



"The recent drone incidents across Europe are a clear sign that Russia still feels bold enough to escalate this war..."  
Volodymyr Zelensky  
Ukraine's president

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## Loan recovery from top 20 defaulters stalls

By mid-2025, six state banks retrieved just 1.6% of the annual recovery target

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Financial authorities are focusing on the country's top 20 loan defaulters, who account for more than half of the toxic assets in six state-owned banks, as recovery efforts slow and capital shortfalls deepen.

As of December 2024, the top 20 borrowers owed Tk 85,444 crore, representing more than 57 percent of all non-performing loans (NPLs) in state-owned banks. Yet by mid-2025, the banks had clawed back just Tk 128 crore – barely 1.6 percent of the annual recovery target of Tk 8,077 crore, according to a finance ministry report.

The exposure is dangerously concentrated. Janata Bank alone holds 63 percent of loans to these top defaulters, leaving it reliant on a handful of distressed conglomerates.

The dismal recovery record comes as state-owned banks grapple with widening capital shortfalls and deepening losses. Janata Bank's capital deficit has soared from Tk 12,400 crore in June 2023 to Tk 57,330 crore by June 2025, while its capital adequacy ratio has plunged to -84 percent, which the finance ministry marked as "critically insolvent". The government has placed Janata Bank under special attention, with the Financial Institutions Division holding monthly meetings with the lender to review its condition.

Rupali Bank has seen its capital deficit nearly triple in two years. Over the same period, its capital adequacy ratio collapsed from -1.08 percent to -20.21 percent, reflecting the sharp deterioration in its performance.

Agrani Bank slipped back into heavy losses after a fleeting rebound in early 2025. By contrast, Sonali Bank, the largest state-owned lender, has staged a modest recovery, posting a net profit of Tk 591 crore in



Bangladesh players celebrate the fall of another Pakistan wicket during their ICC Women's World Cup opener at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: ICC

## Tigresses off to flying start

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh started their ICC Women's World Cup campaign with a clinical performance, thrashing Pakistan by seven wickets in the league stage at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

Pacer Marufa Akter set the tone, removing Omaidha Sohail and Sidra Amin in consecutive deliveries in the very first over, while spinners Shorna Akter (3-5) and Nahida Akter (2-19) played complementary roles, as the Tigresses skittled Pakistan out for just 129 runs in 38.3 overs.

Debutant Rubya Haider Jhelik then stole the limelight as the southpaw struck an unbeaten 54 off 77 balls – the highest score by a Bangladeshi batter on debut and only the third instance of a Bangladeshi debutant hitting a fifty – and shared a crucial 62-



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### RECOVERY PLAN

- » Dedicated task forces focusing on 20 biggest defaulters
- » Credit embargoes, asset seizures, restriction on govt tenders for wilful defaulters
- » Publication of names, close monitoring of the 20 defaulters



June 2025. Bangladesh Development Bank Limited stands out as the only state-owned lender to remain consistently well capitalised, maintaining capital adequacy ratios above 20 percent.

Meanwhile, BASIC Bank continues to haemorrhage, with mounting losses and one of the worst NPL ratios in the sector.

### LOAN RECOVERY STRATEGY

Faced with rising risks, the Financial Institutions Division has unveiled a sweeping recovery strategy aimed at targeting the largest and most wilful borrowers.

Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, said, "We have identified a group of major defaulters across all six state-owned banks, representing a significant portion of the total Non-Performing Loans."

"All banks have been instructed to form dedicated recovery teams to address these accounts with urgency."

Officials plan to publish the names of the 20 biggest defaulters and closely monitor them, while setting up dedicated task forces to focus exclusively on these accounts. For wilful defaulters, tougher measures

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## Global outcry as Israel stops Gaza-bound flotilla

One but all ships intercepted; over 400 activists detained; 77 more Palestinians killed in Gaza

AGENCIES

World leaders and rights groups yesterday condemned Israel's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, as a relentless assault on Gaza killed 77 more Palestinians.

Armed Israeli soldiers boarded around 45 ships that were attempting to break a naval blockade to deliver aid to the Palestinian enclave, arresting more than 400 foreign activists, including Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg. All but one of the two dozen vessels of the flotilla have now been seized.

Meanwhile, protests supporting the Gaza flotilla and the cause of Palestinians were held in several countries, including Spain, Italy, Argentina, Malaysia and Colombia.

Israel said it would deport the detained pro-Palestinian activists, adding that none of the vessels had breached its maritime blockade of the territory.

The Global Sumud Flotilla of around 45 vessels began its voyage last month, with politicians and activists, to Gaza, where the United Nations says famine has set in.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said he expected the members of the flotilla to be expelled from Israel on Monday and Tuesday and sent to European



capitals on charter flights.

"All the passengers are safe and in good health," the Israeli foreign ministry said on X after they began to be taken ashore in Ashdod.

"One last vessel of this provocation remains at a distance. If it approaches, its attempt to enter an active combat zone and breach the blockade will also be prevented."

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## KHAGRACHHARI VIOLENCE

### At least 1,100 accused in 3 police cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three cases have been filed over the violence in Khagrachhari's Sadar and Guimara upazilas following the alleged rape of a schoolgirl last week.

Three Marma youths were shot dead and many shops and houses were vandalised and torched during protests by indigenous people on Sunday.

Of the cases, Sub-Inspector Sohel Rana of Guimara Police Station filed two, while SI Shahriar of Sadar Police Station filed the other on Wednesday.

Officer-in-Charge of Guimara Police Md Enamul Haque Chowdhury said one case filed by SI Sohel was against unidentified individuals over the killing of three people.

As the victims' families declined to file complaints, police became the plaintiff. The case statement did not mention the number of accused.

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Thousands of devotees thronged Patenga beach in the port city to bid farewell to Goddess Durga on the final day (Dashami) of Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the country's Hindu community, yesterday. The day is marked by the immersion of the goddess's idol (bisarjan), symbolising her return to her celestial abode. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

### CHT PEACE ACCORD

## Unease growing beneath unkept promises

Key provisions remain largely unimplemented as successive govts fail to act

MD ABBAS

Successive governments have failed to implement the most important sections of the Chattogram Hill Tracts peace accord, leaving the treaty largely unfulfilled even after nearly three decades.

Rights activists say that due to non-implementation, coexistence between the CHT people and Bangalee settlers is becoming increasingly difficult. They also allege that the violence in the CHT, including recent incidents, is a result of this.

On December 2, 1997, the then Awami League government signed the accord with the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) to bring peace to the hill region. This ended more than two decades of armed struggle by the PCJSS for autonomy of CHT.

Twenty-eight years later, the accord remains only partly implemented. The governments led by the AL, BNP, and the 2007-08 caretaker administration have been accused of lacking the political will to fulfill the key promises: establishing local councils, resolving land disputes, and demilitarising the region.

Officially, the government claims that 65 out of the 72 sections of the accord have been implemented, with only a few remaining. PCJSS leaders reject this narrative, saying that only 25 sections

have been executed, 18 partially, and 29 not at all.

When the treaty was signed, the AL government was in power but failed to implement its key sections. The BNP government, which assumed office in 2001, did not act on the accord, arguing that it had been signed by the previous administration.

**"We did not sign the accord with any political party but with the state itself, which is bound to implement it."**

KS Mong, a PCJSS leader

The Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government, from 2007 to 2008, also did not take meaningful steps to advance the process.

The AL returned to power in 2009 and, in its election manifestos in 2009, 2014, 2018, and 2024, pledged to fully implement the accord.

Rights groups and PCJSS leaders argue that the party could have done so if it had shown genuine goodwill and not betrayed the hill people.

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## Types of passengers you meet on metro

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

Metro rail is the commuting solution for thousands of people in the city. For many, the fleeting commute is as much a part of their day as much as their work. Even though most of the commutes last only a few minutes, each ride gives you an experience that only Dhaka can offer.

Here are the types of passengers that you can expect to meet on the metro rail.

### THE GATE HUGGER

The gate hugger is the one passenger you cannot miss because he is there, standing at the gate the whole time. Even when his destination may be far away, or even if there is plenty of space inside the compartment, this particular passenger archetype just refuses to move away from the gate.

Of course, this makes it difficult for people to board and get off the metro, but they don't care much about another person's convenience. They just love the gate and they will stand there.

### THE ENTITLED ONE

Perhaps the only type of passenger universally loathed are the entitled



ones. These "big shots" refuse to stand in line. Even if they do stand in the queue, you can be certain that they will break the queue as soon as the train arrives and they will attempt to jump into the compartment. It's like the rules just do not apply to them and they don't care how much everyone around them are annoyed by it.

### THE APPREHENSIVE ONE

The apprehensive ones are probably just panicking inside, because they start moving towards the gate long before the train even arrives at the destination. Sometimes, they start the journey two stations in advance,

pushing and shoving their way to the gate, probably anxiety ridden over the fear of missing their station and getting dropped off far away. While it is very understandable to move towards the gate before the train arrives at the station, sometimes the apprehensive ones seem to be freaking out for no particular reason.

### THE ONE WHO LOVES TO TALK

It seems impossible to find a public transport where there isn't at least one person with an overly active mouth. These people seem to have a lot of opinions, strong ones at that and they are highly interested in

discussing those with strangers on public transport. Of course, even the metro rail gets these passengers. While most office goers are not particularly interested in rambling, there are the occasional lippy ones who keep the compartment alive with the sound of their voice. Annoying as they maybe, most commuters do not bother engaging in a conversation with them, but that doesn't stop them from trying.

### THE GROUP OF FRIENDS

While often most people on the metro are office goers, either commuting to or from work, visibly exhausted for what lies ahead, every now and then, a couple or a group of young people will board the metro. These people are way too excited about something and they cannot contain their excitement. They are either talking loudly or moving and gesturing something in the general direction of their friends. Other people will sometimes give them a perturbed look, but that never stops them.

And last but not least, there is another kind of passenger who will watch it all, remember it all, sit on his computer one day and then write about it. I'm that kind.

Which kind are you?

## Until the conch shells call her again Durga Puja ends with immersion of idols

UNB, Dhaka

The biggest festival of the Bangalee Hindu community, Durga Puja, ended yesterday with the immersion of idols of Goddess Durga and her children in rivers, ponds and the sea across Bangladesh.

According to Hindu belief, the immersion symbolises Durga's return to her husband's abode at Kailash.

In Dhaka, the Buriganga river turned into the heart of the celebration as thousands gathered to witness the final phase of the festival. Devotees from different neighbourhoods carried the idols on trucks to the riverbanks, singing hymns and playing instruments such as shankha, khol and dhak.

Amid chants and prayers, worshippers bid farewell to the mother goddess and her children — Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh — immersing their idols in the water with hopes of her return next year.

One of the highlights of the concluding day was Shidur Khela, a traditional ritual where female devotees offered vermilion at the feet of the goddess and then smeared it on one another.

The act symbolises blessings of prosperity and pays tribute to the divine feminine power embodied in Durga.

This year's Durga Puja was celebrated at around 33,355 mandaps nationwide, including hundreds in Dhaka alone. The five-day festival began on September 28 with Bodhon (the invocation of the goddess) on Shashthi and culminated on Dashami with the immersion ceremonies.

Durga Puja, also known as Sharadiya Durga Utsab, is regarded as the worship of Shakti — the divine force. It symbolises the eternal triumph of good over evil, as the goddess defeats the forces of darkness.

## US GOVT SHUTDOWN Trump threatens mass lay-offs of federal workers

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump yesterday signaled that he plans to follow through on his threat for mass layoffs of US federal workers as he ratcheted pressure on Democrats to back moves to end the government shutdown.

The Republican president announced he would meet budget chief Russell Vought "to determine which of the many Democrat Agencies, most of which are a political SCAM, he recommends to be cut, and whether or not those cuts will be temporary or permanent."

Trump's announcement on his Truth Social website came with the government entering the second day of a stoppage that is expected to see 750,000 employees being sent home without pay across a wide range of agencies.

Vought told House Republicans on Wednesday many of those workers would be targeted for permanent layoffs to be announced in the next day or two, echoing Trump spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt's threat that firings were "imminent."

## Loan recovery from top 20 defaulters stalls Unease growing beneath unkept promises

FROM PAGE 1

are being readied: credit embargoes across all banks, asset seizures and digital auctions to ensure transparency, and restrictions on access to government contracts, tenders and facilities.

The roadmap also addresses the vast backlog of cases clogging the courts. "A very large number of cases remain pending across the six banks, constituting the majority share of their NPL burden," Nazma said, adding that 100 priority cases have already been identified based on the highest financial involvement.

"Banks have been directed to intensify efforts toward resolving these cases by ensuring the presence of representatives at every hearing, conducting monthly review meetings chaired by the heads of the respective banks, and taking stronger measures to address writ petitions," she said.

The government plans to establish special loan recovery tribunals with six-to-twelve-month deadlines to fast-track 77 percent of default loans currently tied up in court, according to the finance ministry's report. In parallel, officials are exploring

alternative dispute resolution for mid-tier borrowers. The plan draws on practices in India and Sri Lanka, where arbitration and mediation have been deployed to speed up settlements and ease pressure on overburdened courts.

Alongside loan defaults, thousands of audit objections remain unresolved across the state-owned banks. Then there are weak internal controls, politically influenced lending and poor risk oversight.

"To address this challenge, banks have been instructed to establish stronger monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure timely resolution and effective recovery of audit-related issues," Nazma said.

Rupali Bank Chairman Nazrul Huda, who was appointed in August 2024, "Loans were given in the past without due diligence to bad borrowers who misused or diverted funds, or siphoned money abroad. Many projects are non-existent, and borrowers are not traceable. The recovery of such loans is almost impossible."

The finance ministry has also directed banks to establish

"independent audit compliance cells" to clear objections under strict deadlines, while holding boards and senior management personally accountable for recurring lapses. Plans also include new real-time monitoring dashboards to track audit issues and prevent repeat failures.

Sector-wide, the picture is bleak. Total classified loans at state-owned commercial banks reached Tk 149,140 crore by the second quarter of 2025, with provisioning shortfalls of nearly Tk 640 billion.

To contain the damage, the government is weighing the creation of a state-backed Asset Management Company to isolate toxic assets and manage them professionally. Bank recapitalisations, long a drain on the public purse, are expected to be made conditional on measurable recovery targets, including reductions in NPL ratios.

Nazma said banks have also been ordered to keep the finance ministry fully updated: "All banks have been directed to provide us with regular updates on their recovery progress, covering defaulters, pending cases, and audit objections."

