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EC gets greater powers under amended laws

Commission can appoint its top officials, including secretary, from own ranks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The advisory council yesterday approved amendments to two key laws aimed at strengthening the Election Commission, granting it more authority to recruit all its officials and take disciplinary action against those negligent in polling duties.

The council okayed the drafts of the Election Commission Secretariat (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 and the Election Officers (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 at a meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Under the new provisions, the EC will be able to establish a separate services commission, to be known as the "Election Commission Service", responsible for recruiting officers and staff for the EC Secretariat and taking disciplinary action against those found negligent in their duties.

Shahjahan Saju, a former EC joint secretary, welcomed the amendment, which he said will allow the EC to appoint its top officials, including the secretary from within its officials.

EC officials have been demanding the changes, he said. "It will restrict the government's scope to interfere in the appointment of top officials of the EC," he said.

Besides the secretary, the EC will also be able to appoint additional secretary, joint secretary and other top officials from within its own cadre.

Currently, the EC secretary, its top administrative post, is an officer recruited from the administration cadre under the Election Commission Secretariat Act 2009.

Several other top or mid-level positions are also filled by officers from the administration and judicial services, EC sources said.

The amendment also reinstates the EC's authority over the preparation and maintenance of the national identity (NID) database.

Briefing reporters at the Foreign Service Academy about the advisory council meeting held at the Chief Adviser's Office, his Press Secretary Shahidul Alam said the changes would make the EC more dynamic and ensure accountability in election management.

"In particular, the provisions of punishment for negligence of duty during elections will now be clearer," he said.

According to sources in the Cabinet Division and EC, the draft amendment was prepared following recommendations of the Election Commission Reform Commission.

Although the Cabinet Division's Law Review Committee initially expressed reservations, the advisory council's approval has now cleared the way.

EC officials hailed the decision as a "historic shift."

The other amendment, to the election officers' special provisions, strengthens the EC's disciplinary powers.

If any election officer or employee is negligent in their duties, the EC will now have the authority to take direct action.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Displaced Palestinians, fleeing northern Gaza due to an Israeli military operation, travel in a truck with their belongings as they move southward after Israeli forces ordered residents of Gaza City to evacuate to the south, in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'God, send a missile to relieve us'

Palestinians flee as Israeli tanks, jets bombard Gaza City; at least 79 more killed

AGENCIES

Israeli tanks and warplanes pounded Gaza City yesterday, prompting long lines of Palestinian civilians to flee as the military intensified its assault on the territory's largest urban hub.

Thick columns of smoke billowed into the sky as AFP journalists and witnesses saw a steady stream of Gazans heading south on foot, in vehicles and on donkey carts -- their meagre belongings piled high.

"There is artillery fire, air strikes, quadcopter and drone gunfire. The bombing never stops," said Aya Ahmed, 32, sheltering with 13 relatives in Gaza City.

"The world doesn't understand what is happening. They (Israel) want us to evacuate south, but where will we live? There are no tents, no transport, no money."

Palestinians say the cost of a ride to the south has soared, in some cases topping \$1,000.

"The situation is indescribable -- crowds everywhere, the sound of explosions, women and men crying and screaming as they walked while carrying their belongings," said Shadi

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

» WHO chief says Gaza hospitals on 'brink of collapse'

» Internet, phone lines cut off across Gaza

» Trump says he disagrees with UK's bid to recognise Palestinian state

» Spain says will probe 'rights violations in Gaza'

5 parties mull forging alliance ahead of polls

MD ABBAS

The National Citizen Party, Gono Odhikar Parishad, AB Party, Rastro Songskar Andolan, and Ganosamhati Andolan are exploring the possibility of forming an alliance ahead of the upcoming national election, sources in the five parties said.

The matter gained traction in the political circles after these parties, along with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rob), Nagarik Oikya, Biplabi Workers Party, and Bhashani Janashakti Party, held a meeting yesterday to seek common ground on implementing the constitutional provisions outlined in the July Charter.

Several leaders of the five parties, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that discussions on a possible alliance have been underway.

Hasnat Quaiyum, chief coordinator of Rastro Songskar Andolan, said talks on the possibility of forming an alliance had been ongoing for several days.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, cautioned that nothing was official yet, while acknowledging the potential for political polarisation ahead of the polls.

The meeting was held at the request of the National

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'Disaster if polls not held in line with July Charter'

Say Islamist parties as they hold demos in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of several Islamist parties yesterday claimed the country may face a "national disaster" if the upcoming general election is not held on the basis of the July Charter.

They also demanded a legal basis for the charter and alleged that the government has failed to ensure a level playing field ahead of the election and accused it of bowing to political and external pressure.

Islamist party leaders made the allegations during demonstrations staged in various parts of the capital yesterday.

As a part of its announced programme, Jamaat-e-Islami organised a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque around 5:00pm.

Addressing the gathering, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said, "We've demanded that the next election be held only after giving legal basis to the July Charter. Now a party is opposing it, saying there is no need for such constitutional reform. This is against public aspirations."

"The July Charter must be given a legal basis through a constitutional order and a referendum before the election. Otherwise, the country may fall into a great disaster. If another election is held under the existing state structure, it will give birth to fascism again."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

'We offered Yunus to lead govt on Aug 4'

Nahid tells media after ICT deposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Students Against Discrimination platform offered Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus the responsibility of leading a new government on August 4 last year, a day before the Awami League regime fell, said Nahid Islam, convener of the National Citizen Party, yesterday.

Once the SAD leaders committed to pursuing a one-point demand on August 3 last year, they also began planning for a new government, Nahid told reporters after his deposition with the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

"We initially chose Dr Yunus because we felt his leadership was necessary considering the grave crisis the country was facing."

On the second day of his deposition, Nahid presented his account of the events between July 19 and August 5 last year.

On July 18-19, during the internet blackout, he learnt of the widespread killings from other coordinators.

On July 19, he spoke with Abdul Qader, who announced a nine-point programme, and later with coordinators Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam, who were then in DGFI custody.

On July 20, after consulting with student leaders, they declared the continuation of their shutdown programme, which no electronic media covered. That night, the government imposed a curfew and issued shoot-on-sight orders.

While staying at a friend's Nandipara house, Nahid was abducted around 2:30am by men identifying as DB police.

Blindfolded, handcuffed and beaten, he was grilled about who organised the protests.

"They tortured me, and I lost consciousness several times. They told me I had been forcibly disappeared and warned I would never leave if I did not stop the movement," he said.

After 24 hours, he was dumped near Purbachal and admitted to Gonoshasthaya hospital.

There, he held a press briefing exposing his disappearance and torture, learning that many other coordinators had also been picked up.

The DGFI abducted Hasnat, Sarjis and Hasib Al-Islam, forced them to sit with three ministers and circulated the photos.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



It always seems impossible until it's done: UN Gaza investigator **P5**



Can justice be dispensed in an unjust manner? **P6**



How to rescue banks without creating more risk **P7**



বাংলাদেশ বিমান বাহিনীতে অফিসার ক্যাডেট হিসেবে যোগ দিন

৯৩ বিএএফএ কোর্স (93 BAFA COURSE)

যোগদানের সম্ভাব্য তারিখ: ২১ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫

অনলাইনে আবেদনের সময়সীমা:
১৫ মে ২০২৫ থেকে ২৬ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২৫। * শর্ত প্রযোজ্য

২০২৫ সালের এইচএসসি পরীক্ষার্থীরা আবেদন করতে পারবেন।

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EU seeks ‘face-saving’ deal on UN climate target

AFP, Brussels

EU countries yesterday sought to settle on an emissions-cutting plan to bring to a key UN conference in Brazil, as divisions on the bloc's green agenda threaten its global leadership on climate.

Environment ministers for the 27-nation bloc gathered in Brussels with the clock ticking down on a looming United Nations deadline to produce plans to fight global warming for 2035.

“At the end of the day, we will continue to be either the most ambitious or amongst the most ambitious,” Wopke Hoekstra, the European Commissioner for Climate, said of the yet-to-be-agreed-on EU plans ahead of the talks.

“I’m truly confident that that leadership role that we have played in the past will continue also this year and beyond”.

One of the world’s biggest greenhouse gas emitters behind China, the United States and India, the EU has to date been the most committed to climate action, by some margin.



Hundreds of supporters attend a rally organised by the Jamaat-e-Islami at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque around 5:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Health alert as ‘brain-eating’ amoeba cases rise in India’s Kerala

AFP, New Delhi

India has issued a health alert after infections and deaths caused by a rare water borne “brain-eating” amoeba doubled compared to last year in the southern state of Kerala.

Numbers are still tiny but Altaf Ali, a doctor who is part of a government task force to arrest the spread, told AFP that officials were “conducting tests on a large scale across the state to detect and treat cases”.

Officials reported 19 deaths and 72 infections of the Naegleria fowleri amoeba this year, including nine deaths and 24 cases in September alone.

Last year, the amoeba killed nine people out of 36 reported cases.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says it is often called a “brain-eating amoeba” because it can “infect the brain and destroy brain tissue”.

If the amoeba reaches the brain, it can cause an infection that kills over 95 percent of those affected.

Infections are “very rare but nearly always fatal”, the CDC notes.

The amoeba lives in warm lakes and rivers and is contracted by contaminated water entering the nose. It does not spread from person to person.

The World Health Organization says that symptoms include headache, fever and vomiting, which rapidly progresses to “seizures, altered mental status, hallucinations, and coma”.

EC gets greater powers under amended laws

FROM PAGE 1

Previously, it could only recommend action to relevant authorities.

In case of disputes between the government and the EC over such matters, the EC’s decision will prevail.

The ordinance also makes penalties more stringent. Refusal to perform electoral duties without valid reason, previously punishable by up to one year’s imprisonment or a Tk 5,000 fine or both, will now carry a maximum fine of Tk 100,000.

For misconduct during electoral duties, the current penalty of up to six

months’ imprisonment or a Tk 2,000 fine will be replaced with a minimum of one year and a maximum of five years’ imprisonment, or a fine of up to Tk 20,000, or both.

Meanwhile, Yunus at the advisory council meeting directed ministries and divisions to publicise reforms they have undertaken independently, alongside those recommended by the interim government’s reform commissions.

Press Secretary Shafiqul said the ministries are implementing a range of important reforms beyond the commissions’ proposals.

Of the first set of 121 reform proposals submitted, 77 were marked highly important, with 24 already implemented and the rest underway, he said.

The advisory council also gave final approval to the draft of the Financial Laws (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, prepared under the National Board of Revenue.

In addition, the Income Tax Act, 2023 has been amended to raise the withholding tax on investments in government securities or approved securities by corporate taxpayers from 10 percent to 15 percent.

Kyiv says Russia returned 1,000 bodies to Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday received 1,000 bodies from Russia that Moscow said were of fallen Ukrainian soldiers, a Kyiv government agency announced.

“Repatriation measures took place today. 1,000 bodies, which according to the Russian side belong to Ukrainian servicemen, have been returned to Ukraine,” Ukraine’s Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said on Telegram.

Ukraine returned the bodies of 24 Russian soldiers in exchange, said another government body that provides information on Russian prisoners of war and missing Russian soldiers.

The repatriation of soldiers’ bodies and the exchange of POWs are some of the only areas of cooperation between Ukraine and Russia amid the war.

Tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed on both sides since Russia invaded in 2022, though neither side regularly publishes data on their own casualties.

According to Ukraine’s “I Want to Find” project, the exchange of bodies was mediated by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Despite a US-led push to end the conflict through diplomatic efforts and three rounds of direct talks between Kyiv and Moscow, progress towards stopping the fighting appears to have stalled.

