432 upazila health complexes. However, a long-standing shortage of health workers has been seriously affecting their services.

In February last year, the government took up an initiative -- "Standard Set-Up for Manpower" -- to ensure smooth delivery of health services at public hospitals across the country.

According to the initiative, a 31-bed hospital should have at least 89 health workers, including 34 doctors and 25 nurses.

However, the initiative has not yet been implemented, said a DGHS official.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

ASIA CUP 2025 Pak qualify for Super 4 after drama

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Group A Asia Cup match between Pakistan and the UAE on Wednesday started an hour later than scheduled after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) nearly pulled out in protest of the ICC rejecting its request to remove Andy Pycroft as match referee from the rest of the tournament for his alleged role in the handshake refusal row in the India Pakistan clash.

Pakistan sealed a 41-run win in the contest, qualifying for the Super Four as runners-up from Group A. India qualified as group champions.

The match was originally scheduled to begin at 8:30pm (Bangladesh Time) but had to be pushed back after the PCB instructed its team to not leave the team hotel for the fixture, reported ESPNcricinfo.

The stalemate finally ended after some last minute negotiations between all stakeholders, and the match began at 9:30 pm (Bangladesh Time).

The announcement of Pakistan leaving their hotel to play the game came from the Asian Cricket Council (ACC)

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Ostrich and emu ancestors could fly: study

AFP, Paris

It may sound like a joke, but scientists have long been puzzled by how the family of birds that includes African ostriches, Australian emus and cassowaries, New Zealand kiwis and South American rheas spread across the world -- given that none of them can fly.

However, a study published yesterday may have found the answer to this mystery: the family's oldest-known ancestors were able to take wing.

The only currently living member of this bird family -- which is called palaeognaths -- capable of flight is the tinamou in Central and South America. But even then, the shy birds can only fly over short distances when they need to escape danger or clear obstacles.

Given this ineptitude in the air, scientists have struggled to explain how palaeognaths became so far-flung.

Some assumed that the birds' ancestors were split up when the supercontinent Gondwana started breaking up 160 million years ago, creating South America, Africa, Australia, India, New Zealand and Antarctica.

However, genetic research has shown that "the evolutionary splits between palaeognath species happened long after the continents had already separated," lead study author Klara Widrig of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History told AFP.

Widrig and colleagues analysed the specimen of a lithornithid, the oldest palaeognath group for which fossils have been discovered. They lived during the Paleogene period 66-23 million years ago.



People walk carefully over a dug-up stretch of a road in the capital's South Jatrahari. Commuters have been suffering for months as drainage work by Dhaka South City Corporation drags on. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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