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"We did not sign the accord with any political party but with the state itself, which is bound to implement it," said KS Mong, a central PCJSS leader.

"Yet governments have repeatedly shown no political will to do so."

### INTERIM GOVT'S ACTIONS

After the AL government fell in August 2024, the CHT Peace Accord Implementation Movement submitted a list of demands to the interim administration, urging that the accord be prioritised at the national level.

Since then, the platform has held at least eight programmes to press home their demands.

In response, the interim government reconstituted the peace accord implementation and monitoring committee, led by the foreign adviser.

The committee met once in Rangamati and admitted that the treaty had not been fulfilled, KS Mong, who also serves on the regional council, told The Daily Star.

The government also appointed a new chairman for the Land Commission, which had remained inactive since its previous chief died in 2021. However, beyond these steps, no significant progress has been made in the 15 months of the interim rule, he added.

"The treaty promised local government, land dispute resolution, and demilitarisation. Yet the government's claims of progress don't reflect the ground reality."

One of the central provisions of the accord was restructuring the hill district councils to ensure fair representation of indigenous people. Rights activists say this has not been achieved.

"The ratio of indigenous to Bangalee members of the district councils is now the same, but the treaty clearly stated that one-third of members should be from the Bangalee community," said Nirupa Dewan, rights activist and former member of Women Affairs Reform Commission.

She noted that voter lists of permanent residents of hill districts were not prepared and no district

council elections were never held. Instead, ruling parties appointed their loyalists as district council chairmen. As a result, the district councils and the regional council have remained largely ineffective.

This correspondent tried to contact CHT Affairs Adviser Supradip Chakma for comments. But he did not respond to our phone calls or Whatsapp messages.

### LAND: THE CORE DISPUTE

The Land Commission, another crucial institution, has also failed to function properly.

"Addressing the land issue is the single most urgent priority," said Khairul Chowdhury, professor at Dhaka University's sociology department, who has been the joint coordinator of the CHT Peace Accord Implementation Movement since 2020.

"If the land issue is resolved sincerely, 80 percent of other disputes will be automatically settled," he said. "Without resolving land claims, it is impossible to prepare a proper voter list, hold district council elections, or empower the regional councils."

The Land Commission has received more than 2,200 applications since the law for the commission was amended in 2016. Yet it has remained ineffective due to a lack of rules of business, inadequate funds, and weak institutional support, said Prof Khairul.

Another unfulfilled pledge is demilitarisation.

Dipayan Khisa, a PCJSS central committee member, said, "After the signing of the accord, only 66 out of over 500 temporary military camps in the CHT were removed in two phases. Another 35 temporary camps were removed between 2009 and 2013. However, many of them were later reinstated."

Dipayan said the government has established 16 new military camps, and a BGB camp since 2022, citing a military operation against the KNF in Bandarban.

"If the accord had been properly implemented, the hill people and the Bangalees would not see each other as enemies, and there would be coexistence between the two groups,"

said Nirupa Dewan.

Prof Khairul said the hill people and Bangalee settlers continue to live in uncertainty and fear due to non-implementation of the peace treaty.

They both said violence in CHT would have been prevented had the accord been properly implemented.

Prof Khairul said that with local councils ineffective, governance has been left largely in the hands of bureaucrats and security agencies. Many residents describe this as a "colonial pattern of control", where the population remains subjects rather than active citizens.

"The accord was meant to be a political settlement. If we only count clauses numerically instead of addressing their spirit — land, self-rule, reconciliation — then the crisis will persist," Prof Khairul warned.

He cautioned that without meaningful steps, the CHT risks being trapped in a permanent limbo, similar to unresolved conflicts in places like Kashmir and Palestine.

**A CALL FOR FRESH REVIEW**  
Many rights activists are now calling for an independent review of the treaty to assess whether and how it can be implemented.

"The CHT problem is not unsolvable," said Prof Khairul.

"With dialogue, justice on land issues, and genuine political commitment, Bangladesh can transform the hill from a source of tension into a reflection of its democratic and humanitarian values."

He argued that the accord should be reviewed independently to judge its relevance in today's context. "Circumstances have changed. Geopolitics, leadership, and ground realities are not what they were in 1997."

Such a review, he suggested, should involve credible experts, the military, political leaders, and civil society members. The army, he added, could also undertake an internal review of its role in the CHT.

"The question is whether the CHT will remain a permanent conflict zone, or whether a solution will emerge to bring peace to the region," said Prof Khairul.

## Global outcry as Israel stops Gaza-bound flotilla

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The Global Samud Flotilla later said the vessel's name is Marinette, and it is "still sailing strong".

Meanwhile, Conscience, a ship carrying renowned Bangladeshi photographer and rights activist Shahidul Alam, was still sailing towards Gaza, according to the photographer's Facebook page.

According to social media, Bangladeshi-origin British human rights activist and health specialist Ruhil Loren Akhtar is also taking part in the flotilla.

With the war in Gaza dragging on, solidarity with the Palestinians has grown globally, with activists and, increasingly, governments condemning Israel for its conduct.

Rights group Amnesty International criticised Israel for blocking the flotilla, saying it was an "act of intimidation intended to punish and silence critics of Israel's genocide and its unlawful

blockade on Gaza".

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also criticised Israel for seizing news workers travelling with the flotilla. The media watchdog said it identified 32 journalists on board the vessels, but it remains unclear who has been detained by Israeli forces at sea.

The boats, with dozens of activists from around the world on board, initially set sail from several European ports. After a 10-day stop in Tunisia, where organisers reported two drone attacks, the flotilla resumed its journey on September 15.

Across Europe, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Dublin, Paris, Berlin and Geneva to condemn Israel's interception of the flotilla. Rallies also took place in Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Karachi.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro said he will expel all remaining Israeli diplomats in the country over the interception.

Turkey called the interception "an act of terrorism," and said it had opened an investigation after Israeli forces arrested Turkish citizens on board the flotilla.

Spain yesterday summoned Israel's top representative in Madrid, the foreign minister said, saying that 65 Spaniards were travelling with the flotilla.

Israel blocked similar flotilla attempts in June and July.

**'LARGE SCALE MASSACRE' FEARS**  
On the ground, Israeli tanks blocked the main road to Gaza City yesterday, preventing those who have left the besieged city from returning, and Defence Minister Israel Katz said it was now the last chance for hundreds of thousands of people still inside to escape.

Israel has threatened that any Palestinians who remain in Gaza City will be defined as "terrorists or terror supporters".



Over the past 16 years, they [Jamaat-e-Islami] were not active in the field. They could not enforce a hartal even when their leaders were executed. They merged with the Awami League. Now they are dreaming of turning our independent country into Pakistan. Forget dreaming – such dreams will never come true.

IQBAL HASAN  
MAHMUD TUKU  
BNP leader



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus returned home yesterday after concluding his nine-day trip to New York to attend the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

## Green chilli prices soar past Tk 300

### Rain drives up veggie prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Continuous rain over the past few days has driven up the prices of several vegetables.

During visits to various markets in the capital, this correspondent found that long and round eggplants were selling for Tk 100–200 per kg, up from Tk 80–160 last week, while big round eggplants were priced at Tk 260–300, compared to Tk 200–240 previously.

Prices of other vegetables, including bitter melon, okra and pointed gourd, increased by Tk 10–20.

Bitter melon and yard-long beans were selling at Tk 80–120 per kg, up from Tk 80–100 last week. Spiny bitter melon was priced at Tk 100–120, compared to Tk 80–100, while pointed gourd and okra were sold at Tk 80–100, up from Tk 70–90.

Green chilli prices surged to Tk 300–400 per kg, from Tk 200–300 previously.

Mohammad Faruk, a wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, said, "Many vegetable plants have died due to the continuous rain. The goods come from various districts like Dhaka, Manikganj, Narshingdi and Gazipur."

The situation was observed during visits to Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur, Karwan Bazar, Hatirpool, Kathalbagan and Sukrabad yesterday.

Prices of papaya and potatoes, however, remained unchanged at Tk 20–30 per kg and Tk 20, respectively.

Rabiul Awal, a shopper at Karwan Bazar, said, "Round chickpeas are now Tk 250 per kg, which was only Tk 160 a few days ago, while green chilli has jumped to Tk 400 per kg from Tk 200 last week."

Sirajuddin, a trader at Kathalbagan Kitchen Market, added that blackish, round chickpeas were selling at Tk 300 yesterday morning due to very low supply.



## Early motherhood, lasting vulnerability

### Adolescent mothers face severe physical, mental health risks due to premature pregnancies

SAIMA AKTER ESHA

Only 14 years old, Eka Akhter Munni lay in the gynaecology ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), her face marked by exhaustion and despair.

She was brought to the hospital from Kamrangirchar's Battery Ghat slum, and this is not her first stay here. Munni has just given birth to her second child and is now under treatment in the postnatal ward.

Her mother, sitting beside her, said, "The doctor said she has low blood, so she feels very tired and weak. She also had seizures during the pregnancy. After giving birth, she was bleeding a lot."

"It wasn't a planned pregnancy. The baby was born very small," the mother added.

A few doors away, in the prenatal ward of DMCH, 17-year-old Tamanna Akhter Sweetie has made the long journey from Bikrampur. This is also her second pregnancy, complicated by a serious condition.

"There is water in my kidneys. Doctors said the pregnancy has worsened my situation," Tamanna said.

These are not rare exceptions. Many underage girls across the country continue to face severe health risks due to pregnancy, long before they are old enough to understand what motherhood means. Such risks affect two generations at once – adolescent mothers and their newborns.

According to the Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2023, the marriage rate among girls aged 15–19 stands at 99.31 per 1,000, while girls aged 10–14 face a marriage rate of 20.20 per 1,000.

During visits to DMCH, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, Mohammadpur Fertility Services & Training Centre (MFTSC) and

complications.

"These young girls often suffer from anaemia, eclampsia and malnutrition because they themselves are children. Their babies are also born underweight, with poor brain development. These girls' pelvises are not fully developed, so pregnancy and delivery become life-threatening," she said.

She added that home births, often encouraged by family members, further increase the risks for both mother and child.

Dr Nahid Parvin, medical officer at the gynaecology unit of Pallabi Urban Health Centre, highlighted the emotional struggles many adolescent mothers face. She said many of them cannot properly care for their newborns or form emotional bonds with them.

Bangladesh continues to have the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia, according to the UNFPA-Unicef Global Programme to End Child Marriage 2024, despite decades of intervention.

While the rate has halved since 1970, disruptions in 2024 – including political unrest, school closures and natural disasters – have increased girls' vulnerability to early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, it said.

Mahbub-Ul-Alam, programme manager at the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) and

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**These girls often suffer from anaemia, eclampsia (seizures during pregnancy), and malnutrition because they themselves are children. Their babies are also born underweight, with poor brain development. These girls' pelvises are not fully developed, so pregnancy and delivery become life-threatening.**

Dr Suchitra Saha  
Head of infertility department at MFSTC

the Urban Health Centre in Pallabi, adolescent mothers were found in almost every gynaecology ward.

Doctors report that they encounter such cases regularly.

Dr Suchitra Saha, head of the infertility department at MFSTC, said underage mothers are frequently admitted with

## Illegal depots, withheld info pose fatal trap for firefighters

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and KEERO ADHNAN

Deaths of firefighters have seen an alarming rise in recent years, driven by a rapid increase in illegal chemical warehouses and property owners concealing crucial information during emergencies.

According to the fire service, of the 19 firefighters who died on duty in the last three years, 16 were killed in just two major chemical-related incidents – the recent Tongi fire and the 2022 Sitakunda container depot explosion – where owners allegedly withheld vital information.

"A total of 51 fire service personnel has died on duty since 1966. But we're seeing more deaths recently, with 19 in the last three years," said Talha Bin Zaim, an official at the fire service media cell.

Former fire service deputy director Debashish Barman links the trend to the presence of illegal chemical warehouses in densely populated areas and a lack of specialised training.

"Authorities do not issue licences for stocking flammable chemicals in such areas. But in Tejgaon, Old Dhaka and Tongi, there are many illegal chemical warehouses. Since they lack licences to keep highly flammable chemicals, owners tend to conceal information and lie to firefighters when a fire breaks out," he told The Daily Star, stressing the need to relocate these warehouses.



**In many cases, firefighters are not given accurate information, as explosive chemicals are often stored illegally in densely populated areas. Such concealments occur because owners fear legal consequences and mislead firefighters during emergencies.**

Shajahan Sikder  
Deputy assistant director, fire service

The September 22 Tongi fire is the latest example. The blaze at a chemical warehouse claimed four lives, including three firefighters, allegedly because the owner concealed information.

Debashish said, "The firefighters knew there were chemicals, though they probably didn't know the specific type. But why didn't they wear protective gear for a chemical fire?"

He suspects the warehouse contained hydrogen peroxide, which exploded when firefighters used water. He also pointed out that the fire service lacks sufficient training and resources to tackle chemical fires.

"There are only a few firefighters trained for chemical-related fires. They need to be deployed at stations near chemical warehouses," he said.

Bangladesh has witnessed several high-casualty chemical fires in the past two decades. In 2010, 124 people died in Old Dhaka's Nimtali fire, which involved flammable chemicals. In 2022, at least 47 people, including 13 firefighters, were killed in Chattogram's Sitakunda, after a fire and subsequent explosions at a container depot.

Contacted, Shajahan Sikder, deputy assistant director (acting in-charge, media) of the fire service, acknowledged that concealment of information has contributed to a rise in firefighter fatalities.

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## DHAKA AIRPORT Journalists boycott Akhter, Tasnim Jara press meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists boycotted a press conference of National Citizen Party leaders Akhter Hossen and Tasnim Jara at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning, accusing NCP activists of misbehaving with them.

The incident took place around 9:45am in front of the VIP gate.

A journalist, who witnessed the altercation and claimed he was among those mistreated, told The Daily Star, "The NCP activists were shouting 'Inqilab zindabad' during the media briefing by Humayun Kabir, foreign affairs adviser to BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman. Because of the shouting, we couldn't hear Kabir properly. When one of us asked them to stop, they got louder. Later, when

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## EC asks NCP to pick symbol from 50 options

Shapla not included in the list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has sent a letter to the National Citizen Party, asking it to choose an election symbol from its reserved list of 50 symbols.

The party has been asked to inform the EC in writing of its choice by October 7.

The letter, issued on September 30, was sent by Md Rafiqul Islam, deputy secretary of the EC's election assistance branch, to NCP Convener Nahid Islam.

According to the EC, the NCP applied for party registration and mentioned shapla (water lily), pen and mobile phone as its preferred symbols, later modifying "shapla" to "red shapla" or "white shapla".