Last week, the Kremlin said that peace talks between Russia and Ukraine were on “pause”.

Bolivian parliament passes bill to end child marriages

AFP, La Paz

Bolivia’s parliament has passed legislation to ban marriages and civil unions with minors, bringing the country closer to the 13 Latin American nations that have already outlawed the practice.

A 2014 law restricted marriages to adults, but allowed an exception for people aged 16 and 17 if they had authorization from parents or guardians.

Just over 4,800 such underage unions were registered between 2014 and 2023, according to the Ombudsman’s Office of Bolivia.

The Chamber of Deputies on Wednesday passed an amendment to close the loophole.

The bill had been greenlit by the senate in April and will now be sent to the president for promulgation.

“This is not just a law, it is a promise that our teenage girls will no longer be forced to marry, leave school or take on responsibilities that do not belong to them,” said ruling party senator and bill author Virginia Velasco in a press release.

Officials who register marriages involving minors may be prosecuted and jailed for up to four years, Velasco added.

Advocacy group Save the Children cited data saying 32,300 girls in Bolivia were married before the age of 15 in 2014, the most recent data available.

Child marriages are prohibited in 13 Latin American countries, including Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and El Salvador, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

UK police arrest 3 suspected of spying for Russia

AFP, London

UK counter-terror police have arrested two men and a woman in southeast England on suspicion of spying for Russia, the Metropolitan Police said yesterday.

“All three were arrested on suspicion of assisting a foreign intelligence service, contrary to section 3 of the National Security Act,” police said, adding that the suspects were taken to a police station in London before being released on conditional bail.

A 41-year-old man and 35-year-old woman were arrested at the same address, and a 46-year-old man at a different address the Grays area of

southeastern Essex.

“We’re seeing an increasing number of who we would describe as ‘proxies’ being recruited by foreign intelligence services,” said Counter Terrorism Command head Dominic Murphy.

Six Bulgarians were jailed in May for their roles in a Russian espionage cell run out of a former guesthouse in the eastern English seaside resort of Great Yarmouth.

A number of people are awaiting sentence for an arson attack on a warehouse supplying Ukraine with communications equipment after being recruited by the Russian paramilitary Wagner group.

Disaster if polls not held

FROM PAGE 1

Parwar also said Jamaat wants Bangladesh to move towards an acceptable election. “But unfortunately, we are seeing a quarter exerting political influence or bowing to certain powers. As a result, the government and decision-making authorities are failing to ensure a level playing field.”

He alleged that discussions with the government have so far failed to bring any result.

Around the same time, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish held a rally at the mosque’s north gate, where its Secretary General Jalaluddin Ahmad said, “If the July Charter is not implemented, a national disaster is inevitable. Without it, no electoral process will bring welfare to the nation.”

He claimed there is a conspiracy to foil the aspirations of the July uprising. “Those who want to delay the implementation of the July Charter for the next parliament are actually seeking political advantage.”

We offered Yunus to lead govt

FROM PAGE 1

On July 22, Lt Col Sarwar of DGFI entered his hospital room and pressured him to suspend the movement. He threatened the lives of the disappeared coordinators.

The next day, the DGFI forced him to a Dhaka Reporters’ Unity press conference, demanding he declare the movement was over and accuse the BNP-Jamaat of infiltration, which he refused. Upon his return to the hospital, he faced threats of being forcibly disappeared again.

On July 26, he, Asif Mahmud and Abu Baker Majumder were taken to the DB office, where then DB chief Harun Or Rashid threatened to implicate them in cases unless the movement was withdrawn.

They were abused, denied medication, and pressured through threats targeting their parents and female coordinators.

“At one point, under coercion, I was forced to call off the movement on camera, which was later circulated to the media.”

At that time, DB officials told Nahid their actions were ordered by then prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal.

Harun even proposed that they go to the PM’s office, which they rejected. Instead, they launched an indefinite hunger strike. A writ in the High Court secured their release on August 1. Weak and ill, six coordinators, including Nahid, immediately announced they had been forced to call off the movement.

On August 3, after consultations with anti-fascist student groups, they launched a one-point demand at the Central Shaheed Minar and

announced a nationwide non-cooperation movement.

Initially set for August 6, the March to Dhaka was brought forward to August 5 after learning the government might block networks or kill or abduct them.

On that day, people marched from across the country.

Protesters came under gunfire at Shaheed Minar and Chankharpool but regrouped at Shahbagh after the army withdrew, turning it into a “human sea”, Nahid said.

As they advanced towards Gono Bhaban, news spread that Hasina had fled by helicopter.

They announced the formation of an interim national government, demanded the release of political prisoners and rejected any form of military or military-backed rule.

Nahid testified that throughout the uprising, police, law enforcers, Awami League activists and affiliates shot at protesters, tortured detainees and carried out mass arrests.

Helicopters fired on demonstrators; bodies of the dead were disappeared or burnt; burials were not allowed; the injured were denied treatment; and families of martyrs were threatened.

He accused Hasina, then home minister, police and chiefs of security forces, demanding investigation, prosecution and severe punishment so that victims receive justice.

After the lunch break, the state defence counsel for Hasina and Kamal began cross-examining Nahid.

The other accused in the case is former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who has turned approver.

Nahid’s cross-examination will resume on Sunday.

‘God, send a missile to relieve us’

FROM PAGE 1

Jawad, 47, describing his family’s ordeal as they fled their home on Wednesday.

During the journey, their belongings fell off their truck when it suffered a flat tyre.

“As we were putting the belongings back on it, I looked up at the sky and prayed ‘God, send a missile to take us out and relieve us’.”

The offensive has sparked international outrage, with the territory already devastated by nearly two years of war imposed on it and the Gaza City area gripped by a UN-declared famine.

“The military incursion and evacuation orders in northern Gaza are driving new waves of displacement, forcing traumatised families into an ever-shrinking area unfit for human dignity,” World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X.

“Hospitals, already overwhelmed, are on the brink of collapse as escalating violence blocks access and prevents the WHO from delivering lifesaving supplies,” he warned.

At least 79 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli strikes or gunfire across the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours, most in Gaza City, the territory’s health ministry said early afternoon.

The Israeli military said it continued to target “Hamas terror infrastructure” and also operated in the southern areas of Rafah and Khan Yunis.

Israeli media reported that four soldiers were killed inside their military vehicle in the early hours of yesterday in the southern Gazan city of Rafah.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Telecommunications Company said in a statement that its services had been cut off “due to the ongoing aggression and the targeting of the main network routes”.

The US-backed offensive began on Tuesday and came as a United Nations probe accused Israel of committing “genocide” in the Gaza Strip, saying Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior officials had incited the crime.

Israel rejected the findings and slammed it as “distorted and false”.

Navi Pillay, who headed the investigation, told AFP that she hoped Israeli leaders would one day be jailed.

“I see similarities” to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, she said, pointing to “the same kind of methods”.

In the United Kingdom, US President Donald Trump yesterday said he disagreed with Prime Minister Keir Starmer over Britain’s plan to recognise a Palestinian state, after the leaders discussed the war in Gaza.

“I have a disagreement with the prime minister on that score – one of



our few disagreements,” Trump said at a press conference with Starmer at the UK prime minister’s country residence Chequers on the second full day of his state visit.

The United States has adamantly rejected the notion of countries recognising a Palestinian state, even as France, Canada and other western allies are set to take the step at the United Nations next week.

The UN Security Council was slated to vote yesterday on the latest call for a ceasefire and increased humanitarian access to Gaza, a move supported by a majority seeking to act despite repeated US vetoes.

The draft that is up for a vote, which was reviewed by AFP, calls for opening access to aid but also “demands an immediate, unconditional and

permanent ceasefire in Gaza respected by all parties” as well as the immediate and unconditional release of hostages.

The United States has already rejected that approach multiple times, most recently in June when it used a veto to back its ally Israel.

Meanwhile, Spain said it will probe “human rights violations in Gaza” to assist the International Criminal Court, which has sought arrest warrants for Israeli officials over alleged war crimes.

On Wednesday, the Israeli military announced “a temporary transportation route via Salah al-Din

Five parties mull forging alliance

FROM PAGE 1

Consensus Commission, which asked parties to hold informal discussions to build an accord on implementing the July Charter, said Javed Rasin, joint convener of the NCP.

“We discussed possible ways of implementing the July Charter and the areas where each party can compromise. We listened to all participants and will now deliberate within our party forum,” he added.

Asked whether the discussions would lead to a pre-election alliance, Rasin replied, “Our main focus now is the implementation of the July Charter.”

Saiful Haque, general secretary of

the Biplobi Workers Party, said the nine parties reviewed three possible routes for implementing the charter at yesterday’s meeting.

These are: holding a referendum, issuing a constitutional order, or invoking article 106 of the constitution, under which the government may seek the opinion of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Saiful added that a final common position had not yet been reached, but Quaiyum said participants noted a near consensus had emerged on holding a referendum on implementing the July Charter on the day of the national election.

The leaders agreed to reconvene

in the coming days to finalise both a common approach for implementing the charter and strategies to engage other major parties.

Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said a committee was formed to hold separate discussions with the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami in an effort to bring them into alignment on the charter. He did not disclose the names of the committee members.

Rashed ruled out any immediate movement over the charter’s implementation, describing the current period as “a time for discussion” to reach a consensus through dialogue.

CUCSU ELECTIONS

JCD and Shibir
declare full panels

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong University units of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir have announced full panels for the Cucsu election, scheduled for October 12.

Meanwhile, eight other panels were unveiled yesterday by political, socio-cultural, and independent groups, coinciding with the last day of nomination form submission for the Chittagong University Central Students' Union and hall union elections.

Nasir Uddin, JCD's central general secretary, announced the organisation's 26-member panel at a press conference at Buddhijibi Chatrar.

For the top three posts, CU JCD Organising Secretary Sajjad Hossain Hridoy was nominated for vice president (VP), Md Shafayat for general secretary (GS), and Aiyubur

Rahman Taufiq for assistant general secretary (AGS).

Nasir said, "Only those who have worked and can continue to work for students were included in our panel. We are hopeful this panel will work wholeheartedly for students' interests." He added that alliances may be considered later if necessary.

Meanwhile, Shibir's CU unit announced its panel under the banner of "Sompriti Shikkharthi Jote" at a press conference in Jarulata. Saiful Islam, Shibir's central human resources secretary, formally declared the panel, which includes candidates from minority communities and a visually impaired student.

For the top three positions, Ibrahim Hossain Rony, a central executive member, was nominated for VP; CU Shibir literature secretary Saeed Bin

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Two schoolboys stand dangerously close to a moving train at Kawla Rail Gate in Dhaka, ignoring the level crossing gate. Some passengers also ride on the roof -- another risky and prohibited act. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladesh,
China to move
forward hand
in hand: CA

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has said Bangladesh and China will move forward hand in hand to advance their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership.

In a video message on Wednesday night marking two occasions, Yunus reviewed the development of bilateral relations over the past 50 years, stating that China is Bangladesh's closest friend and most reliable partner.

Extending congratulations on the 76th anniversary of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

ENERGY SECTOR

'Quick rental' act enabled
mega corruptionSpeakers tell dialogue; criticise interim govt
for doing 'little' to punish culprits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ousted Awami League government enacted the now-defunct "quick rental" act to allow large-scale corruption in the power and energy sector by "rewarding and giving indemnity" to power company owners, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday.

However, despite such massive corruption, the interim government remained silent, doing little to identify and punish the culprits, which left many people frustrated, they also said.