However, the EC noted that under Rule 9(1) of the Election Conduct Rules, 2008, the shapla symbol is not included in the list of permissible symbols.

The letter provided the NCP with the full list of available symbols, from which the party has to select one for the next step in the registration process.

The listed symbols are wardrobe, bed, ostrich, kite, cup and saucer, spectacles, building, brinjal, rechargeable lamp, computer, jug, ship, tube well, tiffin carrier, table, table clock, telephone, refrigerator, tabla, heron, rooster, pen, watermelon, flute, gourd, pitcher, prawn, plate, bench, lychee, swing, butterfly, balloon, football, flower tub, stool, bucket, banana, electric fan, mug, microphone, peacock, mobile phone,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A father carries his 16-month-old son, who is suffering from dengue, through the corridors of Mugda Medical College Hospital yesterday. In front of him, his brother-in-law holds the saline bag that is being administered intravenously to the child. As the child kept crying while on the hospital bed, his father decided to comfort him by carrying him through the halls of the hospital.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Man arrested over rape of 8-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A man was arrested in a case filed over the rape of an eight-year-old girl in Surabari area of Gazipur city on Wednesday.

The arrestee, Bhajendra Sarkar, 55, was sent to jail through a court, said assistant Sub-inspector Khasru, duty officer of Kashimpur Police Station, yesterday.

Police said the incident took place on Wednesday afternoon near a puja mandap in Surabari. Hearing the screams of a child, locals caught Bhajendra red-handed.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought him to the police station.

The victim was rescued in a critical condition and admitted to a local hospital. The child's mother later filed a rape case with the police station, said Kashimpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Moniruzzaman.



Traders make fishing traps to sell to fishermen in Rajshahi's Shrirampur area. These traps are used to catch various kinds of fish in char areas. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## Launch services suspended on 11 Bhola routes



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Launch services on 11 routes between Bhola and coastal areas were suspended yesterday due to rough weather triggered by a low pressure system over the Bay of Bengal.

Barishal has been experiencing rainfall since Wednesday night, which continued through yesterday afternoon. Several city roads went under water. Commuters, including office goers and day labourers, struggled to reach their destinations.

Md Humayun Kabir, a meteorological observer at the Barishal Met Office, said the low pressure, along with seasonal monsoon winds, caused cloudy skies and rain. Barishal recorded 24.2mm of rainfall over 24 hours, including 14.2mm between 6:00am and 12:00pm yesterday.

Bhola River Port official Md Shahidul Alam said passenger-carrying vessels on 11 routes, including to Sandwip, Hatiya, and Lakshimpur, were halted since morning. Speedboat services were also suspended.

Launch services to Barguna and Patuakhali were similarly suspended.

## Shipyard Road left in ruins for over a decade

Businesses count losses, commuters suffer as project stalls

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

For more than a decade, Shipyard Road stretching from Khulna's Rupsha Traffic Intersection to Khan Jahan Ali (Rupsha) Bridge has been a nightmare for commuters, businesses and students. What was once a bustling artery of trade and transport has turned into a pothole-ridden stretch.

Though reconstruction began three years ago, slow progress has only worsened the misery. The uneven surface, littered with giant potholes, turns into muddy pits during monsoon rains. Vehicles frequently break down or overturn, while pedestrians struggle through waterlogged sections.

"It feels like this road has been abandoned by the authorities. One pothole is repaired, but ten more appear," said Amiya Kanti Pal, a teacher at Rupsha High School.

The four kilometre-long road is lined with 10 educational institutions, timber yards and what used to be 27 rice mills. But businesses are now in decline. Enamul Kabir, president

of the Laban Chara Market Traders Association, said, "It is almost impossible to transport goods here. Buyers no longer come. Once, Bandabazar saw sales worth

Tk 50 crore annually. Today, it is not even Tk 1 crore." The rice milling industry has been hit hardest. Out of 27 mills, 21 have shut down. "Just last week, one of my trucks broke down on this road. Our

Residents and traders say they have held more than 20 demonstrations in the past decade, but little has changed. A rickshaw-puller near the Rupsha Bridge said, "Every ride costs me. The wheels get stuck, the chain breaks, the passengers shout at me. I can barely survive."

Originally under Khulna City Corporation's jurisdiction, the road was transferred to Khulna Development Authority (KDA) in 2013, when a Tk 98.9 crore project was approved to expand it into four lanes. Work did not begin until January 2022, nine years later. By June 2024, less than half the work was complete.

The project has since been revised, raising costs to Tk 259 crore.

Asked, project director Arman Hossain claimed, "Seventy percent of the work is done, and we are working to finish the rest quickly."



production has dropped by 25 percent. Losses cross Tk 100 crore every year," said Kazi Abdus Sobhan, president of the Khulna District Rice Mill Owners Association.

## Early motherhood, lasting

FROM PAGE 3  
country director of Pathfinder International, said adolescent pregnancies are a direct result of child marriage, increasing health risks for these girls.

He noted that the practice persists due to poverty, social insecurity

and cultural norms. "Child marriage is particularly prevalent in disaster-prone and flood-affected areas, as well as in urban slums, where financial hardships and difficult living conditions often push families to marry off their daughters at a young age in hopes of easing economic burden," he said.

"The DGFP is working closely with government and several private hospitals to provide regular counselling and health services to these

adolescent mothers and their children," he added.

Emphasising that legal reforms alone are not enough, he said, "Broader community awareness and stronger protection mechanisms are needed, especially involving men and family decision-makers. Since families are often the ones arranging these marriages, it is crucial to engage them in changing attitudes to ensure a safer and brighter future for the girls."

## EC asks NCP

FROM PAGE 3  
conch, sewing machine, sofa, suitcase, deer, duck and helicopter.

Contacted regarding the EC letter, NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary said, "The party had requested shapla or red shapla as its electoral symbol, but did not receive a proper response from the EC. Now the commission has sent a letter regarding the choice of symbol, but it doesn't bear a response to our request. We will ask the EC for a specific explanation."

Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (south) of NCP, said the party is "strict" about the shapla symbol, as it connects with marginalised people similar to the BNP's "sheaf of paddy" symbol.

Meanwhile, Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna yesterday said on Facebook, "If the shapla symbol is given to them (NCP), I will not file any case. But I will protest. Since we applied earlier, if shapla is allotted as a symbol, it rightfully belongs to Nagorik Oikya."

## Journalists boycott

FROM PAGE 3  
I approached them, they hurled abuse at me and harassed other journalists as well."

In protest, journalists walked out of the press conference that was scheduled to be addressed by NCP member secretary Akhter Hossen and senior joint member secretary Tasnim Jara.

The NCP media wing later issued a statement

describing the incident as "sad and regrettable."

"Akhter Hossen and two other party leaders have already expressed regret to the affected journalists. An internal probe is underway to identify those responsible," the statement read.

Videos of the altercation, now circulating widely on social media, show journalists demanding disciplinary action against the NCP activists involved.

## Illegal depots, withheld info

FROM PAGE 3  
He said in many cases, firefighters are not given accurate information, as explosive chemicals are often stored illegally in densely populated areas. Such concealments occur because owners fear legal consequences and mislead firefighters during emergencies, he added.

"But it is the firefighters who bear the brunt of such concealment," Shajahan

said. He also noted that the number of firefighters trained to handle chemical-related fires is gradually increasing, with several personnel having received specialised training in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan, and now passing on that knowledge to colleagues at home.

Following the Tongi fire, a fire brigade official filed a

case under the Explosives Act at Tongi East Police Station against warehouse owner Solaiman and 23 others, including 20 unnamed individuals.

Waheduzzaman, officer-in-charge of the police station, said, "We have started an investigation. It is being examined whether the warehouse had a licence or not."

He said all the accused are currently absconding.

## Gazipur villages thrive on coriander cultivation

Farmers earn steady income as demand grows

MONJURUL HAQUE

A radical change has transformed the lives of people in Rathura, Sankatpur, Demra, Fetalia and Nasheria villages of Gazipur's Kaliganj upazila.

For the past 15 years, residents have been cultivating coriander leaves, which have become their main source of livelihood and created employment for thousands. The leaves are sold in areas such as Jatrabari and Karwan Bazar in Dhaka, and are also exported abroad.

According to the Kaliganj Upazila Agriculture Office, coriander was cultivated on one hectare of land in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

During a visit to Rathura, mostly women were seen



working in families once struggled with poverty but now earn Tk 400 to Tk 450 daily from the work. Many were collecting leaves or cleaning them. The leaves are tied with ropes made from banana bark, arranged in bamboo cages, weighed and carried to markets. Several women said their

cultivation cover his children's education costs.

Haridas, 55, said over a hundred families cultivate coriander leaves, with four to five people working per family, greatly reducing unemployment in the village.

Wholesaler Shah Alam Bashar said he buys the leaves from these villages and sells them at high prices in Jatrabari and Dhaka markets.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Farzana Taslim said, "Coriander leaves are profitable and less prone to diseases. Cultivation, which started in 2007, has become a driving force of the area's economy and is increasing rapidly for commercial sale."

She said in 2025, two exhibitions and training programmes were implemented under the improved varieties and technology extension project. Farmers will receive fertilisers and seeds at no cost under these initiatives.

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২।	কাজের বিবরণ	:	জন্মান সেরাম/রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ সজ্জাস্থ যান্ত্রিকীয় ব্যয় নির্বাহক বাকদ।
৩।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের তারিখ	:	০৫ অক্টোবর ২০২৫।
৪।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	:	০৯ অক্টোবর ২০২৫ তারিখ ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
৫।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ	:	০৯ অক্টোবর ২০২৫ তারিখ ১২:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/৬২৪  
৩০/৯/২৫

নিয়োগ অধিদপ্তর  
ইউনিটের নামঃ ৭ আর ই ব্যাটালিয়ন  
স্থানঃ পোস্তগোলা সেনানিবাস

GD-2151

## India, China to resume direct flights

REUTERS

India and China will restart direct flights between designated cities this month, ending a suspension of more than five years, in a move that signals a cautious easing of bilateral tensions, India's foreign ministry said yesterday.

There have been no direct flights between China and India since 2020, even though China is India's biggest bilateral trade partner.

India's largest carrier IndiGo INGLNS said it would begin daily non-stop flights between Kolkata and Guangzhou on October 26. It also plans to launch a route connecting New Delhi with the Chinese city.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China a month ago for the first time in seven years to attend a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation regional security bloc.



Students march during a student strike to support Palestinians in Gaza and to condemn the Israeli force's interception of the vessels from the Global Sumud Flotilla, in Madrid, Spain, yesterday; protesters occupy the platforms of Naples Central Station, blocking incoming and outgoing train traffic, protesting Israeli interception of the Gaza flotilla in Italy; and pro-Palestinian demonstrators rally in solidarity with the Global Sumud Flotilla and Gaza, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## Anti-govt protests grip PoK

9 killed since Monday amid internet blackout; Islamabad blames New Delhi

AFP, Muzaffarabad

Days of violent clashes between anti-government protesters and police have gripped Pakistan's Kashmir on the border with India, with nine confirmed killed among scant news to emerge after an internet blackout.

Thousands first took to the streets of Muzaffarabad on Monday, demanding an end to lucrative benefits for the political class, such as free electricity and expensive cars.

Internet and mobile phone services have been blocked in the towering mountain valley, and local media were warned earlier by authorities against covering the daily demonstrations.

However, AFP reporters on Wednesday saw streets that were stained with blood and littered with spent bullet casings, shards of glass and scattered stones, apparent evidence of the chaos.

"The politicians here behave like gangsters ruling over our heads; we want them gone and their privileges removed," said Asad Tabbasum, a 51-year-old protester.

"They should stand with us," according to an official statement by the Azad Kashmir government on Wednesday, six civilians and three policemen have been killed since Monday.

More than 170 police personnel have been injured, along with 50 civilians, in the "violent demonstrations", the government statement said.

Protest organisers say more than 100 civilians were wounded. Security forces and police have flooded the streets of

Muzaffarabad in response to the protests, firing tear gas to hold back the crowds that reached up to 6,000 at their peak.

The military has not made a statement on the protests or responded to AFP requests for comment.

Criticism of the military is a red line in Pakistan, which was ruled for decades by the generals who analysts say are at the centre

of real power in the South Asian nation.

Muslim-majority Kashmir is claimed in full by both India and Pakistan but has been divided between them since their independence from British rule.

The area is considered highly sensitive by the Pakistani military after years of frequent skirmishes and full-blown wars.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said in a statement to the media that a "few miscreants,

on the enemy's instigation, are attempting to disrupt peace and order in Azad Kashmir".

Naqvi did not identify "the enemy", although it is a phrase regularly used to refer to neighbouring rival India.

"Peaceful protest is everyone's right, but taking the law into one's own hands will never be allowed," he said.

Nuclear-armed neighbours

chanted protesters walked past buildings scorched by fire or with broken windows.

Protest leader Shaukat Nawaz, an AAC member, claimed that police had fired at protesters.

"The bullets being fired at us are made in Pakistan to be used against the enemy and are now being used against us," he said.

The government did not respond to his claims.

Protesters accused the authorities of harassing journalists and preventing coverage of their demonstrations.

"Our voice has been muted, not just that, they are reporting us as miscreants when we are here for our rights," said 22-year-old Akash Kazmi.

The government said in its statement it had accepted "90 percent of the demands".

"We keep saying to the so-called peaceful protesters to come talk to us and solve the issues through dialogue," National Assembly member Tariq Fazal said in a video statement.

The AAC, which has asked for affordable electricity and more hospitals to be built, denied that its demands had been met.

Nawaz spoke with resentment about the weak internet access in the region, provided only by military-backed companies at high prices.

Protests, as well as funerals, continued yesterday.

"Sometimes they call us betrayers, sometimes Indian agents, we are neither," Nawaz roared through a microphone.

"We will keep fighting till we get our rights."



## Russia looking to 'escalate' war: Zelensky

AFP, Copenhagen

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday warned Europe that recent drone incursions showed Russia was looking to "escalate" its aggression, as he offered his country's war-honed expertise to help counter the threat.

European leaders from just under 50 countries converged on a conference centre in Copenhagen under tight security after mystery drone flights rattled Denmark.

The drone sightings in Denmark and high-profile aerial incursions by Moscow in Estonia and Poland have heightened fears that Russia's assault on Ukraine could spill over Europe's borders.

"The recent drone incidents across Europe are a clear sign that Russia still feels bold enough to escalate this war," Zelensky said.

"It was never just about Ukraine, Russia has always aimed to break the West and Europe."