They made the remarks at the event on "Security, Corruption and Energy", which was organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) at Cirdap in the capital.

At the dialogue, M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser at the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010 -- known as the "quick rental" act -- enabled "investment without competition".

"It was mega corruption," he said, adding that the interim government has remained silent so far in this regard.

BNP Standing Committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan said the act gave "indemnity and caused all the corruption" in the energy sector.

He also said although the interim government has repealed the law, the people still do not know what action has been taken against those who received indemnity.

Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the energy ministry, said they took steps to repeal the act on the first day in office. "It may sound strange, but the law was created to do corruption," he said.

He added that a national

prices was returned to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, he added.

Mollah M Amzad Hossain, editor of the fortnightly magazine Energy and Power, urged the government to use this opportunity to end corruption in the sector.

At the event, speakers also stressed that stability and tackling corruption are crucial for free, fair, and credible elections and a smooth democratic transition.

Maj Gen (retd) ANM Muniruzzaman, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), said the country has long lacked a "national strategic policy" on security, which should involve not just the armed forces but also other agencies and citizens.

He said internal stability is a precondition for national security and warned that without consensus among political parties, military strength alone would not help.

He said Bangladesh's geographical location, particularly the Bay of Bengal, could place it "at the centre" of the US-China strategic rivalry, urging the government to act cautiously and avoid tensions stemming from such rivalries.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shujan and member of the National Consensus

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The Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010 -- known as the "quick rental" act -- enabled "investment without competition".

M SHAMSUL ALAM
Energy adviser at the Consumers Association of Bangladesh

committee led by a retired judge was formed to probe ongoing projects taken under the act.

Besides, "structural issues" that led to corruption -- such as secretaries serving as chairmen of power-producing companies -- were also scrapped, he said.

The authority to set electricity

Political decentralisation
ignored in reform agendas
Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

True decentralisation requires the transfer of real power and decision-making to the local level, but this continues to be ignored in Bangladesh, speakers said at a programme yesterday.

"Decentralisation is equated only with strengthening local government. That is part of the problem. True political decentralisation has not been brought to the table in Bangladesh. Neither interim governments nor consensus commissions have placed it seriously in reform agendas. Without it, sustainable decentralisation cannot happen," said Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre.

He made the remarks while addressing the event as chief guest at the Policy Research Institute (PRI) in the capital.

The event was organised by PRI to disseminate findings from a joint BIDS PRI research project on "Urbanisation and Bangladesh Development."

Explaining the consequences of weak decentralisation, Zillur said this is why Dhaka has become the country's "primate city." Unlike Thailand, Sweden, the Philippines or South Korea -- where secondary cities developed through natural processes and policy support -- Bangladesh has not allowed a second city to emerge.

"One fundamental feature of Bangladesh's institutional life is judicial encroachment -- institutions assuming responsibilities that are not theirs. For example, local government's

responsibilities for small scale water management are often overtaken by water boards. When thinking of solutions, we must factor in this encroachment tendency," he noted.

"We build roads, sometimes bypass roads around towns, yet we have no policy to control roadside economic activity. That is why we have no access-controlled highways. Even when a highway is built, speeds do not increase -- because roadside activity is allowed unchecked. Anyone can set up a grocery shop, a tea stall, or a workshop. This is itself a typology of growth."

Zillur said mofussil towns were once supported by key institutions such as district schools, which shaped both society and the state. "Today, decentralisation has eroded. For instance, where do union chairmen live? If their families reside in Dhaka, then their unions become merely spaces of extraction -- subject to interest groups and contracts, including climate-related projects. This dynamic is missing from our political discourse," he added.

Presenting the keynote paper, Dr Ahmad Ahsan, director of PRI, said while urbanisation has long been a driver of growth, the current Dhaka-centric pattern is proving unsustainable.

Excessive concentration of people and economic activity in the capital -- combined with congestion, pollution, and diversion of resources from other urban centres -- was hampering development, slowing job creation, reducing industrial employment, and causing economic losses

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Ensure true political decentralisation
Address judicial, institutional encroachment
Develop national urbanisation policy
Support secondary city growth
Create unified, decentralised city govts

Issue ordinance for
central university
by September 22

Demand students of 7 colleges



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Dhaka's seven colleges, previously under Dhaka University, have set a September 22 deadline for the education ministry to issue an ordinance converting the institutions into a central university.

They warned of a tougher movement if their demand is ignored. The announcement came yesterday during a press briefing in front of the Shaheed Minar at Dhaka College.

Students earlier marched and chanted slogans in favour of central university status, saying only an ordinance could provide a permanent solution to the colleges' problems.

The students accused some teachers of obstructing efforts to address these issues and alleged that current faculty are attempting to keep the colleges under the "National University" model.

They also claimed that students participating in the movement faced threats of poor exam results.

BNP punished
over 7,000
members for
misconduct

Says Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said over 7,000 party members have faced demotion or expulsion over corruption, extortion, and misconduct, acknowledging the decision was difficult but essential.

"This has not been an easy decision, but it is a necessary one. Discipline is not a weakness -- it is our strength. By holding our own members accountable, we show the nation that we are serious about integrity and will hold ourselves to the same standards we demand from those in power," he said in a Facebook post.

Tarique stressed that rebuilding trust with the people, particularly the youth, required internal reform. He urged party members to remain united, disciplined, and committed to service.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Six more die
of dengue, 647
hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six dengue patients died and 647 others were hospitalised across Bangladesh in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the deaths, two were reported from Dhaka North City Corporation, two from Dhaka South City Corporation, and one each from Barishal and Rajshahi divisions.

With these, the total number of deaths has risen to 167 this year, while reported cases climbed to 40,461.

So far, 38,252 dengue patients have recovered and been released from hospitals. Currently, 2,042 patients are receiving treatment across the country, of whom 1,325 are admitted outside Dhaka.



A couple looks at bonsai trees on the inaugural day of the 24th Annual Bonsai Exhibition 2025 yesterday, where 500 specimens are on display at the Women's Voluntary Association Auditorium in Dhanmondi. Organised by the Bangladesh Bonsai Society, the event promotes the conservation of indigenous trees.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

‘It always seems impossible until it’s done’

Top UN Gaza investigator hopeful Israeli leaders will be prosecuted for Gaza ‘genocide’

AFP, Geneva

The UN investigator who this week accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza said she sees parallels with the butchery in Rwanda, and that she hopes one day Israeli leaders will be put behind bars.

Navi Pillay, a South African former judge who headed the international tribunal for the 1994 Rwanda genocide and also served as UN human rights chief, acknowledged that justice “is a slow process”.

But as late South African anti-apartheid icon Nelson “Mandela said, it always seems impossible until it’s done”, she told AFP in an interview.

“I consider it not impossible that there will be arrests and trials” in the future.

Pillay’s Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, issued a bombshell report on Tuesday concluding that “genocide is occurring in Gaza” – something Israel vehemently denies.

The investigators also concluded that Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant have “incited the commission of genocide”.

Israel categorically rejected the findings and slammed the report as “distorted and



false”.

But for Pillay, the parallels to Rwanda – where some 800,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were slaughtered – are clear.

“I see similarities” to what is happening in Gaza, she said, pointing to “the same kind of methods”.

While Tutsis were targeted in Rwanda’s genocide, she said “all the evidence (indicates) it is Palestinians as a group that is being targeted” in Gaza.

Israeli leaders, she said, had made statements, including calling Palestinians

“animals”, which recalled the demonising rhetoric used during the Rwanda genocide, when Tutsis were labelled as “cockroaches”.

In both cases, she said the target population is “dehumanised”, signalling that “it’s ok to kill them”.

The International Criminal Court has already issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for suspected war crimes.

Pillay said securing accountability would not be easy, highlighting that

the ICC “does not have its own sheriff or police force to do the arrests”.

But she stressed that popular demand could bring about sudden change, as it had in her home country.

“I never thought apartheid will end in my lifetime,” she said.

The 83-year-old took on a particularly daunting mission four years ago when she agreed to chair the freshly-created COI tasked with investigating rights abuses in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel.

Since then, she and her two co-commissioners have faced a barrage of accusations of bias and antisemitism, which they deny, and a recent social media campaign urging Washington to sanction them, as it has ICC judges, Palestinian NGOs and a UN expert focused on the situation in Gaza.

The pressure has been intense, but Pillay says the hardest thing for her team has been viewing video evidence from the ground.

“Watching those videos is just traumatic,” she said, pointing to images of “sexual violence of women (and abuse of) doctors who were stripped naked by the military.”

“It’s so painful” to watch.



Pakistan, S Arabia ink defence pact

AFP, Riyadh

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a new strategic defence pact yesterday, with the two sides saying an attack on one country would be considered “an aggression against both”.

The agreement comes just days after an Israeli strike targeted Hamas leaders in neighbouring Qatar, sending shock waves through the Gulf states that have long depended on the United States for their security.

“This agreement... aims to develop aspects of defence cooperation between the two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression,” read a statement published by the Saudi Press Agency.

“The agreement states that any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both,” it added.

The deal was signed by Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Global trust in UN slips to just 58%

REUTERS, NEW YORK

A new poll of over 36,300 people worldwide showed huge support for more international cooperation on issues including trade, global health, climate and poverty, but gave largely failing grades to institutions like the United Nations, IMF and others.

The survey, commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation and conducted in 34 countries from August 8 to September 10, offers a grim picture of confidence in multilateral institutions at a time when the United States and other advanced economies are slashing development aid.

Despite cuts in development spending and rising nationalist rhetoric around the world, 75% of those surveyed said they support global cooperation if it is proven to effectively solve problems, but just 42% see it being in their personal interest.

Only 58% of those surveyed had trust in the United Nations, which is gearing up for next week’s General Assembly meetings, 60% in the WHO and 44% in the IMF.

Rockefeller Foundation President Rajiv Shah said the poll results showed a hunger for smarter and more creative solutions to replace outdated international institutions and systems.

Putin has let me down

Says Trump at end of UK state visit, hails ‘unbreakable bond’ with Britain, signs huge tech deal

AFP, Chequers

Donald Trump warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin had “really let me down” after he met Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday, the final day of the US president’s historic UK state visit.

A day after King Charles III treated him to royal pageantry at Windsor Castle, Trump appeared at a news conference with Starmer and spared him the harsh criticism he has doled out to other leaders – although he suggested the UK leader could use the military to curb immigration.

Starmer, meanwhile, gently nudged Trump on Ukraine and called for more pressure on Putin, as he tries to bridge the divide between Trump and European allies on Kyiv.

Trump, who has long been friendly with Putin, then issued a rebuke to the Russian leader for continuing the war.

“The one that I thought would be easiest would be because of my relationship with President Putin, but he’s let me down,” Trump said.

“He’s really let me down.”

He urged European nations to stop buying Russian oil, saying that “if the price of oil comes down, Putin’s going to drop out of that war”.

Referring to Starmer, Trump said “one of our few disagreements” was over the UK’s plan to recognise a Palestinian state.

The US leader, embroiled in an immigration crackdown at home, offered his thoughts on immigration in Britain, revealing, “I told the prime minister I would



stop it”, even if it meant calling in the military.

But for the rest of the time at the prime minister’s official country house north of London, the two leaders seemed on the same page, as Trump hailed America’s “unbreakable bond” with Britain and signed a huge tech cooperation deal with Starmer.

At the signing ceremony attended by a host of US tech CEOs, Starmer said he and Trump were “leaders who genuinely like each other”.