European leaders are keen to work with Ukraine's war-tested expertise as they seek to bolster their own defences, and are discussing plans for a "drone wall" to counter the menace from Moscow.

"If the Russians dare to launch drones against Poland, or violate the airspace of

northern European countries, it means this can happen anywhere," Zelensky said.

"We are ready to share this experience with our partners."

French President Emmanuel Macron said that Western countries should be willing to take a tougher line when confronted by Russian drones, to sow doubt in the Kremlin.

"It's very important to have a clear message. Drones which would violate our territories are just taking a big risk. They can be destroyed, full stop," Macron said.

Romanian PM Nicosur Dan, whose country has seen Russian drones crossing over from Ukraine, warned his forces would shoot down the next one to violate their airspace.

As Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine drags on through a fourth year, Europe is scrambling to keep up pressure on Moscow and secure funding for

Kyiv.

Macron said it was key to step up efforts to counter the so-called shadow fleet of ageing oil tankers to "kill" the business model Russia uses to circumvent restrictions on exporting its oil.

In a bid to ensure Ukraine has the financing it needs, the EU is exploring a proposal to use frozen Russian assets to fund a new \$165-billion loan.



## GEN Z PROTESTS

### Three killed in Morocco

REUTERS, Rabat

Three people were killed and others injured in Lqilia, near Agadir, when security forces used firearms to prevent a group of individuals from stealing their weapons on Wednesday night, local authorities said, in an incident that marks a deadly turn in anti-government protests that initially rallied for social justice reforms.

The protests, which began Saturday with demands for better education and healthcare, have been organised online by a loosely formed, anonymous youth group calling itself "GenZ212." The group has used platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and the gaming app Discord to mobilise support.

Security forces had to use firearms in self defence after tear gas failed to stop the group from storming into the security forces (gendarmerie) facility, local authorities said.

Armed with knives, the group managed to set fire to a part of the facility and to a vehicle, forcing security forces to use firearms in self defence, said local authorities, who did not specify how many were injured.

The GenZ 212 movement is inspired by similar youth-led protests in Asia and Latin America.

## INDONESIA SCHOOL COLLAPSE

### No more signs of life, say rescuers

### 59 remain missing

AFP, Sidoarjo

Rescuers detected "no more signs of life" at a collapsed Indonesian school where 59 people were believed missing days after it gave way, an official said yesterday, raising fears no more survivors would be found.

Part of the multi-storey boarding school on the main island of Java collapsed suddenly on Monday as students gathered for afternoon prayers.

Five people have since been confirmed dead and 59 people were still feared buried under the rubble after days of rescue operations.

"We used high-tech equipment like thermal drones, and, scientifically, there were no more signs of life," said Suharyanto, the head of Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency.

Distraught families waited anxiously near the site for news of their loved ones. Many burst into tears upon hearing there were no signs of life, and one woman fainted, AFP journalists saw.

Residents near the school opened their homes to families as they waited, while charities set up posts offering food and drink.

Rescuers pulled five survivors from the rubble on Wednesday as frantic parents demanded that they speed up efforts to find dozens of children they believed were still trapped.

Investigations into the cause of the collapse in the town of Sidoarjo are continuing, but initial signs pointed to substandard construction, experts said. The building collapsed after its foundation pillars failed to support the weight of new construction on the fourth floor of the school, the national disaster management agency spokesman said.



## A skull that can change human history

AFP, Bangkok

A digital reconstruction of a million-year-old skull suggests humans may have diverged from our ancient ancestors 400,000 years earlier than thought, and in Asia, not Africa, a study said.

The findings are based on a reconstruction of a crushed skull discovered in China in 1990, and have the potential to resolve the longstanding "Muddle in the Middle" of human evolution, researchers said.

But experts not involved in the work cautioned that the findings were likely to be disputed, and pointed to ongoing uncertainties in the timeline of human evolution.

The skull, labelled Yunxian 2, was previously thought to belong to a human forerunner called Homo erectus.

But modern reconstruction technologies revealed features closer to species previously thought to have existed only later in human evolution, including the recently discovered Homo longi and our own Homo sapiens.

"This changes a lot of thinking," said Chris Stringer, an anthropologist at the Natural History Museum, London, who was part of the research team.

"It suggests that by one million years ago, our ancestors had already split into distinct groups, pointing to a much earlier and more complex human evolutionary split than previously believed," he added.

If the findings are correct, it suggests



there could have been much earlier members of other early hominins, including Neanderthals and Homo sapiens, the study says.

It also "muddies the waters" on longstanding assumptions that early humans dispersed from Africa, said Michael Petraglia, director of Griffith University's Australian Research Centre for Human Evolution, who was not involved in the research.

"There's a big change potentially happening here, where east Asia is now playing a very key role in hominin evolution," he told AFP.

The research, published in the journal Science, used advanced CT scanning,

structure light imaging and virtual reconstruction techniques to model a complete Yunxian 2.

The scientists relied in part on another similar skull to shape their model, and then compared it to over 100 other specimens.

The resulting model "shows a distinctive combination of traits", the study said, some of them similar to Homo erectus, including a projecting lower face.

But other aspects, including its apparently larger brain capacity, are closer to Homo longi and Homo sapiens, the researchers said.

The findings are only the latest in a string of recent research that has complicated what we thought we know about our origins.

## Gaza flotilla seizure violates int'l law

World leaders must make Israel allow humanitarian aid into Gaza

The interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, with most of the activists on the boats being detained by the Israeli forces (as of 6:15pm, Bangladesh time), is a clear violation of international law. The flotilla, which includes more than 40 civilian boats and about 500 activists, is carrying basic humanitarian aid—food and medicine—for war-torn Gaza, where a genocide continues and starvation has set in.

According to the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, the mission is lawful and protected under a comprehensive set of international legal instruments. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) guarantees freedom of navigation on the high seas. Security Council Resolutions 2720 and 2728 are binding instruments and demand unimpeded humanitarian access and the removal of all barriers to aid delivery. The Fourth Geneva Convention imposes an obligation to permit the free passage of humanitarian aid and prohibits interference with relief operations and the targeting of civilian infrastructure. These internationally accepted legal instruments, among others, confirm the legality of the flotilla and show that Israel is violating them by intercepting the fleet.

Israel has intercepted boats carrying humanitarian aid many times before. The deadliest case was in 2010 when Israeli commandos boarded a Turkish ship that was a part of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. Clashes broke out and 10 activists were killed as a result, drawing global condemnation and straining Israel-Turkey relations. In June, environmental activist Greta Thunberg along with other activists departed from Catania, Sicily with food, medical supplies, baby formula and other essential goods. They, too, were intercepted and sent back home. This time, the flotilla is much bigger with a higher number of activists, many of whom have been detained by Israeli forces. Many countries, including Turkey, Malaysia, Colombia, and South Africa, have condemned such "illegal detention" of their citizens.

Even the UK, a close ally of Israel, has called for the country to solve the "atrocious humanitarian crisis" and allow the humanitarian aid from the flotilla to be handed to humanitarian organisations on the ground. Yet, Israel continues to bombard Gaza and kill Palestinians, while blocking humanitarian aid, resulting in the starvation of civilians, including infants. We applaud the courage and resolve of the Freedom Flotilla activists who have risked their lives to conduct this mission driven by their sense of humanity and outrage. These heroes must be left unharmed. While a US proposed "peace plan" to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza is in the discourse, the international community must keep pressuring Israel to lift all restrictions on humanitarian aid and allow the remaining Palestinians to get the food and medicine they so desperately need. The world cannot remain silent anymore.

## Free Golartek playground

Playgrounds are for children, not for dumping seized vehicles

Over the past decades, we have witnessed many of Dhaka's playgrounds disappearing either due to the greed of powerful businesses and individuals or simply due to poor urban planning. Recently, the Golartek playground in Mirpur-1, largest playing field under the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), was found to be occupied by Darus Salam Police Station. The police station has turned a part of the four-acre field into a dumping ground for more than 50 seized vehicles, ranging from trucks and buses to motorcycles and rickshaws.

According to locals, seized vehicles started taking up space in the Golartek field just two years after the establishment of Darus Salam Police Station in 2008. More than a decade has passed since then, yet the police station continues to use the field as a dumping ground. They claim that the vehicles are case exhibits and that they have no alternative storage space. And despite repeated demands from the locals to clear the field, there has been no concrete action from the police. According to the station, they have written to the city corporation requesting land, but no allocation has been made to date.

Is that a viable reason to turn a public playground into a dumping ground for seized vehicles? The deputy commissioner of police for the Mirpur division has cited the absence of a permanent station building as the root of the problem. But why should the community suffer for this? The lack of urgency from both the police and city authorities to clear the field is unacceptable.

Dhaka has already lost most of its open areas, including parks and playgrounds. Many of them have been converted into commercial spaces, and plans are underway to destroy the few that remain. The impact of this on our children is immense. Deprived of outdoor spaces, they are forced to stay indoors, their eyes glued to screens, harming their health and overall well-being. We urge the government to take immediate action and ensure that the Golartek playground is freed from occupation. The DNCC authorities and Darus Salam Police Station must work together to resolve this issue without delay. Furthermore, the government must save all remaining playgrounds and parks in the city from illegal encroachment. Playgrounds are not a luxury, they are a vital infrastructure for a healthy and liveable city.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Germany reunified



On this day in 1990, after four decades of Cold War division and with pressure from German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to a unified Germany within Nato, leading to Germany's reunification.

# Will an Upper House solve our governance woes?

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem is research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Sami Mohammed is programme associate at CPD.

**KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM and SAMI MOHAMMED**

The interim government has been pursuing reforms for balancing the concentration of power focusing on three core pillars of the republic: legislative, executive, and judiciary. Introduction of an Upper House in parliament was initially raised by the Constitution Reform Commission, later by the National Consensus Commission, and finally considered by political parties for the next level of action. Currently, Jamaat-e-Islami and allies demand proportional representation (PR) in both Houses, while the BNP opposes it in both and the National Citizen Party (NCP) wants it only in the Upper House. However, the fundamental issue is whether the Upper House would be able to ensure accountability of the majority party and its leaders and, more importantly, such a House could improve governance practices and judicial independence.

But global evidence on whether these reforms work remains unexplored. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has conducted a quantitative study to unearth this evidence. The study examined parliamentary institutions' impact on governance, accountability, and effectiveness, using data from 108 countries over 25 years.

The suitability of any reform depends on the institutional arrangement of a country. And as the current political landscape of Bangladesh stands, these reforms are idealistic at best and chaotic at worst. Governance is a social contract between people and their representatives to carry out their will. The design of the legislative system should have the goal of ensuring accountable and effective representation and governance. To achieve this, the incentive of these representatives must align with this goal.

Weak institutions and clientelist politics have created an elite ruling class serving itself and its patrons. This fundamental lack of quality in governance remains unaddressed in the reform agenda. Simply having more representation with the scope of competition will not ensure quality. In this environment, a bicameral parliament or PR system does nothing to improve the quality of governance.

Our study shows the negative effects of bicameralism on several

governance outcomes. These include corruption control, effectiveness and accountability as measured in the World Governance Indicators. We also examine social spending and judicial independence. Cross-country regressions show that bicameralism and the PR system generally weaken governance, though bicameralism raises social expenditure. Parliamentary systems improve corruption control and accountability, while military executives show gains in those areas but reduce effectiveness. Alignment between Houses and higher levels of political polarisation are both negatively related to governance indicators. The method of Upper House selection by plurality shows mixed results, with positive associations for corruption control and accountability but negative associations for social expenditure and the judiciary. Finally, a higher GDP per capita (PPP) is negatively associated with government effectiveness and government social expenditure.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

### Control of corruption

We find that the presence of an Upper House is negatively associated with the control of corruption. Without competition, fair elections, and distinct constituencies, an Upper House cannot ensure scrutiny; its suitability depends on institutional context. In the weak institutional environment of Bangladesh, it only doubles the number of representatives who are susceptible to capture by moneyed interests.

Parliamentary systems better control corruption than presidential or assembly-based ones. Along with this, polarisation in the legislature weakens control over corruption. When both Houses are aligned under one party, scrutiny weakens. Polarisation can become debilitating and make the legislature ineffective.

Single party dominance makes the Upper House simply a rubber stamp without any incentive to hold the

government accountable. This implies the requirement of robust opposition participation in parliamentary procedures and empowerment of standing committees of the legislature. Proportional representation in electoral systems also negatively affects corruption control when adopted in both Houses. Without campaign finance limits, the Upper House risks becoming a lobbying tool to block laws. In political environments dominated by tribalistic voting, simultaneous House elections risk creating legislative supermajorities with very little incentive to provide scrutiny.

### Governmental effectiveness

Governmental effectiveness is heavily dependent on having clear resolution mechanisms in place for legislatures to move forward despite differences in opinions and having proper participation of the opposition parties in the parliamentary proceedings. Without proper incentive mechanisms for working together and competitive

focus on passing legislation, legislatures can be deadlocked or become a rubber stamp in effect. The perception of governmental effectiveness is negatively associated with bicameralism, PR, and high political polarisation. This implies that while PR may offer more diverse representation in the legislature, their ability to work together and convince the people of the government's effectiveness remains in question.

### Voice and accountability

The impact on voice and accountability remains positive for parliamentary structures compared to presidential ones. Parliamentary systems show consistently better association with improved governance outcomes compared to presidential systems. Thus, proper accountability must be ensured through due parliamentary oversight rather than leaving it up to the goodwill of an empowered

executive branch. The tendency we observed in the previous regime of bureaucratising governance through increasing empowerment of the executive branch ought to be reversed.

The analysis also shows a positive association with the plurality electoral structure of the legislature compared to the PR system. It also shows a negative relationship with bicameralism. This shows that the span and structure of legislative representation do not ensure voice and accountability of the people; rather, it is largely dependent on the institutions and quality of said representation. The mere existence of the Upper House will not guarantee any protection against autocratic tendencies or ineffectiveness.

### Government social expenditure

We find that upper houses are positively associated with health and education spending as a share of GDP. The PR system also has a positive effect on social spending. We can infer that the more diverse representation of the population in the legislature provides an incentive to increase allocation in the health and education sectors. This provides some insight into the welfare orientation of bicameral legislative structures.

### Judicial independence

The presence of proportional representation in upper houses has shown a positive association with judicial independence. However, this is heavily dependent on the appointment procedure of the judges. In a more diverse and multiparty composition, the legislature may prevent judicial capture if the appointment of judges is conducted through parliamentary vote. Under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, the judiciary's independence and role as a co-equal branch of government determining the constitutionality and legality of the policies weakens. Bangladesh has seen first-hand how a subservient judiciary legalised authoritarian tendencies under the previous regime. An independent judiciary is crucial for accountable governance; without it, the legislature cannot limit abuse of power.

Overall, structural reforms are necessary to maintain a participatory and accountable governance structure in Bangladesh. Bicameralism and proportional representation are not the panacea to solve all our woes of abuse of power. The fundamental problems of the country's unicameral legislature are getting no attention. Simply increasing centralised systems of power without incentives for participation, resolution and resilient rules-in-use will jeopardise reducing the reform process to just a performative populist exercise.

# Women in coastal regions need better social security



Md Al Mamun is research associate at BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University.

MD AL-MAMUN

Bangladesh is recognised as one of the countries vulnerable to climate change, ranking seventh globally in the 2021 Global Climate Risk Index published by Germanwatch. Between May and August in 2024, the country experienced four major natural disasters, including Cyclone Remal and widespread flash floods in south-eastern regions. The southwest coastal districts are often at the epicentre of this crisis.

In areas like Shyamnagar, Gabura, and Burigoalini in Satkhira, evidence shows a growing pattern of forced displacement, destruction of agricultural livelihoods, and the feminisation of climate vulnerability. Studies show that salinity intrusion and decline in crop production in several upazilas of Satkhira disproportionately affect women, who are often responsible for subsistence farming, collecting water, and managing household food security.

A study titled "Menstrual hygiene management in flood-affected Bangladesh: Addressing socio-cultural barriers, infrastructure gaps, and policy responses," published in the *Frontiers in Public Health* journal this year, shows how women face

challenges in managing menstrual hygiene during floods in districts like Noakhali, Feni, Barishal, Khulna, and Satkhira. The study identifies multiple barriers, including a lack of access to sanitary products, inadequate sanitation infrastructure in shelters, and deeply rooted cultural stigmas around menstruation. It highlights how women are forced to use unhygienic materials like cloth, leaves or even newspapers, risking infections and health complications. Emotional distress due to a lack of privacy and social stigma further exacerbates their suffering. However, menstrual challenges are just the tip of the iceberg; women are among the most vulnerable groups during and after natural disasters.

Because of these ground realities, it is urgent to transition from conventional poverty-targeted programmes to adaptive social protection (ASP), a framework that integrates social safety nets with disaster preparedness and climate resilience.

Bangladesh has made notable progress in building a social protection system that supports vulnerable populations. Since the launch of the National Social Protection

Strategy in 2015, the government has implemented various programmes, including the Maternity Allowance Programme for the Poor, Allowances for the Financially Insolvent Disabled, Allowances for the Widowed, Deserted and Destitute Women, and Old Age Allowance. Emergency response efforts like Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Food for Work have helped during crises. The use of digital platforms and mobile payment systems has also improved service delivery.

However, these systems often fail to reach climate-affected women in coastal regions. Many of them are excluded from official lists because they lack formal documents or fixed addresses. They often lose everything to river erosion or storm surges, and thus remain invisible to the system. This is where ASP becomes critical, because it not only addresses poverty but also build resilience to environmental shocks. In countries like Ethiopia and the Philippines, this model has already shown results by helping vulnerable communities prepare for and recover from climate stress.

For Bangladesh, especially in places like coastal Satkhira, ASP must be tailored to the unique needs of women. This means making a few essential changes.

First, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries must include climate vulnerability. Women who are displaced, landless, or living in disaster-prone areas should be prioritised, even if they do not meet traditional income-based qualifications. Second, cash transfers should be sent directly to women's mobile accounts. Many women already use mobile financial

services. This approach ensures fast, safe and dignified delivery of aid during emergencies.

Third, skills training should move beyond stereotypical jobs like sewing or poultry farming. Instead, training should focus on areas such as climate-resilient agriculture, healthcare, information technology, and construction. Mobile learning units or local community centres can help make these trainings accessible to women in remote areas. Fourth, women must have a voice in community-level planning. Early warning systems, disaster response teams, and local adaptation plans should include women not as beneficiaries but as decision-makers.

Fifth, menstrual hygiene and maternal health support should be embedded into disaster preparedness. During floods and cyclones, women's basic needs are often overlooked. Providing hygiene kits, private spaces, and trained female volunteers can significantly improve health outcomes.

The good news is that Bangladesh already has the building blocks. The use of digital cash transfers during recent disasters shows that rapid and targeted support is possible. Now the focus must shift to inclusion, accessibility, and gender sensitivity.

Adaptive social protection is not about temporary relief. It is about long-term dignity. It ensures that the next disaster does not wipe out years of progress or push the same families back into crisis. Strengthening adaptive social protection for women in coastal regions is not only a development priority, but a national responsibility and a matter of justice.

# Hair, humiliation, and madness: The policing of bodies

**Dr Nazia Manzoor**  
teaches English at North South University and is editor of Star Books and Literature at The Daily Star. She can be reached at nazia.manzoor@gmail.com.

**Sharmee Hossain**  
teaches English at North South University. She can be reached at sharmeehossain28@gmail.com.

**NAZIA MANZOOR and SHARMEE HOSSAIN**

A recent video circulating on social media shows three men holding down a 70-year-old man named Halim Uddin Akand and forcibly cutting his dreadlocks in the name of social service. Halim Uddin claims to have been growing his hair for nearly four decades after visiting the shrines of Sufi saints Hazrat Shah Jalal (RA) and Hazrat Shah Poran (RA). As the deeply troubling video unfolds, the Mymensingh native can be seen crying to the Almighty, "Allah, tui dehis!" ("Bear witness to this, Allah.")

Much has already been written about this incident, critiquing the moral, religious and ideological policing that it reflects. Our interest in this vile act of coercive hair-policing, however, is twofold. On the one hand, we reject this kind of vigilantism against bodies and peoples, irrespective of their faith and value system, in a post-uprising Bangladesh. On the other hand, we want to interpret this particular incident through the historical lens of other forms of hair-policing that tend to target the vulnerable in our society, particularly women. We address the question: how could this particular video be placed within the narratives of hair, its policing and politics? Can women's and men's hair be placed within the same contentious framework of religio-patriarchal dominance?

Hair, one must acknowledge, shapes much of the narratives pertaining to womanhood, widowhood, modesty, sexuality, social ostracism and more within the context of South Asia. Consider the image of a Bangalee Hindu widow in popular culture

and literature, her head forcibly shaved after the passing of her husband, desexualising and dehumanising her for the rest of her life. The widow's hairlessness serves as a constant reminder of a woman's social status being inextricably tied to her hair. Consider also the pressures women in contemporary Bangladesh face—in our cities, villages, institutions, public spaces, and even within private domains—regarding how, and in what precise way, their hair is visible, concealed

Orthodox Jewish women, for example, are required to shave their heads and wear wigs after marriage to deter desirability from other men. Covering and uncovering hair is where societal "certification" is awarded.

Post-9/11, much global attention has been placed on Muslim women's right to cover, as well as the enforcement or removal of their headscarves. Recall the US's call to invade Afghanistan under the pretext of "rescuing women in cover" from the Taliban, as though

to resistance, and from social mobility to power. It is within this framework that we situate the forcible hair-chopping of Halim Uddin Akand.

A devotee of Shah Jalal (RA) and Shah Poran (RA), Halim Uddin's uncut hair testifies to Bengal's intrinsic plurality of faith. His long, uncut hair bears witness to the blending of Sufi traditions, Bengal's spiritual conventions and *tarika*, *fakiri*, and, more simply, an individual's autonomous choice to adorn their body as they decide. The cutting is part of the dangerous trend of attacking the sites of pluralism in the post-uprising Bangladesh, including mazars, akhras, and khankas, rejecting some of the very ideals the movement stood for. This forcible hair-cutting act is not merely about personal appearance but about policing identity, stripping away markers of belonging that do not conform to an exclusionary vision of faith. In doing so, the three men situate themselves within a broader project of erasure, where difference is not tolerated but eliminated.

Halim Uddin's *pagol* (madman) status is also uniquely familiar to us as Bangalee. Historically, women have been labelled *daini* (witches), *rakkhoshi* (monsters), and indeed, *pagli* (madwomen) whenever they did not conform to social norms or could not be contained by hegemonic frameworks. But history also reminds us that in Bengal, *pagol* were torchbearers of courage and resistance. Under Karam Shah Pagol and his son Tipu Shah, the Pagolpanthis of Mymensingh and Sherpur rose to become one of the first organised challenges to colonial power and zamindari oppression. In 1825, Tipu Shah's followers captured Sherpur and established a just administration with lower taxes, creating an independent nation of peasants (Gautam Bhadra, *Iman o Nishan*). It was a visceral jolt for the British administration. By 1833, the rebellion was crushed, and Tipu Shah was sentenced to life imprisonment. Local legend holds that Tipu Shah Pagol will return on a full moon to the banks of the Kangsha River. The eternal life of the *pagol* on the banks of

the Kangsha River does not die.

Since then, the word *pagol* has metamorphosed in the hands of oppressors. Once a title given to the knowledgeable and wise (think of Lalon's *tin pagoler hoilo mela*), it has been turned into a tool to otherise and dehumanise bodies that do not conform to power. Irrespective of gender, once the *pagol* label is attached to someone, it clings to the bodies of the subjugated, questioning their very humanity, as seen in the case of Halim Uddin. His spectacularised hair-chopping thus can be read as an act of patriarchal disciplining, a violent attempt to erase difference, and a continuation of branding the resistant as "mad" to strip them of dignity and legitimacy.

Indeed, a quick Google search reveals multiple incidents of forcible hair cutting and its resulting humiliation in recent months: in June, a woman's head was shaved over dowry demands in Lakshmipur; in July, another woman in Gaibandha was shaved and stripped naked for an alleged extramarital affair. Earlier in March, a 19-year-old young man took his own life after a union parishad member forcibly cut his hair to publicly shame and discipline him. These acts are not isolated; they reflect a broader pattern of using bodily humiliation to enforce social control and punish those who defy hegemonic norms. The psychological and social consequences of such violence can be long-lasting, instilling fear and reinforcing oppressive power structures within communities.

We wonder how long the state will remain apathetic in the face of such brutality. While it is encouraging that two arrests have been made in connection to Halim Uddin's case, we cannot ignore that repeated acts of violence make all of us—women, children, bauls, the poor, and *pagol*—vulnerable. Every cut, every humiliation, is an attack on our shared humanity, and ignoring it only strengthens those who thrive on fear and control. Silence is complicity; courage and collective action are the only antidotes to the cruelty that seeks to divide and dominate us.



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

or sexualised. It is no exaggeration to claim that how a *ghomta* is worn, what form of hair covering is being practised, when hair can be let loose, and in whose presence, are questions and concerns that women and girls of this region must negotiate constantly, even daily. Some businesses insist that their staff must cover their hair, some schools encourage it, and the general public freely shames and polices women for their hair (un)covering or (in)visibility practices. Women's hair choices, thus, are incessantly monitored, surveilled, and often enforced. Hair is deeply political, and its regulation is not exclusive to South Asian or Bangalee female lives.

a debilitating war against an entire people could somehow be framed as a feminist mission. Considering the state Afghan women find themselves in, 20 years after the US left, the facile and, frankly, racist nature of that claim could not be more obvious. Curiously, Western feminism's embracing of the headcover as an empowering garment also remains a partial truth to the larger Muslim hair-covering narrative. Of course, just as one cannot be forced to cover their hair, one cannot be forced to remove their hair covering either. So much depends upon female hair—from empowerment to coercion, from religious indoctrination

## Of Donald Trump's peace plan and Palestinian subordination



**Dr Binoy Kampmark**  
was a Commonwealth scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He is a senior lecturer at RMIT University, Australia. He can be reached at bkampmark@gmail.com.

**BINOY KAMPMARK**

He had moments of discomfort and embarrassment—pressed into calling the Qatari prime minister by his host to apologise for striking Doha and made to pay lip service to the prospect of a Palestinian state—but Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu had many reasons to be pleased. On September 29, US President Donald Trump advanced a peace proposal that essentially preserves Israeli pre-eminence regarding the fate of Palestinians, though it entails a cessation of hostilities, an affirmation that Gazans would not be expelled (those leaving would have the right to return), and an injunction against Israeli annexation of the strip. But Hamas, militarily and politically, would have to surrender all claims, with the Palestinian Authority shepherded and supervised by foreign powers.

Trump's peace proposal comprises 20 points. They include a "deradicalised terror-free zone," Gaza's redevelopment for the benefit of its people aided by "a panel of experts who have helped birth some of the thriving miracle cities in the Middle East," and

an immediate end to the war on its acceptance by the parties. Israel would withdraw to an agreed upon line in anticipation of a hostage release, during which all military operations would cease pending complete withdrawal. All hostages, dead and alive, would be returned within 72 hours, to be followed by the release of 250 Palestinian life sentence prisoners and Gazans detained since October 7, 2023.

Hamas and militant factions will forfeit any role in governing Gaza, with any offensive infrastructure and equipment destroyed, but any of its members wishing to commit to "peaceful co-existence" and decommissioning of weapons will be granted amnesty, with those wishing to leave given safe passage to receiving countries. Compliance by the militant group will be overseen by "regional partners." Full aid would resume, with the UN and Red Crescent restored to their role as chief distributors.

On the issue of governance, a temporary technocratic "apolitical" Palestinian

committee" of qualified Palestinians and "international experts" would form a temporary transitional body, subject to a "Board of Peace" personally chaired by Trump. Most unfortunately, it is likely to include such figures as Sir Tony Blair, the Middle East's typhoid Mary when it comes to peace. The transitional authority would hold the reins till reforms by the Palestinian Authority (PA) are completed. With immediacy, however, the

**In keeping with history, the Trump plan, even if it were to be implemented to the letter, enshrines the essential subordination of Palestinian goals to the dictates of other powers. Palestinian military presence is not only to be curtailed but essentially eliminated altogether.**

US would work with Arab and international partners to deploy an "International Stabilisation Force" (ISF) to Gaza. The ISF will be responsible for training Palestinian police forces and provide support in terms of vetting recruits, with assistance from Jordan and Egypt.

The proposal clearly envisages a significant role for the ISF, though it says who will comprise it. Israel will not, under the plan,

occupy or annex Gaza, surrendering what territory it has taken to the ISF. Even if Hamas were to delay or reject the proposal, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) would still hand over occupied territory of "terror-free areas" to the stabilisation force but retain a security perimeter to stem "any resurgent terror threat."