The deal comes on the back of pledges of £150 billion (\$205 billion) of investment into the UK from US giants including Microsoft, Google and Blackstone.

Trump had earlier said goodbye to King Charles at Windsor, calling him a “great gentleman and a great king”.

The US president and First Lady Melania Trump wrapped up their

Syria, Israel security deals by end-2025

AFP, Damascus

Syria expects to finalise security and military agreements with Israel by end-2025, an official said yesterday, in what would be a breakthrough less than a year after Bashar al-Assad’s ouster.

With the United States pushing for a settlement between the two neighbours, Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani arrived in Washington to discuss talks with Israel and the possible lifting of remaining sanctions on Syria, said the foreign ministry official.

Syria and Israel remain technically at war, but opened direct negotiations after Assad was toppled by an Islamist-led coalition in December last year.

“There is progress in the talks with Israel,” said the official, speaking on condition anonymity because he was not allowed to brief the media, adding that several agreements were expected to be signed “by the end of the year”.

Last week, President Ahmed al-Sharaa said Syria was negotiating with Israel to reach a deal that would see Israel leave the areas it occupied in recent months.

The Syrian interim leader remains under UN sanctions and a travel ban due to his past as a wanted jihadist. He led the armed conflict that ousted Assad.

CHARLIE KIRK COMMENTS

ABC scraps Jimmy Kimmel show

AFP, Hollywood

Jimmy Kimmel’s late-night show was pulled from the air Wednesday hours after the US government threatened to cancel broadcasting licenses because of comments the host made about the killing of conservative influencer Charlie Kirk.

The stunning move by network ABC to remove one of America’s most influential late-night shows was blasted by critics as government censorship but celebrated by Donald Trump, who has long chafed at the comedians who mock him.

Trump, who also rejoiced in July at the cancellation of Kimmel’s fellow late-night satirist Stephen Colbert, then urged that two other comedians be removed.

The furor comes a week after Kirk, a close Trump ally, was shot dead on a Utah university campus, setting off a bitter battle over responsibility in deeply polarized America, with conservatives – including Trump – blaming “the radical left.”

Authorities said this week that 22-year-old Tyler Robinson was the lone gunman and brought a murder charge against him.

Kimmel spoke about the shooting in his show-opening monologue on Monday.

“The MAGA gang (is) desperately trying to characterise this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them and (doing) everything they can to score political points from it,” said Kimmel, referring to the president’s “Make America Great Again” movement.

He then showed footage of Trump pivoting from a question about how he had been affected by Kirk’s death to boasting about the new ballroom he is building at the White House, prompting laughter from the studio audience.



China urges greater unity to avoid ‘law of the jungle’

Minister slams ‘hegemonic logic’ at Beijing forum

AGENCIES

China’s defence minister trumpeted Beijing’s efforts to reshape global governance, warning yesterday against an increasingly divided world “defined by the rule of the jungle”, while saying his country’s strong military would be a force for peace.

The remarks come amid simmering tension between China and the United States and its allies and partners over flashpoints across East Asia, including Taiwan and the South China Sea, as well as broader economic rivalries under President Donald Trump.

Formally opening the Beijing Xiangshan Forum on security, Dong Jun said the world was at a crossroads overshadowed by Cold War thinking, hegemony and protectionism, and had to choose dialogue over confrontation.

“External military interference, seeking spheres of influence and coercing others to take sides will bring the international community into chaos,” Dong added.

His remarks took veiled swipes at the United States and appeared more hawkish than his speech at last year’s forum, particularly on topics such as tension over democratically governed Taiwan.



“An obsession with absolute superiority in military strength and a ‘might is right’ approach will lead to a divided world defined by the rule of the jungle and disorder,” Dong said.

Dong’s remarks follow recent speeches by President Xi Jinping against “hegemonism and power politics” and this month’s large military parade in Beijing that showed off a host of new weapons.

Addressing attendees at the opening ceremony on Thursday, Dong warned of “new threats and challenges” now facing world peace.

“While the themes of the times – peace and development – remain unchanged, the clouds of a Cold War mentality, hegemonism and protectionism have not lifted,” he said.

“Historical memory must serve as a constant warning to recognise and oppose hegemonic logic and acts of bullying that are disguised in a new form.”

Dong’s remarks come two weeks after a grand military parade in Tiananmen Square to commemorate China’s 1945 victory over a Japanese invasion, which left millions dead. The parade saw China unveil a host of new weapons, including advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles.



A protester lights flares in Marseille, southeastern France, during a day of nationwide strikes and protests called by unions over France’s national budget yesterday. In a rare show of unity, trade unions have urged French people to strike in protest at the authorities’ “horror show” draft budget designed to reduce France’s ballooning debt.

Save children from sexual exploitation

Holistic actions needed to prevent child trafficking, sex trade

Our society's failure to ensure a safe and secure childhood for children—especially girls—continues to be reflected in various statistics, whether on child labour, physical or sexual violence, or commercial sexual exploitation of children. Unfortunately, these figures often remain just numbers as policymakers, politicians, and public institutions fail to take meaningful action or allocate sufficient resources based on the findings. One such alarming statistic was shared at a recent event, where the International Justice Mission, an anti-slavery organisation, estimated that 20 to 50 percent of Bangladesh's sex trade involves minors. The estimate draws on several recent studies.

For instance, a 2024 study by Freedom Fund on Dhaka's sex workers found that 22 percent of both street-based and brothel-based sex workers are under 17. The US State Department's 2023 *Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh* estimated that 30,000 girls became victims of child sex trafficking across the country. Climate migration and poverty often make children vulnerable to sex traffickers, pushing them towards the trade not just in brothels and streets but also in hotels, spas, massage parlours, and private homes.

In fact, a UNICEF report on Bangladesh last year noted that more than 34 lakh children live in "street-situations" without parental care. While they are more vulnerable to sex traders, many girls growing up with parental care, too, may become victim because of child marriage. Young girls escaping abusive marriages also often fall prey to traffickers. Most victims do not have the choice of refusal, as that often ends in serious consequences, including physical, sexual and emotional violence, along with deprivation of basic needs.

Despite this grave threat, our policy response remains minimal. Law enforcers seem more focused on controlling political unrest, for example, than on apprehending sex traffickers and individuals running sex trades. Broader policies aimed at addressing poverty and climate migration are inadequate. Social safety net benefits often fall short of ensuring sustainable livelihoods and frequently fail to reach the most vulnerable populations. Child marriage continues to be a problem among vulnerable and marginalised communities, with Bangladesh having the highest prevalence rate in all of South Asia. Meanwhile, legal loopholes, systemic barriers, and low convictions of cases filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act embolden criminals involved in sex trades.

Simultaneously, the lack of safe and well-equipped shelter homes for trafficking survivors and street children leaves many continuously vulnerable to exploitation. Add to this the danger of online sexual exploitation. Though the previous government had tools to monitor social media activity, these were rarely used effectively to catch online offenders or recruitment networks. Under the circumstances, we can only hope that the current and future governments will place child safety at the forefront—by enforcing existing laws, innovating policy, and implementing holistic, long-term solutions to end child sex trafficking and ensure every child's right to a safe, secure life.

Solve the manpower crisis

Upazila health complex expansion will be futile without required manpower

We are concerned by the health authorities' decision to expand the capacity of nine upazila health complexes without addressing the existing manpower shortage at these facilities. The Health Services Division (HSD) has reportedly approved increasing the number of beds from 31 to 50 in eight complexes, and from 50 to 100 in the remaining one. This move comes in response to the overwhelming pressure of patients at these facilities. While the need for expansion is understandable, it raises a critical question: what purpose will this expansion serve if additional manpower is not recruited and essential equipment is not procured simultaneously?

Our upazila health complexes have long been grappling with a severe shortage of doctors, nurses, and essential staff, which severely disrupts their day-to-day services. The lack of manpower is also linked to mismanagement and inefficiency in these facilities. Moreover, absenteeism and a lack of specialist doctors have been a major barrier to providing treatment to rural people, many of whom are forced to seek treatment at district or medical college hospitals, which puts an extra burden on them. According to an estimate by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), around 59 percent of doctor positions in upazila health complexes currently remain vacant. All nine hospitals awaiting expansion are also operating with fewer doctors and nurses than the approved number of posts. For instance, the Nikli Upazila Health Complex in Kishoreganj is operating with only four doctors against 17 sanctioned posts, while in Jashore's Chowgachha Upazila Health Complex, only 10 doctors are working against 32 sanctioned positions. A similar situation prevails in the other seven facilities.

We, therefore, hope that the authorities will show the same urgency in recruiting staff as they did in deciding to expand the health complexes. Currently, due to the involvement of multiple agencies, the process of recruiting manpower takes a long time. This process needs to be simplified and expedited. It is, however, noteworthy that the appointment process for 3,000 doctors is underway, and more doctors are expected to be recruited through regular and specialised BCS examinations. In the meantime, the health authorities can temporarily assign doctors to the facilities that are struggling to deal with the pressure of patients. Nevertheless, in the long term, a better mechanism is needed to address doctor shortages. Improving the services of upazila health complexes in terms of manpower, equipment and capacity should be carried out comprehensively to ensure proper, affordable and accessible healthcare for the rural and marginalised communities of the country.

Can justice be dispensed in an unjust manner?

Role of the judges is critical



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam
is the editor and publisher of
The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

When judges give preference to the letter of the law and ignore the spirit of the law, they, knowingly or unknowingly, violate the law's main purpose, which is to serve justice.

When we want changes in a hurry, we don't think much about the methods, hence the changes don't last. When we want to dispense justice in a big way but don't pay attention to legal details or the due process, then fairness, a precondition of justice, is not assured. When we want to punish culprits en masse but don't allow much scope for the accused's rights, it smacks of vengeance. This creates doubt about the credibility of the legal process and its outcome in the public mind.

We forget the age-old saying: "Justice must not only be done but also be seen to be done." The obligation is clear: in punishing all those who break the law, we cannot break the law. In holding abusers of power accountable, we cannot abuse power ourselves. The truth is, justice can never be established in an unjust manner.

We are currently witnessing a severe abuse of the law. Bring a few people together and create a mob, and you are above the law. Even the sight of people being beaten to death does not seem to nudge the government's conscience. Use some keywords to denigrate an institution or a person, and you don't have to bother about facts. People are being charged with murder, arrested, and kept in jail without trial or bail, in some cases for more than a year. Many of them were abusers of power under the past regime. There is plenty of evidence of their wrongdoings, yet there has been little progress with the investigation.

According to the Police Headquarters, as of August 6, 2025, a total of 1,730 cases have been filed related to the July uprising, including 731 murder cases. But as of September

Since there is no punishment for registering false charges—on the contrary, it has become an excuse for making money—the phenomenon of filing dubious cases has acquired momentum, especially when the government's position is that anyone can file cases and "we cannot do anything about it." But had the government acted on the principle that filing false cases is a crime, and punished those who exploited the right to sue, the floodgates of harassment and extortion would not have opened, and law would not have been so shamefully, deliberately, and wilfully abused.

An investigation by *The Daily Star* revealed that till May 3, 2025, at least 266 journalists have been implicated in

falsely implicated in cases related to last year's mass uprising. We welcome this step but urge that a timeline be set to discharge these cases promptly, otherwise nothing much will come out of this good step.

I will be the first to admit that due to politicisation of journalism, many lost objectivity and honesty as they indulged in shameless sycophancy that

When we want to dispense justice in a big way but don't pay attention to legal details or the due process, then fairness, a precondition of justice, is not assured. When we want to punish culprits en masse but don't allow much scope for the accused's rights, it smacks of vengeance. This creates doubt about the credibility of the legal process and its outcome in the public mind.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

A judge cannot be a legal bureaucrat. They have to be highly moral, gutsy, and fearless defenders of the law and the constitution. We want to see judgments that shake the very foundation of fascist and autocratic governments. We want to see pronouncements that strengthen democratic norms and practices and nip in the bud any attempts by legislative majorities to shrink the space of dissent. Our judges must have the moral responsibility to strengthen our faith in the law.

2, charge sheets have been submitted in only 34 cases, including 13 murder cases. (We are not including cases filed with the ICT.)

So what happens to the rest? Why should they be forced to live under the ignominy of unproven crimes, especially when no investigation has been completed against most of them?

The government is also aware that a business of extortion has evolved centring the filing of false cases and then deleting names upon payment. What is further distressing is that all the relevant ministries, especially home and law, are aware that cases are being filed based on personal hatred, family conflicts, financial disputes, and political rivalries.

If a political party with wind in its sail decides to punish political rivals belonging to a party now discredited, then false cases pile up at lightning speed, and no one in power is ever bothered about it. Harassing and discrediting a possible rival in the coming election is also a factor.

various cases connected with the July-August uprising. At least 14 journalists have been arrested. Of those accused, at least 137 have been implicated in 32 cases (between August 21, 2024 and April 20, 2025) filed in Dhaka, Chattogram, Bogura and Rajshahi. According to case documents, they have been charged with murder, attempted murder, rioting, abduction, vandalism, extortion, assault, and unlawful assembly. Cases have also been filed under the Explosive Substances Act. Why terrorism has been left out is a wonder.

Perhaps today, compared to anywhere else in the world, we have the highest number of media professionals accused of murder and attempted murder. With a change in power, how did so many journalists become murderers overnight? As a lifelong journalist, I find it a matter of great shame and humiliation. Yes, most of them have not been arrested, but many of them have lost their jobs, their social standing, along with their reputation.

And what about those in jail? They have consistently been denied bail. Why? Isn't bail a right under the constitution? There is one female journalist, Farzana Rupa, who has been in jail for more than a year, without any charge framed against her. Why is she being denied bail? Given both the Bangalee and Muslim cultures, the role of a woman in the family and especially in raising children is supreme. Shouldn't this be a factor in considering her bail, particularly when no evidence has been found against her yet? There is also a specific provision of law to grant bail to women and people with disabilities. These are violations of the very basic human rights to restore which people ousted the last government.

After nearly a year of humiliation for those falsely charged, on September 9, the government thankfully formed committees at the district and metropolitan levels in an attempt to identify and discharge individuals

not only discredited our profession but also made it easy for oppression, forced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, and suppression of dissent to continue. Except for a few, newspapers and electronic media houses created a shameful record. Many journalists sold their conscience for benefits and privileges and indulged in corruption, thus denigrating the profession. These so-called journalists should be exposed, charged with appropriate crimes, given a fair trial, and sentenced as the law determines. But to accuse them of murder or attempted murder shows how the government itself trivialises the law. This actually creates cover for the real culprits.

There are many other instances of politicians and former parliamentarians who are in custody for nearly a year or even more. Some of them are in their late 70s and early 80s, and are suffering from ailments that may cause fatal outcomes. There is no progress in the investigation of their cases, yet their bail petitions are constantly being rejected.

Denial of bails was one of the distinct horror stories from the past regime. We wrote many times about the arrests of Mirza Fakhru'l Islam Alamgir, Amir Khosru, and many others, and protested the denial of their bails for months and even years. Writer Mushtaq Ahmed was detained along with cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore in May 2020 for satirical Facebook posts and a cartoon criticising the then government for its handling of the Covid pandemic. Mushtaq died in jail in February 2021 due to indescribable torture. He was denied bail six times by different judges, including a High Court judge. Shouldn't these judges bear some responsibility? They all lacked that crucial ethical commitment that is required of a judge. If one had granted him bail—to which the victim had every right—his death would have definitely been averted. They were not judges but carriers of the government's diktat.

So why is the judiciary still denying bails and not showing independence that we, at least now, expect from it? The police have the responsibility to arrest, but how long a person will be in jail is determined by the judge, including whether he or she should be placed on remand which, as we know, is nothing but a permission for torture. In the past, we saw a judiciary eager to serve the executive branch. Why is that trend being repeated now with the same zeal, loyalty, and disregard for the law, which they are in charge of upholding?

Bail denial was like the second nature of our judges before. Unfortunately, we see no sign of that changing. It seems there is no sufficient respect for the fact that no one has the right to deprive a citizen of even one hour of liberty without lawful process. Whenever a judge denies bail, his or her conscience should bear the heavy burden of depriving a citizen of freedom, liberty, and right to normal life.

The judiciary's excuse is, if the offence is non-bailable, how can a judge grant bail to the accused? Well, here comes the question of fairness

How to rescue banks without creating more risk



Dr Md Main Uddin is professor and former chairman in the Department of Banking and Insurance at the University of Dhaka. He can be reached at mainuddin@du.ac.bd.

MD MAIN UDDIN

In Bangladesh, 86 percent of financial intermediation occurs through banks. Commercial banks typically provide small and short-term loans to a large number of borrowers. By offering such loans, they build a well-diversified portfolio, which is crucial for risk minimisation. However, instead of small loans, banks in Bangladesh tend to prioritise large loans, which contribute mainly to the creation of non-performing loans (NPLs).

The country's banking sector has been experiencing a crisis for the last two decades due to ever-growing NPLs. According to the Bangladesh Bank, the amount of NPLs stood at Tk 420,335 crore (24.13 percent of total loans) in March 2025, rising from only Tk 22,481 crore in 2009. The amount of total distressed assets now stands at Tk 756,526 crore, about 45 percent of total loans. About 71 percent of the total bad loans are concentrated to 10 banks only.

The NPL crisis is the result of massive corruption, fund embezzlement, weak governance, and regulatory laxity which have pushed the economy to a credit crunch—a decline in lending activity owing to a sudden shortage of funds. The economy is experiencing a long period of low growth accompanied by high unemployment. There is also increasing erosion of trust and confidence in the banking sector.

The increase of NPLs primarily affects asset quality and profitability of banks. When a loan (asset of a bank) becomes non-performing, it is classified as sub-standard, doubtful, bad, and a loss, depending on its severity of underperformance. Among them, a sub-standard loan is bad, a doubtful loan is worse, and a bad and loss loan is the worst. With the rise of NPLs, a bank fails to generate the expected income.

According to Basel III, a bank has to maintain 12.5 percent capital of its risk-weighted assets. The implication of risk-based capital requirement is that, the higher the risk-



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

weighted assets (underperforming assets), the higher the capital requirement. There is a direct relationship between risk-weighted assets and capital requirement. As the risk-weighted assets through NPLs increased abnormally for many years, a number of banks failed to maintain the required capital every year. The latest Financial Stability Report released at the end of 2024 shows that the overall capital adequacy ratio of Bangladesh is only 3.08 percent against the requirement of 12.5 percent, while Pakistan maintains 20.6 percent (end of 2024), Sri Lanka 18.4 percent (end of 2024), and India

provision. While the provision shortfall was just Tk 26,585 crore in March 2024, it jumped to Tk 106,131 crore in December 2024 and finally to Tk 170,655 crore in March 2025. The central bank barred these banks from paying dividends, allowing deferment of provisions.

Burdened with massive NPLs, many banks have been facing a serious crisis, failing to carry out their daily operations. Some were rescued by the Bangladesh Bank through liquidity support. But some banks are so severely troubled that the government had to consider a merger. Hence, the finance ministry recently approved a draft proposal

with an NPL rate of 48.20 percent, SIB with 62.30 percent, FSIB with 96.37 percent, GIB with 95 percent, and UB with 97.80 percent.

A failing bank can be rescued in various ways: merger and acquisition, recapitalisation, bailout, and liquidation. Another rescue mechanism is regulatory intervention with a proactive strategy including recovery and resolution plans ex-ante and powers to intervene when banks face distress ex-post.

Given the quality of assets, it is nearly impossible to merge five banks into one and make it successful. Rather, EXIM and SIB may be merged as they still have a good percentage

of quality assets. Alternatively, each of them can be acquired by some good banks. But we don't have such big private banks that could acquire them. The Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC had the capability to an extent, but it has been destroyed systematically and is still recovering. In contrast, FSIB, GIB and UB should be liquidated; the individual depositors' claims must be settled first in this regard.

The successful rescue of a failing bank depends on some key considerations. Transparency is mandatory in the process. While reviewing asset quality, it has to be valid and reliable. The rescue mechanism should be followed by a strong regulatory framework. The depositors' confidence in the banking system must be retained.

At times, the government has to rescue banks against its will, because some banks are so big that they cannot be allowed to fail. Although the present situation requiring the rescue of several banks emerged purely from non-economic reasons, they need to be salvaged for the sake of financial stability. But it must be remembered that a rescue is often followed by moral hazard problem—when one party has the chance to take advantage of a financial deal, knowing that all the risks will land on another party. If the government bails out the failing bank without giving a serious message, bailouts can create incentives for other banks to assume more risk as they expect to be salvaged from the consequences of the risk.

As a bank does not fail overnight, it must be continuously monitored. Internal compliance has to be followed. The Bangladesh Bank should discharge its responsibility properly. To prevent bank failure, salaries and bonuses of bankers must also be linked to their performances. If bankers can claim higher salaries and bonuses when they perform better, they (salaries and bonuses) must be reduced proportionately when they underperform. Bankers must also keep at least 50 percent of their deposits in their own banks so that they can bear the risk of bank failure.

Still, if a bank fails again, its directors and top executives must be held responsible; the defaulters have to face legal consequences. The failure of all parties that gives birth to large-scale scams leading to bank failure must be considered intensely for due punishment. Before the rescue of a bank is considered, it should be ensured that the causes of failure are purely economic.

Why the Global South should rewrite AI's colonial code



Zakir Kibria is a writer, policy analyst and entrepreneur based in Kathmandu. He can be reached at zk@krishikaaj.com.

ZAKIR KIBRIA

The American writer and humorist Mark Twain once observed that history doesn't repeat—it rhymes. Today, as artificial intelligence reshapes economies and power structures worldwide, the echoes are unmistakable: the whirring servers training large language models sound unnervingly like the steam engines that once powered cotton gins and rubber plantations. The promise is universal progress, but the patterns feel hauntingly familiar.

When China proposed a World AI Organisation (WAIO) in July 2025—positioned as a UN-like body for “safe, fair, and responsible” AI—it framed itself as a champion of multipolar governance. Yet for those of us from Trinidad to Tanzania, this move evokes older scripts: great powers drafting rules for a technological order that extracts value from our lands, labour, and languages while leaving us dependent on their systems. Consider the brutal arithmetic: while AI could inject \$19.9 trillion into the

global economy by 2030, Latin America may receive only three percent of those benefits, and Africa, Oceania, and non-China Asia a mere eight percent combined. This isn't innovation—it's inheritance.

The coffee in your cup, the cocoa in your chocolate—these commodities once fuelled colonial economies through supply chains designed to enrich distant metropolises. Today, we have new raw materials: data. Kenyan workers label images for Silicon Valley algorithms. Venezuelan gig workers scrub toxic content from chatbots. Indian call centres train voice assistants. This labour remains largely invisible, underpaid, and disconnected from the value it creates—a digital encomienda system where sweat trains machines that displace the very people who nourished them.