The plan also envisages the establishment of an interfaith dialogue to promote the values of peace between the parties, and a "credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood" if the programmes for Gaza's redevelopment and PA reform take place as planned. A vague US promise to "establish a dialogue" between Israel and the Palestinians regarding peaceful and prosperous co-existence rounds off the points.

There was palpable grumbling from the Israeli camp. Netanyahu undoubtedly harbours ambitions of finishing "the job," and there is little to say the war will not resume once the Israeli hostages are returned. Having previously rejected any governing role of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, he now reluctantly accepts the idea subject to a "radical and genuine overhaul" of the body.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, one of the right-wing heavies in the Israeli cabinet, is threatening to withdraw his Religious Zionist Party from the coalition. Agreeing with the plan had been "an act of wilful blindness that ignores every lesson of October 7," and it would only "end in tears," he said. Fellow zealot, National Security Minister Itamar

Ben-Gvir, is also likely to be seething.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid is also suspicious of Netanyahu, who tends to say "yes" when visiting Washington, "standing in front of the cameras at the White House, feeling like a breakthrough statesman." On returning to Israel, however, he always seemed to add a qualifying "but," his political base always reminding him "who the boss is."

In keeping with history, the Trump plan, even if it were to be implemented to the letter, enshrines the essential subordination of Palestinian goals to the dictates of other powers. Palestinian military presence is not only to be curtailed but essentially eliminated altogether. Hamas, never consulted regarding the peace terms, is to accept its own effacing. The PA is to accept its own subservience and infantilisation. The Gazans are also to accept an economic and development programme dictated and directed from without. Statehood is to be kept in cold storage till appropriate, controlled conditions for its release are approved—and certainly not by the Palestinians themselves. They, it would seem, remain the considered errand children of international relations, mistrusted and requiring permanent, stern invigilation.

**This article first appeared on Countercurrents.org and Scoops International News under the headline 'Palestinian subordination: Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan' on October 2, 2025.**

**CROSSWORD**  
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**  
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16 Case in point  
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27 Half of a '60s group  
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**DOWN**  
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3 Got some reps in  
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12 Distorts  
17 Marks a ballot  
19 Old oath  
22 Rotunda topper  
24 Line of work  
25 Ready for war  
26 Chin cover  
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**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

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# Stars celebrate Durga Puja at home and abroad

Leaving a bittersweet note, Durga Puja celebrations concluded yesterday with the Bijoya Dashami. Bangladeshi stars around the world shared the celebrations with their fans.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Durga Puja, the most significant festival for Bangladesh's Hindu community, concluded yesterday with Bijoya Dashami. This year, leading figures from film, television, and music observed the celebrations in diverse ways—across cities, on stage, and overseas.

Actress Bidya Sinha Saha Mim divided her

time between Dhaka, her parental home in Rajshahi, and her in-laws' residence in Cumilla. After Saptami in the capital, she travelled to Rajshahi to join her parents, later reuniting with her in-laws for Dashami. Alongside family visits, she appeared in multiple television and online programmes and shot new commercials.

Bappy Chowdhury spent his first Puja abroad, joining events in the United States. He

is scheduled to appear at a Dashami celebration in New York's Times Square. Reminiscing about childhood Puja in Narayanganj, he admitted missing the company of family and friends.

For actress Puja Cherry, the occasion carried a note of grief. Known for visiting mandaps with her mother, who passed away last year, she marked the festival with friends while sharing photos online during Mahashtami. Yet, she described her celebrations as incomplete without her mother's presence.

Actress Mondira Chakroborty, who usually observes Puja in Khulna, remained in Dhaka due to professional commitments, visiting local mandaps with family but expressing nostalgia for her hometown festivities.

Singer Shithi Saha, whose family has organised Puja in Sirajganj for more than 150 years, performed at the Sharadiya Cultural Festival at Shilpakala Academy before returning to Sirajganj for the final day.

Meanwhile, producer and presenter Debashish Biswas began celebrations in Dhaka before travelling to the United States, also set to perform at Times Square. Actor Manoj Pramanik, currently studying in South Korea, extended greetings from Busan.

From Rajshahi to New York, this year's Puja highlighted tradition, memory, and performance for Bangladesh's cultural stars.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### 'Jokes in Progress—Comedy Open Mic'

**Jokes in Progress—Comedy Open Mic** invites audiences to an evening of laughter and spontaneity. Emerging and seasoned comedians take the stage to test new material, delivering sharp wit, clever punchlines, and unexpected humor. The event offers an intimate space where comedy evolves in real time.

Date: Saturday | October 4, 2025

Time: 8 pm onwards

Venue: 1/6, Noorjahan Road, Mohammadpur



## Kalidas Karmakar's 'Holy War' takes centre stage at Sotheby's

Bangladeshi art gained global spotlight this week as works by five masters were featured at Sotheby's London auction of South Asian Modern & Contemporary Art. Highlighting the segment Five Bangladeshi Jewels, Kalidas Karmakar's rare 1978-79 piece **Holy War** reaffirmed his pioneering role in experimental

printmaking.

Alongside works by Zainul Abedin, Rashid Chowdhury, Mohammad Kibria, and Shahid Kabir, the five pieces, collectively estimated at £46,000, sold for £181,610. **Holy War**—a mixed-media reflection on violence and the Liberation War—was hailed as a rediscovered milestone.



## Fahmida Nabi set to release three new songs

Renowned singer Fahmida Nabi is gearing up to release three new songs, with recordings and video productions already underway. She has completed the voice recordings for all three tracks and has filmed music videos for **Ami Bhalo Achi** and **Akash Upor**. The third, a rain-themed song, is awaiting its video shoot. All three songs will be released one by

one on YouTube.

Fahmida Nabi not only lent her voice but also composed the tune for **Ami Bhalo Achi**, with lyrics written by Ela Majid. **Akash Upor** was composed by Sochhol Kazi, with lyrics by Hasan Mashuk, while the rain song was penned by Sohel Alam and composed by Sheikh Mohammad Rajon.



# NEWS

## At least 1,100 accused in 3 police cases

FROM PAGE 1

Another case was filed against around 300 unidentified people on charges of obstructing government duties, injuring officials, vandalism, and arson, the OC said.

The case statement says people kept protesting and chanting slogans in violation of Section 144, defying repeated requests from police and army.

It further said that 250-300 members of an armed hill group from within the crowds clashed with security personnel, attempting to grab government weapons.

Bangalee settlers also gathered at the scene at that time.

As tensions escalated, the OC and army personnel urged both sides to disperse. Their appeals went unheeded, and the crowds began hurling stones.

At one point, the armed group moved toward the Ramesu Bazar area, firing at the army, police, and Bangalees. As the Bangalees advanced, the clash turned into a full-scale riot.

According to the case statement, gunfire erupted as fighting moved toward Ramesu Bazar.

Meanwhile, it added, flames were seen

rising from nearby homes and shops.

Thirteen army personnel, three policemen, and the OC were injured by gunfire from the crowd. Police fired seven tear gas shells to protect lives and property, and the armed group fled when reinforcements arrived.

By around 4:30pm, the situation was brought under control. Police and army advanced toward the bazar and found several injured individuals lying on the road, who were then taken to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital, said the case statement.

Meanwhile, SI Shahriar filed a case with Khagrachhari Sadar Police against 700 to 800 unidentified people on charges of violence and obstruction of officials on government duties.

Khagrachhari Superintendent of Police Arelin Jewel confirmed the filing of three cases and said the situation is now under control.

Law enforcement agencies remain deployed across the district, with intelligence surveillance ongoing.

Although Section 144 remains in force in both upazilas, vehicular and public movement appeared normal yesterday, with crowds seen at the

weekly market.

Deputy Commissioner ABM Iftekharul Islam Khondker said the administration is monitoring the situation. "If law enforcement deems it stable, Section 144 will be lifted."

The violence followed allegations that a teenage girl was raped on September 23 while returning home from private tuition. Her father filed a case the next morning with Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station against three unidentified men.

Law enforcers arrested a man named Shoyon Shil in connection with the case, and a court placed him on a six-day remand.

However, a medical board report submitted to the civil surgeon on Tuesday found no evidence of rape. Khagrachhari Civil Surgeon Dr Saber Ahmed said, "All 10 indicators examined showed no signs of rape. Still, it is for the court to decide."

The girl's father declined to comment yesterday, saying he would speak only in court. He also questioned how his daughter's photos and medical details had been circulated by the media despite her being underage.

## Tigresses off to flying start

FROM PAGE 1

run stand for the third wicket with skipper Nigar Sultana Joty (23) to power Bangladesh to 131 for three in 31.1 overs and help them begin on a winning note.

This was Bangladesh's second win in the showpiece event—the first also coming against Pakistan in 2022 in Hamilton.

After Marufa's in-swingers stunned everyone by knocking over the stumps of Omaira and an in-form Sidra, Pakistan managed to put up some resistance through a 42-run stand between Muneeba Ali and Rameen Shamim. However, experienced left-arm spinner Nahida broke the partnership by removing both the batters in quick succession.

Nahida dismissed Muneeba (17), caught brilliantly at point by youngster Nishita Akter Nishi, before having Rameen (23) caught off her own bowling in the next over.

Pakistani batters—Aliya Riaz (13), Sidra Nawaz (15), Fatima Sana (22)—then tried hard to get their side back in the contest but Bangladeshi spinners took wickets at regular intervals to keep their opponents at bay.

Pakistan's number nine Diana Baig made an unbeaten 16 off 22 balls but it still could not stop them from being bowled out for their lowest total at a neutral venue against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh started cautiously in the below-par run chase, losing Farzana Hoque Pinky (two) and

Sharmin Akhter Supta (11) early.

However, since the arrival of skipper Joty at the crease, Bangladesh took a completely different approach, as both Jhelik and Joty struck Pakistani bowlers to all parts of the ground for boundaries, taking the Tigresses close to the 100-run mark.

Bangladesh did lose skipper Joty in the 25th over, but Jhelik stayed till the end, while Sobhana Mostary made an unbeaten 19-ball 24 as the Tigresses got over the line with ease.

Bangladesh will now travel to India, where they will face England in Guwahati in their second match on October 7. Bangladesh's remaining six matches will also be held in India.

## Country struggles to break free

FROM PAGE 12

highlighting chronic malnutrition and an urgent need for interventions.

According to the 2022 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS), one in four children (24 percent) is stunted (low height for age). The figure is 40 percent in urban slums—far above the WHO threshold of 15 percent.

Besides, 22 percent of children are underweight, while 11 percent are affected by wasting (low weight for height)—more than double the WHO emergency threshold of 5 percent.

The WHO emergency threshold serves as a benchmark to determine whether a public health issue, such as a disease or malnutrition, has reached a critical level that requires immediate intervention.

The BDHS report showed that economic disparities play a major role in child malnutrition: stunting affects 34.5 percent of children from the poorest households, while rates of wasting also show a strong correlation with household income.

Nazma Shaheen, a professor at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of Dhaka university, said, "When the cost of a healthy diet soars, many families simply cannot afford it and are forced to compromise on the quality of meals."

Unhygienic food, poor sanitation, and unsafe water lead to an increase in diarrhoea and infections, driving

up malnutrition, she said.

Adolescent pregnancies also heighten health risks—51 percent of girls marry before 18, and 73 out of every 1,000 girls aged 15-19 give birth, perpetuating intergenerational malnutrition.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Nutritional gaps in childhood have lasting effects on growth, cognition, and well-being.

Md Akhtaruzzaman, a professor at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, said, "Stunting can limit learning abilities and academic performance, eventually leading to economic disadvantages in adulthood."

According to UNICEF, wasting further compromises immunity and increases the risk of child mortality, while severely underweight children face a greater risk of death.

Highlighting the economic case for early nutrition, UNICEF Country Representative Rana Flowers said, "If you get health, nutrition, and brain development right early on, education and long-term economic growth follow."

Bangladesh's per capita nutrition spending is only \$18, and many ministries fail to fully utilise even this, found a 2024 study by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM).

Of the spending, 98 percent goes to broad "nutrition-sensitive"

programmes and just 2 percent to direct interventions.

Efficiency is further weakened by misaligned local priorities, political influence, and overlapping roles between ministries such as the health ministry and the food ministry, it said.

THE WAY FORWARD

Experts suggest that frontline health workers should lead interventions on maternal supplementation, breastfeeding promotion, dietary diversity, and school-based nutrition education, hygiene initiatives, and aid targeted at slum residents and the extreme poor.

They also call for the expansion of school meals that will include eggs, nuts, fortified biscuits, and milk.

SANEM recommended a real-time database to monitor programmes regularly, and a dedicated, module-based nutrition budget enabling local authorities to set regional priorities.

Sayema Haque Bidisha, research director at SANEM and a professor at DU, suggested strengthening social safety net programmes such as Open Market Sale (OMS) for low-income families.

Sayema's suggestions were backed by Nazma Shaheen.

"Without strengthening the current programmes, years of progress in child nutrition could vanish, leaving the nation to pay the price in health, education, and economic potential," she noted.

## The passing of a Language Movement hero

FROM PAGE 12

capital's New Eskaton area after his wife passed away in 2006. He had no children.

Sadi told The Daily Star that Rafique had been receiving treatment at other private hospitals since September 11 after suffering multiple mild strokes. Rafique also had kidney problems and other issues related to old age.

He was transferred to the Birdem Hospital on September 28 and placed on life support on Wednesday afternoon.

Quoting doctors, Sadi said Rafique suffered a cardiac arrest before his death.

Born on September 12, 1929 at Shahbajpur village in Brahmanbaria's Sarail Upazila, Rafique spent his early life in different districts including Narail and Munshiganj.

He passed intermediate from Munshiganj's Haraganga College in 1949. There, he engaged himself in different democratic movements, including the Language Movement.

After getting admitted to Dhaka Medical College, he became one of the organisers of the Language Movement. He was among those who challenged a

ban on gathering on February 21, 1952, marching in the front lines.

Rafique became a member of the East Pakistan Communist Party in 1953, according to a write-up by Sadi in the magazine Kali o Kolom.

Following the events of the movement, Rafique had to live two years as a fugitive. He was allowed to sit for his exams and earned his MBBS degree in 1957.

However, he was the only student denied an internship for his involvement in the Language Movement.

He later co-founded a pharmaceutical company with friends, but could not remain there for long. He also contributed to Bangladesh's drug policy formulation and served as a senior officer at BCIC.

He eventually stepped away from these roles to devote himself fully to writing and literary pursuits.

He authored several books on different aspects of the Language Movement. One of his most notable works is "Language Movement: History and Significance", which he co-authored with Abdul Matin, a fellow activist and leader of the movement.