The infrastructure gap mirrors historical resource monopolies by the colonisers. Africa and Latin America together host just three percent of global AI computing capacity.

Why? Building sovereign compute requires chips, energy, and capital—resources hoarded by powers now racing to lock in dominance. The US AI Action Plan champions open models while tightening semiconductor export controls. China promotes “inclusive infrastructure” while relying on smuggled Western chips to power 91 percent of its AI models. Both offer partnerships, yet neither surrenders control. As Krystal Maughan, a Trinidadian AI researcher, warns: “A lack of vision for oneself results in being part of someone else's vision.”

Enter the siren song of “democratisation.” Meta's Mark Zuckerberg promotes “open-source AI” while sporting shirts emblazoned “Aut Zuck, Aut Nihil” (Either Zuckerberg or Nothing)—a Caesar-esque declaration of intent. The rhetoric is seductive: Download our models! Build local solutions! Yet Llama's “openness” is a masterclass in illusion. Meta withholds training data, restricts commercial use, and leverages its \$40-billion war chest to ensure no startup can rival its scale.

This isn't a partnership, it's predation. By dangling open models while monopolising compute and data, Big Tech turns Global South innovators into outsourced R&D departments. Startups fine-tune Llama for regional needs, only to be acquired or crushed when Meta absorbs their breakthroughs. The result? A new dependency: nations trade sovereignty for the false god of accessibility, importing values baked into foreign algorithms. Consider

the cultural erasure: Swahili chatbots trained on English syntax, agricultural AIs blind to monsoon soil, and facial recognition systems that misidentify black and brown faces. When tools are designed without us, they recreate the world *against* us.

Yet a quiet rebellion is flowering. From Jakarta to Johannesburg, many nations are increasingly rejecting the false binary of US vs China roadmaps and scripting their own code for technological self-determination.

Pakistan's National AI Policy mobilises its youth bulge (64 percent under 30) through education and ethical frameworks, transforming demographic weight into AI leverage. Kenya is building continental research hubs, asserting that African data deserves African governance. Indonesia's public consultation on AI ethics centres on *gotong royong*—collective decision-making rooted in village traditions. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are deploying capital and neutrality to convene Global South summits, shifting the discourse from charity to co-ownership.

These aren't isolated experiments. They're threads in a tapestry of techno-decolonial praxis. We won't win with borrowed code; we win by rebuilding the foundation.

The Global South, therefore, must have a policy that catalyses this momentum. Three pillars can anchor its AI sovereignty—(i) Sovereign compute: Regional compute alliances, like a Latin American cloud network or GCC-funded AI corridors, can pool resources to break dependency. Imagine

Angola and Nigeria co-investing in solar-powered data centres that train models on African health records, guarded by local privacy laws. Data stays, value flows; (ii) AI justice charter: A Global South pact could bind members to ethical non-negotiables like algorithmic bias audits, data dignity clauses, and profit-sharing from extracted resources. Brazil's digital rights framework and India's “AI for All” vision offer templates; (iii) Diplomacy by design: Why beg for seats at G7 tables when we can build our own? A Global South AI Alliance (uniting ASEAN, AU, Mercosur, GCC) should co-draft standards at the UN, demand compute reparations from tech giants, and sanction digital extractivism. Power isn't given; it's negotiated.

Currently, trust in AI sits at 46 percent globally. In the Global South, scepticism runs deeper—we remember promises made by colonial surveyors mapping “empty” lands later filled with mines. Yet this mistrust is wisdom, not weakness. It compels us to ask: Who benefits? Who governs? Whose future?

The WAIO proposal, like Zuckerberg's open-washing, is a symptom of an old order seeking new legitimacy. Our response must be neither rejection nor submission, but re-imagination. Let us build AI that honours Kerala's fishing nets, not just Wall Street's trading algorithms; that learns from Quechua elders and Lagos market women; that sees compute as a commons, not a weapon.

History is rhyming, yes. But poets know: rhymes can be rewritten.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Puccini work
- 6 River to the Rio Grande
- 11 “-and his money ...”
- 12 Fragrance
- 13 Island off Naples
- 14 Plug part
- 15 Composer
- Stravinsky
- 17 Tell whoppers
- 18 Beach atmosphere
- 22 Horse strap
- 23 Quick drawing
- 27 Co-op's cousin
- 29 Find darling
- 30 Declare
- 32 Rain heavily
- 33 Rams from behind
- 35 Dict. entry

38 Sticky stuff

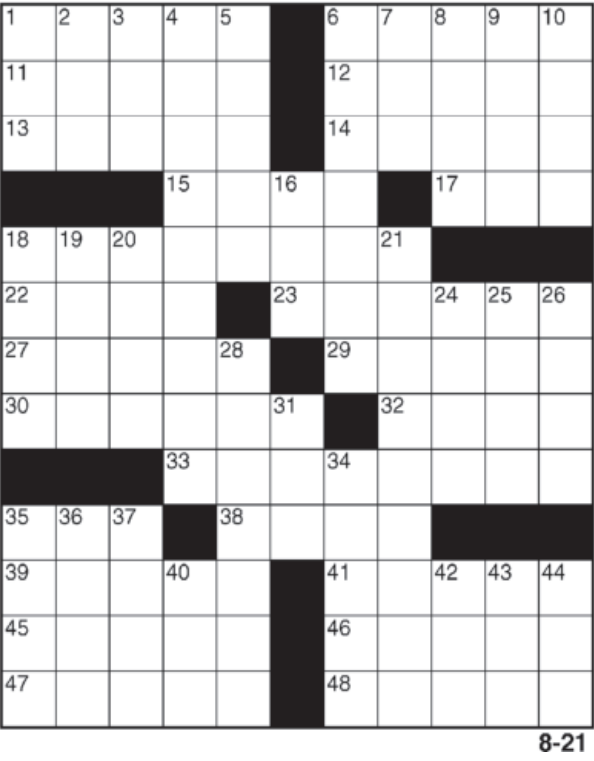
- 39 Menzel of “Frozen”
- 41 Puccini work
- 45 Sheets and such
- 46 Party prep
- 47 Slow tempo
- 48 Chaplin persona

DOWN

- 1 Tic-toe link
- 2 One-kind
- 3 Soak up
- 4 Cook's seasoning
- 5 Straighten
- 6 Cook's seasoning
- 7 Screw up
- 8 Put in the fridge
- 9 Old Atlanta arena
- 10 Cook's seasoning
- 16 Treaty org. since 1948

18 Killer whale

- 19 Corp. bigwigs
- 20 Start of a German count
- 21 Cook's seasoning
- 24 Animated character
- 25 Engine gunk
- 26 That woman's
- 28 Cook's seasoning
- 31 Eastern “way”
- 34 Perch
- 35 Cook's seasoning
- 36 Falco of TV
- 37 Helsinki native
- 40 Trawling need
- 42 Greek vowel
- 43 Toddy base
- 44 Phone download



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to dsopinion@gmail.com

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

With the result, the line-up of the Super Four is also confirmed as earlier. India and Pakistan had qualified from Group A. The Super Four phase will begin on Saturday with a showdown between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Dubai.

Menstrual pain management and the lack of targeted therapy in Bangladesh



ILLUSTRATION: AZRA HUMAYRA

“I got my period quite early, and I was scared to ask many questions. I remember crying to my mother as to why this was happening to me; she laughed and said it would be alright.

AZRA HUMAYRA

Due to the wide range of experiences among menstruating individuals, the term “menstruation”, which generally refers to the monthly release of blood through the vagina, remains mysterious. Blood discharge is one of its components, but there are many more that we rarely discuss. Among the many is the management of menstrual pain. It’s not uncommon to see people be unaware of menstrual pain simply because they do not experience it, and that leads to overgeneralisation. It could even affect the judgement of those who shape the minds of young people. “I got my period quite early, and I was scared to ask many questions. I remember crying to my mother as to why this was happening to me; she laughed and said it would be alright. I never experienced excruciating pain, and when my Science teacher in class nine said how menstrual pain is psychological, I agreed with her, not knowing any better,” said Fatema Tuz Zohra, a final-year student at Chittagong University. According to a paper published by the *Centre for Economic Studies and Ifo Institute (CESifo)*, titled “Social Norms and Misinformation: Experimental Evidence on Learning about Menstrual Health Management in Rural Bangladesh”, the majority of menstruating people report decreased physical and mental well-being, particularly stress and shame, during menstruation. Additionally, there are significant knowledge gaps regarding the proper use of hygienic materials for menstrual health management, and empirical and normative expectations align with the reported adverse health behaviours. The shame

surrounding menstruation is one of the key reasons for the dearth of discussions about menstruation and, more specifically, menstrual pain. Zohra further added, “It was not until my early 20s that I learned about endometriosis and other issues that lead to intense menstrual pain. With the shame surrounding menstruation, I thought it’d be better if I didn’t draw much attention to it. I never thought that simply not knowing about these issues was causing me to invalidate other people’s experiences.” Because of the lack of awareness, targeted therapy is often rare. Menstruating people often think their symptoms are not alarming and that everyone experiences the same symptoms, which is not true. Even if we look at the statistics by the World Health Organisation (WHO), endometriosis affects roughly 10 percent (approximately 190 million) of reproductive-age people globally. Merely prescribing medication to alleviate menstrual pain is insufficient for addressing all issues; healthcare professionals must provide adequate explanations to enable patients to fully understand their current situation and make educated decisions. Alo Akter, who has been suffering from severe menstrual pain due to endometriosis for more than two years, states, “I used to feel intense pain during my periods, but the worst menstrual pain I endured was when I couldn’t even sit at home and do online classes. Then, I went to the doctor, and the ultrasound showed a cyst on my ovary. The doctor told me that I should stop my period by taking pills and told me to get married in a few months, but when I asked if my problem would go away afterward, he could

not give me the answer.”

There were a few complaints from one of the interviewees who wished to remain anonymous. She suffers from vaginismus, which causes vaginal muscles to involuntarily or persistently contract. She says, “I didn’t even know what vaginismus was. I contacted my gynaecologist because I wanted to use tampons but couldn’t because of the pain. She prescribed me pills. What will that do? Pills won’t help the pain.” Upon talking with a few others, a pattern was noticed: whenever a patient complained regarding pain, the doctors often prescribed birth-control pills. Pills are effective when it comes to regulating your cycles and managing pain to some extent, but they are not for all conditions.

of a one-size-fits-all approach, particularly the indiscriminate prescribing of birth control pills, fails to address the diverse and individual experiences of those who menstruate. This approach often overlooks the unique needs of individuals suffering from conditions such as endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), vaginismus, etc., leading to inadequate treatment and continued suffering. The deep-rooted shame and stigma surrounding menstruation contribute significantly to the lack of open discussions and awareness, further perpetuating the issue. To address the situation, parents and educators must create a more informed and encouraging atmosphere for young people, and

The deep-rooted shame and stigma surrounding menstruation contribute significantly to the lack of open discussions and awareness, further perpetuating the issue.

Besides, pills are not for everyone. According to another paper titled “Adverse Effect of Combined Oral Contraceptive Pills” published in the *Asian Journal of Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research*, because of using pills, people of reproductive age experience side effects such as spotting, weight gain or weight loss, nausea, breast tenderness, severe headache, depression, darkening skin, and vaginal infection. The adverse effects might make daily tasks a nuisance. A lack of understanding and knowledge among parents lead to a reluctance to take pain medication and targeted therapy. Dr Shamima Aktar, gynaecology and obstetrics consultant at Prabin Hospital (BAAIGM), says, “There’s a lack of targeted therapy for menstrual pain because parents seldom discuss the manifold aspects of menstrual cycles and patterns. I have patients who complain of severe pain during their menstruation but never take pain medication because their parents deem medications to be redundant or that their children might become heavily reliant on them. Some guardians take active measures when they realise their children are having severe pain during menstruation, but most parents usually lack knowledge and awareness, hence the lack of targeted therapy.” The management of menstrual pain in Bangladesh is hindered by a lack of targeted therapy and knowledge. The prevalent use

healthcare experts must provide individualised care and thorough explanations. For Bangladesh’s menstrual population to maintain their physical and emotional health, these gaps must be filled. As though pain were merely a personal flaw, every cramp, spasm, and blood heaviness are felt in private, stitched into women’s existence. Families hush it, teachers dismiss it, and doctors often reduce it into a prescription. But pain that is unnamed grows heavier; it presses into the mind until it feels like shame. To speak of it openly is still seen as transgressive, to demand answers is to risk being told it is all in your head. Yet, if half the population must bleed in order to exist, why must their suffering remain unacknowledged? Why must they be taught to live as though their pain were not real? **References:** 1. Social Science Research Network. (2021). *Social Norms and Misinformation: Experimental evidence on learning about menstrual health management in rural Bangladesh*. 2. Asian Journal of Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research. (2016). *ADVERSE EFFECT OF COMBINED ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS*. 3. World Health Organization: WHO & World Health Organization: WHO. (March 24, 2023). *Endometriosis*. *Azra Humayra is a Sub-Editor at Campus, Rising Stars, and Star Youth.*

A guide to giving good gifts

TINATH ZAEBA

As satisfying as it is to get a good gift, it can be just as satisfying to give a great one. For many, gifting is a love language. It is a way to show affection, celebrate moments, and express our love beyond words. That being said, deciding what to gift someone can feel challenging at times. However, if you remember a few things, the whole process becomes a lot easier. **Personalise the gift** There are many ways to make a gift feel personal. For instance, instead of a typical keychain, try a resin one made with their favourite flowers shaped into their initials. Or, if you’re getting them something like a plushie, tuck in a letter to explain why you picked it. You could even give the plushie a name and a backstory. Another personalisation option is engraving something, like a wallet or necklace, with the recipient’s initials or a meaningful word. Personal touches work well when you want to impress someone you don’t know very well, or someone who already owns a lot of things. **Pay attention to what they like** It’s tempting to go with the first idea that crosses your mind, like a jersey for a football fan. But thoughtful gifting is about the person, not just the category. If someone’s always outdoors, maybe they’d like a water bottle that keeps drinks cold or a cool smartwatch. If they wear bold colours, get something equally vibrant and fun. One of the best gifts I received was a curl cream set, because a friend noticed my hair was naturally curly, even though I never mentioned it. That observation meant a lot, so paying attention is key here.



Give something they wouldn’t buy for themselves Great gifts are often small luxuries people don’t afford themselves, like a good scented candle, sleep mask, or spa voucher. It doesn’t need to be pricey; just something that feels like a treat. This makes the gift memorable as everyone likes a little treat. You can also go for functionality, like a gift set with shower products and a bathrobe, or a snack box themed around a favourite colour or type of food. **Unwrapping is part of the gift** Presentation adds a lot to a gift. You don’t need expert wrapping skills, but showing care with nice wrapping paper, a ribbon, or a box makes the moment feel special. A well-wrapped gift builds curiosity. I also try to include a detailed letter inside explaining my reason for the gift and why I got it for them. Gift bags are also a great option if you’re like me and don’t know how to wrap properly. **Don’t overthink the price** Good gifts don’t have to be expensive. As corny as it sounds, it really is the thought that matters. A handmade bracelet, a book they would enjoy, or a card in their favourite colour can all be meaningful. You could make jewellery using resin or polymer clay from stationery stores to make a cute decor for their space. A handmade friendship bead bracelet never gets old. *Tinath Zaeba is an optimistic daydreamer and a cat mom of 5. Get in touch via tinathzaeba25@gmail.com.*

Are we treating the strays right?

We should not be depending only on a small group of people to take care of all strays. It should be a community effort.

ADRIN SARWAR

There was a time, not too long ago, when stray animals weren’t seen as a nuisance. They were silent companions who were considered a part of the community. They may not have worn collars or eaten from food dispensers, but they belonged everywhere and with everyone. Strays used to be able to roam around freely, without having to think about food or a place to sleep, because residents left their windows ajar, kept leftover food aside, and made space in the corner of their verandas. Whenever it was time for a meal, cats and dogs would show up at these homes. These animals weren’t “owned,” but they were cherished. Every neighbourhood had a familiar face. The community members would collectively care for them, like a neighborhood ritual. However, times have changed. Communities no longer welcome strays. Rather, they take stringent measures to keep them away. What, then, should we make of the stories about how neighbours used to safeguard and care for the animals? I heard from my mother that, on a stormy night, my grandfather rescued a family of cats. After a lot of searching, amid the storm, he managed to find the mother and her litter of kittens. He brought all of them back home. In many ways, it feels as though the sentiments that my grandfather fostered were



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

passed down to him through the spirit of community. But why exactly has this sense of responsibility withered away? Perhaps, architecture played a role. Before, homes were built close to the ground. Almost every house had open courtyards and shaded spaces that naturally offered shelter, allowing easy access for cats and dogs. However, as cities grew vertically, high rises replaced smaller buildings. With people retreating into their own individual spaces, the emotional distance within the community

widened as well. Tall buildings and gated communities left no room for strays to wander around or rest for a while. By placing individuality at the heart of our urban life, we have paid the price of a weakening community, one that drastically changed people’s mindset towards stray animals. Not only do they think of these animals as pests, but they are also ready to go to any extent to get rid of them. Earlier this year, reports of brutal violence being inflicted on strays surfaced. Take, for instance, the

brutal killing of a dog named Keeper, a known and loved stray in Dhaka’s Elephant Road area. Another shocking incident unfolded last year in Japan Garden City in Mohammadpur, with multiple dogs and cats dying after consuming poisoned food that was left out in the open. Amidst the grief and anger that these incidents fuel, there are glimpses of hope. Small activist groups are stepping up – rescuing injured animals, organising adoption drives, and educating the public

about neutering and co-existence. More people are also speaking up, demanding laws that protect street animals and punish cruelty. What we must reckon with, though, is that we have regressed from where we once were. We should not be depending only on a small group of people to take care of all strays. It should be a community effort. We must acknowledge that strays were and remain a part of the neighbourhood. As the short story “Biral” by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay notes, when both humans and animals feel hunger and thirst, only humans are allowed to eat freely, while animals are beaten for doing the same. “Whatever you eat, we have a share in that too, simply because we are a part of this society too.” Reviving empathy isn’t just about changing minds; it’s about rebuilding spaces, values, and rhythms that allow us to live with animals, not just around them. **References:** 1. The Daily Star (March 9, 2025) *Community shocked after beloved dog Keeper killed*. 2. The Daily Star (November 23, 2024) *The tragic fate of stray animals in Japan Garden City*. *Adrin Sarwar is a final-year student studying Printing and Publications Studies.*

CAN CRICKET ESCAPE POLITICS?

When India captain Suryakumar Yadav and his Pakistan counterpart Salman Agha step out for toss in a Super Four fixture of the Asia Cup on September 21, eyes will be on their hands as much as on the coin. Last Sunday, India's refusal to shake hands post-match after convincingly beating Pakistan sparked a storm that still rumbles louder than the cricket itself. Since then, Pakistan nearly boycotted the tournament, boardrooms traded barbs, and a match referee's "miscommunication" became front-page news. As the rivalry returns to Dubai, fans wonder who will triumph, and whether cricket can truly step out of the shadow of politics. In the Asia Cup so far, the headlines have been written off the field. The rematch between India and Pakistan promises to be no different.

‘We don’t play on T20 friendly wickets’

Former Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque remained tight-lipped on whether he worked on his game in Australia during a recent visit but divulged on the continued frustrations over poor wickets in T20s, sub-standard domestic four-day cricket and the need for players to find their own ways to improve in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi. The excerpts are as follows.



The Daily Star (DS): The Bangladesh team is now in the UAE for the Asia Cup. So far, they have failed to post big scores in any of their matches with problems in strike rotation, and inability to hit big shots consistently in T20s becoming apparent. How do you view these issues?

Mominul Haque (MH): Power-hitting depends on the wicket. We don't play on T20-friendly wickets in our country. T20 wickets need to offer consistent pace, and bounce that can be trusted. You can then anticipate and hit the ball.

In Bangladesh, you have to judge the nature of the wicket before playing shots. The ball stops on you when you are trying to play a shot and that slows down the hand. That is why power-hitting traits go missing in our players. The issue of too many dot balls is also caused by that. When you try to attack, sometimes you end up with dots and also can't hit deliveries which are there to be hit.

DS: What do you think is the remedy?

MH: From press conferences to elsewhere, the players are always talking about wickets. Without good wickets in T20s, power-hitting or scoring big runs is difficult. Many have raised this subject but nothing materialised. At the end of the day, you have to find your way out as a player. In high level tournaments, for instance the ongoing Asia Cup, if a player

doesn't perform, they will be dropped. When they do not improve, they will feel bad about it. Since the board isn't taking initiatives, we have to find alternative routes.

For instance, I don't have access to any practice facilities with pitches that guarantee good bounce and where the ball comes on nicely. I have to use concrete or granite slabs to increase my range of shots.

Wickets in Bangladesh are all same, whether it's indoors or outdoors. There is no carry or bounce like in other countries. I don't know why indoor turfs are also same

but the one in Mirpur is slow since it's made of rubber. The indoor is also very enclosed and sunlight barely reaches inside so not much air to facilitate swing. The wickets in Bogura and Rajshahi, from what I have seen previously, would be the best options for the Bangladesh team batters.

DS: NCL T20 is postponed for now due to inclement weather. How do you view the tournament?

MH: In our country there are not many white ball tournaments. Many players do not get the opportunity they deserve in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and that's why a smaller number of players get exposure. NCL T20 creates that platform and gives such players an opportunity.

U-17s make flying start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh launched their SAFF U-17 Championship campaign in style, thrashing Nepal 4-0 in their Group A opener in Colombo yesterday.

The men in red and green, two-time champions, now need only a point against hosts Sri Lanka on Sunday to reach semifinals.

After several early missed chances, Sabbir Islam broke the deadlock in the 30th minute at Racecourse International Stadium, capitalising on a weak clearance by Nepal goalkeeper Ram Bahadur. Opu Rahman and Md Arif struck shortly after the break, before Bangladesh sealed the rout in the 65th minute through a Mohammad Manik strike.



PHOTO: X

Think big to hit big!

EKUSH TAPADER from Abu Dhabi

Six-hitting remains Bangladesh's Achilles heel in T20s -- at least that's what any avid watcher would conclude.

Yet insights from Julian Wood, who was brought in by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for a power-hitting camp ahead of the ongoing Asia Cup, may reveal the underlying reasons behind the Tigers' struggle to clear the ropes consistently.

Among Test-playing nations, Bangladesh rank 10th in six-hitting rate. Between 2006 and 2023, they averaged only 3.8 sixes per innings -- the lowest among Test teams. From 2023 to 2025, there was some progress, with the average rising to 6.1 sixes per innings.

But in the Asia Cup group stage, Bangladesh showed little sign of improvement. Instead, new concerns surfaced. The Tigers managed just eight sixes across their three games -- an average of 2.67 per match -- despite having undergone dedicated work on power-hitting.