Rafique penned more than 20

books on Rabindranath Tagore. For his significant contributions to research on Tagore's life and writings, the Tagore Research Institute in Kolkata honoured him with the "Rabindratattacharya" title in 2011.

Besides, he has written books on Kazi Nazrul Islam, Jibanananda Das, Bishnu Dey, the partition of 1947, and the 1971 Liberation War.

He received the Bangla Academy Padak in 1979 and Ekushey Padak in 1995.

Rafique's writings on the partition of Bengal shed new light on this historic event. One of his most well-known books on the subject is "Desh Bibhag: Fire Dekha", widely praised for its insightful analysis and original perspective.

As a vigilant guardian of the nation's freedom, The Daily Star paid tribute to Rafique on its 33rd anniversary in 2023 by honouring him with the "Sentinel of Freedom of Thought" award.

His first book of poetry is "Nirbasita Nayak" (1966) and prose work is "Shilpa Sangskriti Jiban" (1958). He also wrote on medical issues. He edited numerous literary works and scientific research papers.

### 3 hurt in crude bomb attacks in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Benapole

Three employees were injured in separate crude bomb attacks on two business establishments in Nawapara of Abhaynagar upazila in Jashore on Wednesday night.

Witnesses said unidentified assailants hurled two crude bombs at the office of Biswas Trade International near Nawapara Rail Station Bazar around 9:30pm. One exploded inside the office and the other outside, injuring three staffers — Masum, 32, Shawon, 30, and Jahangir, 28.

Soon after, another crude bomb went off in front of Taralder Traders near the ferry ghat area, though no casualties were reported in that blast.

On information, army personnel and police visited the scene.

Abhaynagar Police Station Officer in Charge Robiul Islam told The Daily Star that bomb fragments were recovered.

He said they have launched an operation to identify and arrest those responsible.



A boy cries as a young girl pulls him by the arm in Bhabadah Dumurtala village of Abhaynagar upazila after he slipped on a waterlogged road. Thousands of families have been suffering for nearly three months due to waterlogging in the area. With canals clogged and no proper drainage, locals face the crisis of homes, roads and farmland remaining submerged every year, while children and the elderly fall prey to waterborne diseases. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

### Rain likely for next 1-2 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rainfall is expected to continue across Bangladesh for the next one to two days, with heavier showers in the southern districts, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

BMD Senior Meteorologist Bazlur Rashid said the country will see widespread rainfall as a well-marked depression over the west-central Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas moves northwestwards, gradually intensifying into a deep depression.

The five-day forecast, issued at 9:00am yesterday, said most areas of Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, and Sylhet divisions are likely to experience light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty winds. Heavy to very heavy rainfall may occur in some places.

Similar conditions are expected in most parts of the eight divisions today. Rainfall is expected to decrease from October 7.

## Holidaymakers defy rain and rough seas

Beaches packed, hotels sold out in Cox's Bazar

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

There was hardly any space to step foot at Sugandha Beach in Cox's Bazar yesterday as it was packed with holidaymakers. Some played in the sand, some dived into the sea, while others enjoyed horse riding or jet-ski rides. Smiles and joy were visible on every face as a light drizzle added to the thrill.

In the afternoon, standing on the crowded beach, Osman Gani, supervisor of Sea Safe Lifeguard, estimated that nearly 100,000 people were present. "Due to a low-pressure system, the sea is rough. That's why we are repeatedly requesting tourists not to go too deep into the water. We are keeping a close watch to prevent any accidents," he said.

Heavy rain began in Cox's Bazar in the morning. Although the rainfall lessened as the day progressed, the Met Office issued local cautionary signal number three. The waves in the sea also remained rougher than usual.

Despite the warnings, thousands of tourists from

across the country flocked to Cox's Bazar to spend their holidays during the Durga Puja festival and the extended weekend.

Nusrat Jahan, a tourist from Dhaka, said, "The weather may

have brought an extraordinary influx of tourists. Almost all hotel rooms are sold out. Without advance booking, it is practically impossible to get a room."



be bad, but for us it's a different kind of joy. Watching the sea in the rain is an extraordinary experience. However, it was really tough to manage a hotel room."

Israfil Hossain, a visitor from

Abu Morshed Chowdhury, president of the Cox's Bazar Chamber of Commerce, said the beach town has around 500 hotels and motels. "Right now, finding a room is extremely difficult. But neither we nor the administration have exact data on how many tourists come during such festivals. That's why it's hard to determine the exact scale of business. Still, we expect business transactions worth several hundred crore taka during this puja holiday period."

Meanwhile, the administration has imposed a ban on entering the sea due to rough weather.

Apel Mahmud, additional DIG of Tourist Police (Cox's Bazar region), said, "Adequate police are present at various points of the beach. CCTV monitoring has been increased, and patrols have been intensified to ensure safe travel for tourists."

### Man generates power from sluice gate water

Self-made device lights up 50 bulbs



SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Harnessing the current of sluice gate water, a man in Barguna has devised a way to generate electricity at no cost.

Using a self-designed device, Monirul Islam of Purbo Burir Char village in Sadar upazila produces enough power to light over 50 electric bulbs for 15 to 18 hours a day on a limited scale.

Monirul's home stands near the Payra River by the Purakata ferry ghat. An irrigation sluice gate connects the river to nearby farmlands. He has installed his device at the sluice gate, where the force of flowing water spins it to generate electricity.

A fuel trader by profession, Monirul said the project was the result of three months of effort and cost him Tk 70,000. The Payra river experiences tidal surges twice a day, enabling continuous power generation for up to 18 hours, he said.

"Given the opportunity, I could light up village after village at no cost. Wherever there is water current, this technology can work."

Jamal Mia, a workshop mechanic who helped in the project, said, "We are producing electricity by harnessing nature's force at minimal cost. The light from this electricity is brightening up the village."

Locals said such initiatives could open a new horizon in cost-effective electricity production if supported and expanded.

Contacted, Sheikh Abdur Rahman, deputy general manager of Patuakhali Palli Bidyut Samity, said, "We are not aware of electricity generation using sluice gate water, but it is something worth looking into."

### Anthrax cases reach 17 in Rangpur

UNB, Rangpur

The number of confirmed anthrax infections has climbed to 17, with four new individuals diagnosed in three upazilas of Rangpur.

Among the new cases, two were identified in Kaunia, one in Pargachha and one in Mithapukur upazilas.

The district's civil surgeon, Shaheen Sultana, said they have so far received 23 suspected anthrax cases, of which 17 tested positive.

The first 13 infections were detected in Pargachha, where two people died in July and September with symptoms of the disease, she said.

A team from the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research arrived in Pargachha last month.

On September 13 and 14, they collected samples from 18 suspected patients, and 13 were found infected with anthrax.

Livestock samples collected from the affected areas were also found to be infected, according to IEDCR sources.

### Once a road, now a nightmare

1.5km stretch of Habiganj road impassable for months

MINTU DESHWARA

A 1.5-kilometre stretch of Kalenga Road in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila has fallen into such disrepair that locals say it is barely recognisable as a road.

When it rains, the potholes turn into pools of mud and water, leaving the road from Himalaya to Chamlati almost impassable.

Students, farmers and traders say daily life has become a struggle, with vehicles frequently breaking down or getting stuck.

"When it rains, my books get drenched. It's impossible to walk in the mud, and going to madrasa has become painful," said Sumaiya, a student at Himalaya Noorani Madrasa.

Her classmate Sadia added, "I can't get to class on time. One day, I even slipped and got hurt."

Local trader Sohel Mia Hannan said, "Vehicles avoid the road, making it difficult to transport goods. It has become a serious issue for anyone in business."

Farmers are also facing rising costs. "To transport rice and vegetables to the markets, we often have to pay double the usual fare, and sometimes no vehicles are available at all," said Hossain Mia.

CNG driver Sajid Mia said, "Engines get stuck in the mud, passengers get off, and we have to lift the vehicle out. It's unbelievable that such roads still exist."

Retired government official Mahbubur Rahman said, "We've been raising the issue for years, but no meaningful action has been taken."

Chunarughat Upazila Engineer Imam Hossain said a renovation proposal has been submitted. "We are waiting for the necessary funds to start the work," he added.



A CNG-run autorickshaw driver tries to push his vehicle out of a muddy pothole. This 1.5-kilometre stretch of Kalenga Road in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila has fallen into disrepair, breaking apart whenever it rains and turning potholes into pools of mud and water.

PHOTO: STAR

### 2 dead, 396 hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least two people died of dengue, and 396 others were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

One of the deaths was reported from Dhaka North City Corporation areas and the other from Chattogram division, according to the DGHS.

With this, the total number of dengue-related deaths this year has risen to 202, while total number of cases have climbed to 48,228.

Of the total cases, 45,682 patients have been released so far following treatment. Currently, 2,344 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
OCTOBER 3

Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-45	12-30	4-15	5-53	7-30
JAMAAT 5-20	1-15	4-30	5-56	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



# Say cheese!

The resurgence of digital cameras, point-and-shoots, and instant cameras

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

**There's a Japanese concept known as *jinbaittai* which translates to the rider and horse becoming one. Similar to this concept, photo enthusiasts want something personal to take photos with. Something they can hold to their faces, look down the optical viewfinder, and capture a moment by pressing down on a tactile shutter button.**

MEHRAB JAMEE

Digital cameras, a personal electronic device so popular and widespread in the 2000s, became a relic of the past due to the advent and rapid improvement of smartphone cameras over the past decade. Famous US photographer Chase Jarvis once said, "The best camera is the one that's with you." As smartphones became an everyday carry for us, the digital camera got left behind in the early 2010s.

Fast forward ten years, and now we're seeing a global uptick in digital camera purchases. Be it for the old-school vibes of the photos on TikTok, the social aspect of using an actual camera, or just a sense of nostalgia for a time when shutter buttons physically clicked, consumers are returning to this piece of tech and picking up point-and-shoots anew.

When the smartphone revolution happened, we became obsessed with cramming every possible necessity into this one device. As a result, almost all of us now carry glass-slab supercomputers in our pockets capable of taking detailed photos through a mix of upgraded optics and software enhancements. After tweaking these near-perfect photos with a filter of our liking, they can be uploaded to our social media profiles right on the smartphone. How efficient!

Yet photography enthusiasts yearn for something more personal, removed from the notification boxes of nuisance our smartphones have become. They want something separate to pursue this hobby, but don't want to invest in a heavy DSLR or a mirrorless camera that breaks the bank. They want something small and pocketable. Simple digital cameras like Sony's much beloved CyberShot lineup, Canon's IXUS, or Nikon's Coolpix fit nicely into this niche.

The act of using an actual camera instead of a smartphone to take photos has become so unusual that it instantly feels like an event. It's a definite conversation starter, inciting curiosity and a sense of whimsy, providing an excuse to indulge in memories of family photoshoots and friends' group shots.

Digital or instant cameras have become so obscure now that owning one is cool again. It's so cool, in fact, that Gen-Z wants to be photographed just holding the camera. Instant cameras have the extra advantage of printing the photos out and handing them to your friends right away. A physical gift for a change, not something you Airdropped or sent via WhatsApp.

Fujifilm's Instax mini-series comes in bright colours, while the mini-EVO emulates vintage leatherbound cameras. Polaroid, the company synonymous with instant photography, is still in the game with its recent lineup, including the I-2, NOW, NOW+, and Go series.

There's a Japanese concept known as *jinbaittai*, which translates to the rider and horse becoming one. Similar to this concept, photo enthusiasts want something personal to take photos with. Something they can hold to their faces, look down the optical viewfinder, and capture a moment by pressing down on a tactile shutter button. They want dials, rotors, and buttons that give them quick access to ISO and shutter speed adjustment. They want manual focus to adjust the natural depth of field a lens can produce.

Most enthusiasts and tech aficionados already own DSLRs or mirrorless cameras, but they need something capable and compact. The point-and-shoot lines such as Sony's RX100 or ZV series, Canon's PowerShot G series, and similar offerings from Leica and Fujifilm dominate this segment of the market.

Coming to photo quality, it hugely varies from basic digital cameras to premium point-and-shoots. But across the board, the photos have a more balanced colour science. Photos from the premium point-and-shoots turn out images with a more natural shallow depth of field than portrait modes on smartphones. They look less processed because, in fact, they

are less processed. What you see on your optical or digital

viewfinder is what you get in the photos, and photo enthusiasts prefer this natural look to the artificial tinge of iOS or Android's image processing. On basic point-and-shoots, users get softer images with more vibrant colours and a blurry quality to them, which resembles many of the filters we now use. Instant cameras print out Polaroids with the option to print them with retro filters like sepia, grayscale, or vignette. Most of these cameras offer Bluetooth or Wi-Fi transfer of photos, with brands like Sony, Canon, Fujifilm, and many more supporting smartphone apps for lossless transfer of digital images.

You can buy these cameras brand new from Bashundhara City, Jamuna Future Park, Multiplan Centre, and other tech hubs, or you can buy second-hand cameras from Gulistan, Motalib Plaza, or online. Buying second-hand gear is always a risk, though, so make sure you avoid sketchy places with unbelievable deals, stick to trusted retailers, and test the device before buying it.

Photography is a hobby that demands time and patience. Getting the right camera will obviously put you off to a good start. But at the end of the day, you can take a good photo with almost any camera, and it's more important to have fun with your photography. Instead of getting all caught up in learning all the settings and trying to click professional photos from the start, start taking photos, and the specifics will come to you. Have fun with the trial-and-error process and say "Cheese!" before taking group shots.

*Note: We would like to extend our gratitude to The Analogue Cache for providing us with the cameras photographed here.*

Mehrab Jamee is an activist at Sandhani, a 5th-year medical student, and writes to keep himself sane. Reach him at [mehrabjamee@gmail.com](mailto:mehrabjamee@gmail.com)

## On the trips that never make it out of the group chat

NUSRAT MEHERIN FAIZA

Every time my friends and I talk, whether over a cup of coffee, on a late-night group call, or in between class breaks, there's this one ritual we never fail to perform: planning for a trip.

With each interaction, the fervour of planning a trip becomes more intense. The need to escape from the chaos of the city is overwhelming. Thus, we first try to settle on a destination: Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Sylhet, and if the budget is on the higher end, maybe somewhere outside the country. The next course of action involves looking for hotels, crunching numbers to find the cheapest tickets, and delegating the responsibility of carrying a Bluetooth speaker for the trip.

For a moment, it feels like it's really happening! What could possibly go wrong? Everything apparently.