Wood identified the Tigers' timid mentality as the root of the issue, pointing to a regressive mindset shaped by the team environment.

"If you're chasing 100, win it in 10 overs," urged Wood, who had returned to England after his short stint with the side. "If you're chasing a low score, like we did against the Netherlands, you should aim to win it in 10 overs. You should sit down halfway

through the game and say, 'Right, that's what England would do.' You need to challenge yourself to do that. My only concern is that this doesn't really happen."

The lack of aggression was most evident against Sri Lanka. Bangladesh hit only one six in that game -- their only defeat in

Tigers' performance still raised questions. "I thought Sri Lanka bowled really well. They had two wicket maidens in the first two overs of the Powerplay. The grounds are big, and it is the Powerplay where you need to target big," he explained.

But large grounds and tricky

Even in Bangladesh's eventual win over Afghanistan, their finishing exposed glaring flaws. During the penultimate over, Jaker Ali failed to connect with three consecutive deliveries from pacer Azmatullah Omarzai, and his struggle carried into the final over.

Wood recalled speaking with Jaker afterward, telling him he had "tried to hit too hard and lost shape" -- something probably Wood had not expected from Jaker, whom he had termed the 'ice-man' during that short power-hitting camp.

But Jaker was not the only concern. After scoring briskly at over 10 runs an over in the Powerplay, Bangladesh could add just 35 runs in the final five overs -- without a single six in the last 47 deliveries.

According to Wood, the Tigers "hit the panic button" against Afghanistan. More importantly, he highlighted their limiting mindset of seeing themselves as a "160-170 side."

"They need to change that mindset to one where they aim for 200," Wood emphasised. "If you set yourself up for 200, depending on the surface and game situation, you might get 180."

For Bangladesh, the challenge extends beyond this Asia Cup. They must shed their mental shackles to truly compete in T20Is -- a format where totals north of 300 have already been reached.



the tournament, which hurt their net run rate and forced them to depend on other results to qualify for the Super Four.

Wood admitted that the "dry and slow UAE pitches" could have been a factor, but the

wickets are the same for everyone, where the Tigers' Group B opponents thrived. In their first two matches, Sri Lanka cleared the boundary nine times, while Afghanistan smashed 19 in two games so far.

Unprepared MSC face Kings challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

In a repeat of last season's clash, Federation Cup champions Bashundhara Kings and Bangladesh Premier League holders Mohammedan face off today in the Challenge Cup -- the season's curtain-raiser -- at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium.

The venue and a few fresh faces are the only changes from last season, when Kings came from behind to beat Mohammedan 3-1 in a match that was halted for 10 minutes after flares were thrown onto the Bashundhara Kings Arena pitch.

Stacked with 16 current or discarded national team players and boosted by strong preparation, Kings remain the favourites against Mohammedan, who have had less than an ideal preparation.

"This is not really preparation; rather, I want to treat this match as preparation for the league. Still, we will fight for the title," said Mohammedan coach Alfaz Ahmed.

Meanwhile, the appointment of Brazilian coach Roberto Carlos Mario Gomez has been a major boost for Kings, who also advanced to the group stage of the AFC Challenge League last month with an inspiring 1-0 win over Syrian side Al Kamarah SC.

Kings will rely on proven attackers Dorielton Gomes of Brazil and Emmanuel Sunday of Nigeria, along with Brazilian playmaker Raphael Augustin and Nigerian defender Emanuel Tony.

On the other hand, Mohammedan parted ways with Malian forward Souleymane Diabate and will instead depend on new arrivals Samuel Boateng, Bernard Morison, and experienced Uzbek striker Muzaffar Muzaffarov.



3 shrines vandalised, set on fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Three shrines and an Akhra were vandalised and set on fire in Cumilla's Homna upazila yesterday.

Locals and police said Md Mohsin, 35, of Asadpur village, posted "derogatory comments about Islam" on Facebook around 10:50am on Wednesday.

The post sparked outrage among locals, who later gathered near Mohsin's house to stage demonstrations demanding his punishment.

On information, police and army personnel rushed to the spot and detained Mohsin, said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Homna Police Station.

In the afternoon, a local, Shafiqul Islam, filed a case against Mohsin, he added.

Around 10:30am yesterday, a group of people under the banner of "Tawhidi Janata" again gathered near Mohsin's house and started demonstrating, said the OC, quoting locals.

The agitating people were calling

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Abdu Shah's shrine lies in charred ruins after locals set it on fire yesterday in Asadpur village under Homna upazila of Cumilla. Inset, agitators also torch Hawali Shah's Akhra in the same village.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

JULY ATROCITIES ICT frames charges against 5 ex-cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-I yesterday framed charges on three counts against five former police officials, including Habibur Rahman, ex-commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, in a case filed over crimes against humanity committed in the capital's Rampura during the July uprising.

The three-member tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, passed the order.

The other accused are then DMP's (Khilgaon zone) additional deputy commissioner Rashedul Islam, then Rampura Police Station officer-in-charge Mashiur Rahman, then sub-inspector Tarikul Islam Bhuiyan, and then Rampura police outpost assistant sub-inspector Chanchal Chandra Sarkar.

Of them, only Chanchal is in custody while the others remain fugitives.

The charges include murder, attempted murder, conspiracy, complicity, facilitation, abetment, incitement, failure to prevent or punish crimes, and command responsibility under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

According to the formal charge, on July 19, police action in Rampura left six-year-old Musa critically injured after being shot. The same bullet that pierced his body fatally struck his grandmother, Maya Islam. Musa survived following treatment, but his grandmother died of her injuries.

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Tulip's citizenship row deepens amid fresh scrutiny The Labour MP denies allegations

BULBUL HASAN, London

The controversy surrounding Labour MP Tulip Rizwana Siddiq took a fresh turn as new evidence emerged suggesting she continues to hold Bangladeshi citizenship through a national identity card, voter registration, and multiple passports, despite her repeated public assertions that she is solely a British national.

A joint investigation by Prothom Alo and The Times verified the authenticity of official documents in Dhaka, confirming that Tulip obtained a Bangladeshi national identity card in 2011 and has been registered as a voter using the address of Sudha Sadan, the Dhanmondi residence of her aunt, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Passport office records further reveal that Tulip was first issued a Bangladeshi passport in 2001 from London and obtained a second one in Dhaka in 2011, while Hasina was in office.

Meanwhile, Tulip has issued a rebuttal, describing the allegations as "politically motivated" and "fabricated".

In response to queries from The Daily Star last night, she said that she never held a Bangladeshi national identity card, voter ID, or passport since childhood.

Framing the reports as a deliberate attempt to damage her reputation, she said the Bangladeshi authorities are circulating "fabricated documents in a desperate attempt to justify their so-called trial".

In her statement to this newspaper, she noted that

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ASIA CUP 2025 Bangladesh through to Super Four

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh are through to the Super Four of the Asia Cup thanks to Sri Lanka, who handed Afghanistan a six-wicket defeat in the final match of Group B in Abu Dhabi on Thursday.

Kusal Mendis struck an unbeaten 74 off 52 balls and Kamindu Mendis chipped in with an unbeaten 13-ball 26 as Sri Lanka cruised to 171-4 in 18.4 overs in response to Afghanistan's 169-8.

With the win, Sri Lanka qualified as Group B winners with three wins in as many matches, while the Tigers made it through as runners-up with two wins over Hong Kong and Afghanistan, respectively.

Afghanistan finished third in the four-team group with a sole win over fourth-placed Hong Kong.

The Afghans, in a must-win game, had lost their way early on after choosing to bat, hobbling to 120-7 after 18 overs.

But the experienced Mohammad Nabi then shifted the momentum, first scoring 17 runs off

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Climate change causes havoc with global water cycle: UN

AFP, Geneva

Climate change is spurring increasingly erratic and extreme swings between deluge and drought globally, with cascading repercussions for societies, the United Nations warned yesterday.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization said in a report that the world's water cycle was becoming ever more unpredictable, with shrinking glaciers, droughts, unbalanced river basins and severe floods wreaking havoc.

"The world's water resources are under pressure from growing demand, and at the same time, we are seeing more water-related hazards," WMO chief Celeste Saulo told reporters in Geneva.

The agency's annual State of Global Water Resources report "shows quite clearly that the water cycle has become increasingly erratic and extreme," she said, pointing to the "cascading impacts on infrastructure, agriculture, energy, health, and economic activities".

Last year was the hottest on record, leading to prolonged droughts in northern parts of South America, the Amazon Basin and southern Africa, the report said.

Meanwhile, parts of central Africa Europe and Asia dealt with wetter weather than usual, being hit with devastating floods or deadly storms, it pointed out.

Africa's tropical zone experienced unusually

heavy rainfall in 2024, resulting in around 2,500 deaths and displacing some four million people.

Asia and the Pacific were meanwhile hit by record-breaking rainfall and tropical cyclones, killing more than 1,000 people.

And Europe saw its most extensive flooding in more than a decade, with a third of river networks exceeding high flood thresholds, the report found.

WMO said 2024 was the sixth consecutive year globally where there had been a "clear imbalance" in the world's river basins.

"Two-thirds have too much or too little water – reflecting the increasingly erratic hydrological cycle," it said.

The organisation also flagged how the water quality in major lakes was declining due to warmer weather, and glaciers

shrank across all regions for the third year in a row.

It found that across the globe, a full 450 gigatonnes of ice was lost – enough to fill 180 million Olympic swimming pools, WMO said.

The meltwater had added about 1.2 millimetres (0.05 inches) to the global sea level in a single year, contributing to the risk of flooding for hundreds of millions of people living in coastal zones, the report warned.

"From the 1970s until now, 9,000 gigatonnes have been lost, which is 25 millimetres of sea

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New Picasso portrait unveiled at Paris auction house

AFP, Paris

A previously unknown portrait by Pablo Picasso of one of his lovers was revealed on Thursday after being put up for sale at auction in Paris with a reserve price of eight million euros (\$9.5 million).

Entitled "Bust of a woman with a flowery hat", it depicts Dora Maar, a French photographer, painter and poet who was Picasso's best-known muse.

Painted with oil, the colourful work measuring 80 x 60 centimetres (31 x 24 inches) "is valued at around eight million euros, a reserve price that could soar," according to auctioneer Christophe Lucien at Parisian auction house Drouot.

It was painted by Picasso on July 11, 1943, and acquired in August 1944 by a French collector who is the grandfather of the current owners.

Agnes Sevestre-Barbe, a Picasso specialist present during the unveiling of the work, said it was "unknown to the public and never exhibited, except in the Spanish master's studio in Paris".

She added that it was "quite exceptional and marks a milestone in the history of art and in that of Picasso."



Cars arriving to pick up children after school occupy nearly the entire stretch of Kakrail's main road, disrupting traffic and causing long tailbacks. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon in front of Willes Little Flower School and College.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

This time, Ekushey book fair to begin in December

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time, the Amar Ekushey book fair will be organised twice in a single calendar year, with the upcoming edition scheduled to be held from December 17 this year to January 17 next year.

This marks the second time the fair will be organised outside its traditional February slot. The first deviation was in 2021, when the event was postponed to March due to Covid concerns.

The decision was finalised at a meeting held yesterday at Bangla Academy, chaired by Cultural Affairs Secretary Md Mofidul Rahman.

Speaking to this newspaper following the meeting, Bangla Academy Director General Mohammad Azam said, "Preparations are underway for the national election in February. Soon after, the Ramadan and Eid holidays will begin, during which most people leave Dhaka. Then April will bring storms and heavy rainfall, making it impractical

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