Every friend group has attempted to plan a trip. Unfortunately, something always comes up, and somehow it just never makes it past the stage of discussion. However, it's not about the process of planning but the friends that make it as entertaining as the prospect of a trip itself.

There is always The Planner – the enthusiastic one in the group – who pushes everyone else as well. They devise the most detailed itineraries, break down budgets, and even have suggestions for outfits. Their dedication is admirable, and honestly, we'd be lost without them.

Then there's the "Always Yes" friend. They'll eagerly agree to every single plan, even that one idea that's exceeding the budget. Why? Because they secretly know it's never going to materialise. In contrast to them exists "The Budget Conscious" one. They are always present to remind us to stay within our limits, even when wanderlust takes over. It can be frustrating, sure. But they are the reason



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

we can't even fathom the idea of going broke.

Finally, we have "The Last-Minute-Bail-Out" one – the friend who confirms till the very end, only to cancel at the last moment, taking the whole trip down with them. It stings, yes, but it is hardly surprising anymore.

The question remains, however, why does the trip never actually materialise even after planning everything out? The trip is usually an escape for everyone from their hectic lives. The throes of adult life, though, come with too many moving parts – exams, jobs, family obligations, and of course, the eternal struggle of syncing everyone's schedules.

Truthfully, the laughter over wild ideas, the argument, picturing ourselves in places we've never been – this becomes our mini escape. Years later, we will still laugh at our infamous Cox's Bazar trip or the unrealistic Bali trip that only lived in our search histories. But maybe, just maybe, we will never really let go of the dream.

What if, someday, we don't just plan it out but also book tickets, pack our bags, and make no excuses? I only have my imagination to think of all the photos, the sleepless nights, and heartfelt conversations by scenic landscapes that could unfold.

Until then, I wait, like countless others, holding on to the hope of a trip that makes it out of the group chat. The day it happens, it will be worth every failed trip that never happened. Regardless, we will find ourselves arguing over the same old plan, knowing it will stay exactly where it always does – in the group chat.

Nusrat Meherin Faiza is a writer, tutor, and chronic overthinker. Reach out to fuel her overthinking at [nmfajal5@gmail.com](mailto:nmfajal5@gmail.com)

## Navigating imposter syndrome in friendships

TARANNUM KHONDKAR

Imposter syndrome is the persistent thought process of self-doubt and inadequacy where people feel like a fraud in their success or relationships. A majority of people tend to experience imposter syndrome at some point in their lives, although the conception is different for everyone. The mainstream media often depicts imposter syndrome primarily within the context of careers or, occasionally, romantic relationships.

However, there is one crucial,

Have you ever wondered whether your friends actually like you? An innocent question, you could say, but is that where your inquiry stops, or do you enter a downward cynical spiral, dissecting every part of your friendship, even parts that do not exist?

A telltale sign of imposter syndrome is when a person self-sabotages their position in a friendship and feel unworthy of their friends' trust or fear being ousted from the friend group. As a result, they become insincere and distant, leading to the end of their bond. A phenomenon seemingly



ILLUSTRATION: AZRA HUMAYRA

**The internalisation of such harmful thoughts not only ends present friendships but also becomes a hurdle in forming new ones, always in the back of your mind, feeding illusions of inferiority or undeserving of the connection between friends.**

overlooked portion of our lives where imposter syndrome can creep up on and that is in friendships.

capable of destroying friendships. However, what causes it? Well, scientists are yet to discover a certain

reason for it, but many factors may have an impact which include, gender, age, environment, media consumption, and even cultural stereotypes. For some, it may emerge from toxic past friendships, trauma inflicted by former friends may materialise as self-doubt, while for others, it may even simply stem from a simple sense of inferiority that makes it hard to feel like they belong in a friend group.

The internalisation of such

harmful thoughts not only ends present friendships but also becomes a hurdle in forming new ones, always in the back of your mind, feeding illusions of inferiority or undeserving of the connection between friends.

If these situations or emotions sound familiar, do not be alarmed – imposter syndrome is not the grim reaper of friendships. There are measures to take back control from your debilitating thoughts

and improve your bond. The first step to improvement is recognition – becoming conscious of your patterns. Instead of burying your thoughts of self-doubt, try to be objective in your approach. Ask yourself: is there real evidence for this thought, or is it simply my insecurity speaking?

People suffering from imposter syndrome rarely give themselves credit, and breaking this chain requires grounding yourself with facts that oppose your brain's ramblings. A practical tool that does just that is journaling. Writing one's feelings of discontent to revisit later in the future when your mind is calm enough to separate reality and your own insecurity may do wonders for people struggling with such thoughts.

Now, it is certainly possible that one makes up scenarios that validate their harmful thoughts. One thing to get rid of this habit is communication. Verbalising one's feeling of self-doubt to others can help provide reality checks that diminish the insecurity. As such, communicating with their friends regarding such thoughts becomes

crucial in bettering oneself.

It may seem awkward and unnecessary at first, but there is no need to rush. It is important to start small and create space for difficult conversations but also remain clear and direct regarding the emotions involved. From there, the friendship can progress by all parties involved finding a system that sustains the connection.

It goes without saying, but for those who have been experiencing imposter syndrome to a detrimental degree, and has handicapped their ability to function socially – seeking professional help is the best course of action. It is true that not much research has been done into how imposter syndrome inflicts friendships, but professionals are surely better equipped at helping one navigate their mind's disarray.

The process of recovery is gradual; one should not be expected to be cured of such debilitating thoughts within a day. Consistency is how one can slowly build a sustainable system that improves their mental health, helping them retain and build new friendships.

## SPORTS

**What to WATCH**

**Star Sports Select HD1**  
ICC Women's World Cup  
England vs South Africa  
Live from 5:30 pm  
Premier League  
Bournemouth vs Fulham

Live from 1:00 am (Saturday)  
**T Sports**  
Afghanistan vs Bangladesh  
2nd T20  
Live From 9:00 pm

The first over of the team's World Cup opener, a pacer runs in with the glistening white ball, lets it rip with a proud seam, the ball swirls in the air, changing direction as it approaches the pitch, kisses the earth and zips inwards with the seam to rattle the stumps of a right-hander. Bangladesh's Marufa Akter did exactly that to Omaira Sohel (0) in the fifth ball of their opening match at the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 against Pakistan in Colombo on Thursday. In the next ball, she did it again, this time against the in-form Sidra Amin, who managed to make connection with the ball, but only with the inside edge of the willow, after which the ball crashed onto the stumps. Marufa (2-31) set the tone with that opening burst as Bangladesh eventually bundled out Pakistan for a mere 129 in 38.3 overs.

PHOTO: AFP



## Withdrawing councillors turn to 'guardian' sports advisor

SPORTS REPORTER

Rafiqul Islam Babu, one of the 16 councillors alongside Tamim Iqbal who had withdrawn their nomination from the election the day earlier alleging government influence, urged Sports and Youth Adviser Asif Mahmud on Thursday to accept their three-point proposal as "a way out" of the current turmoil in the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) polls.

Rafiqul and some other aggrieved councillors arrived at the BCB premises on Thursday, hoping to have a talk over some tea with the BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, who never arrived at the office.

Later, Rafiqul and his group spoke to the media in a press conference, outlining the three proposals.

"The first proposal is that the tenure of the existing board could be extended according to the rules and regulations, which could solve a lot of the problems. Another option is to reschedule the election.... An ad-hoc committee could also be formed to run things for a short period," he said alongside organisers Yeasir Abbas and Abdullah Al Fuad Redwan.

Interestingly, Rafiqul had earlier shown concerns that the board could be run through an ad-hoc committee, but now, he sees it as a solution.

Just a day before, Tamim, as the face of the group, said that government interference was at large in the BCB polls. But on Thursday, Rafiqul spoke in a very different tone.

"Many in the media and outsiders have created an opposition, pitting our honourable advisor against one group. That's not the case. Not just cricket, the honourable advisor is the guardian of all sports," he said.

When asked if Tamim was in agreement with the proposals, he said, "I am speaking on behalf of everyone."

Asked if withdrawing was a mistake, he said, "No, I'm not saying that. We did that as a form of protest. But there is a way out of this."

The Daily Star reached out to

Tamim, who left the country on Wednesday, but he refused to comment, saying he wanted to be left out of these events for now as he is dealing with a family emergency.

The 16 councillors withdrew nomination after former BCB president Faruque Ahmed filed a writ petition with the High Court on September 30, challenging the inclusion of councillors from 15 clubs which were under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in the BCB polls, and an HC bench stayed the order.

The 15 clubs were expected to be a vote bank for Tamim and Co in the polls for the 12 director positions in the Dhaka club category.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission had allowed councillors to take back their withdrawal by 12:00pm on Thursday, but no one did.

The BCB election is set to take place on October 6.



## Joty praises 'incredible' Marufa

SPORTS REPORTER

Just one match into their campaign in the ICC Women's World Cup 2025, Bangladesh have already matched their previous best finish courtesy of an emphatic seven-wicket win over Pakistan in Colombo on Thursday.

The Tigresses had won one game in their only other appearance in a 50-over World Cup back in 2022, which had also come against Pakistan.

"We wanted to start with a win. It gives us momentum that we can take into the rest of the tournament," said skipper Nigar Sultana Joty at the post-match presentation.

Player-of-the-match Marufa Akter set the tone in the very first over, dismissing Omaira Sohel and Sidra Amin for ducks with two wonderous in-swingers.

"I was getting good swing. There was some lovely swing on the first ball, and I maintained the line and length," Marufa said after the match.

Chasing 130, opener Rubya Haider Jhelik, making her WODI debut, made 54 not out off 77 balls laced with eight fours to take the side over the line with 113 balls to spare.

"Marufa is very young and mature. She knows her role very well, and is very confident. How she delivered was incredible. After the first innings, we talked about playing our natural game. Jhelik batted really well in her debut game," the skipper said.

With the win, Bangladesh have jumped to second position in the points-table, sandwiched between toppers Australia and hosts India, with two points and a positive net run rate of 1.623.

## 'Chess in Bangladesh needs a new role model'

ANISUR RAHMAN

At 59, Niaz Murshed, the subcontinent's first grandmaster, claimed his seventh national title by winning the 49th National Chess Championship on Wednesday. While his triumph celebrated a living legend, it also highlighted the fragile state of chess in Bangladesh.

Three grandmasters – Reefat Bin Sattar, Enamul Hossain Razib, and Abdullah Al Rakib – were unavailable for the championship, while the country lost GM Ziaur Rahman last year. Niaz's victory, achieved in the absence of other big names, testified to his enduring brilliance but also exposed a glaring void at the top level of chess in the country.

This year's focus was on the younger generation – IM Fahad Rahman, IM Manon Reza Neer, FM Tahsin Tajwar Zia, and FM Shakline Mostafa Sajid – especially after Neer's national triumph last year. Fahad finished runner-up, while Niaz, who had only aimed for a top-five finish to secure a place in the national team for the upcoming Chess Olympiad, eventually ended up making it all the way.

According to Niaz, Bangladesh's failure to produce a sixth grandmaster since 2008, when Enamul last earned the title, stems from outdated strategies and flawed planning.

"They [Fahad, Neer, Tahsin, Shakline] have been stuck at a certain stage for two reasons – our own problems and worldwide rating depletion," Niaz explained. He noted that FIDE's new rating system has lowered scores across the globe, further complicating progress for local talents.

In preparation for the Chess World Cup in India from October 31 to November 27, the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) is planning to bring in a Russian grandmaster to train Fahad, Neer, and a few other prospects. Niaz,

however, criticised this approach.

"Hiring foreign coaches for one or two months has never worked. It's poor planning," he said. "Young players need quality tournaments and long-term training. They can learn plenty from me as well. They [BCF] are repeating the same mistakes."

Bangladesh's five existing grandmasters all won multiple national championships before achieving GM title, but among the current



prospects, only Neer has one such national title. That fact alone explains why the wait for a sixth GM has dragged on for 17 years.

Still, Niaz remains hopeful that the breakthrough will eventually come from the current pool of players – a milestone he believes could help revive chess in the country.

"You can't attract players without a role model. I was a role model for the last generation, not this one," Niaz said. "We need a new role model. If Fahad or Neer had become grandmasters at 15 or 16, it could inspire many to take up chess. But we've failed to create that new icon."

## TIGERS SURVIVE RASHID SCARE TO EDGE AFGHANISTAN

Bangladesh almost snatched defeat from the jaws of victory after losing six wickets for nine runs following a 109-run opening stand between Parvez Hossain Emon (54 off 37 balls) and Tanzid Hasan Tamim (51 off 37), before came knocks from Nurul Hasan Sohan (23 not out off 13) and Rishad Hossain (14 not out off nine) earned them a four-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first of three T20Is in Sharjah on Thursday. Earlier, a disciplined bowling effort restricted the Afghans to 151-9. The openers then put the Tigers on course of victory before Rashid Khan's four-wicket haul nearly flipped the fate of the match. Eventually, an unbroken 35-run stand off 18 balls between Nurul and Rishad got them over the line. The second match will take place at the same venue today.



## PSG's young core hints at bright future

REUTERS, Paris

Paris St Germain's 2-1 victory at Barcelona on Wednesday bore all the hallmarks of a statement win as the Champions League holders leaned on a blend of academy graduates, fringe players and established names to show their depth.

The French champions travelled to Spain shorn of several key players, with Ousmane Dembele, Desire Doue, Marquinhos, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, and Joao Neves all sidelined.

"I want to feel our DNA as a team and as a club," coach Luis Enrique said. "Whatever the players, whatever the problems, we are here, like the supporters."

After an early Barca opener from Ferran Torres, PSG's response came from unlikely sources, Senny Mayulu – a 19-year-old midfielder pressed into service as a centre forward – grabbing the equaliser before the break.



Ibrahim Mbaye, 17 and making his first start in the competition, helped set up the move with a sharp link-up with Nuno Mendes.

Quentin Ndjantou, 18, was introduced for only his second professional appearance and

showed enough energy and daring in a late cameo to underline why Luis Enrique trusted him in such a setting.

"The pride is to see so many Titis (young Parisians) in a match like this," Mayulu said. "We work

hard every day, the coach trusts us, he puts us in the starting 11, and we have to give that back."

Portugal striker Goncalo Ramos eventually sealed the victory in the closing stages, extending his knack for scoring goals in decisive moments as a late substitute.

Midfielder Vitinha hailed the collective effort.

"It was an incredible match and I'm proud of this team," he said. "We had five regular starters missing, and players who don't often play stepped up and gave a great response."

The victory not only strengthened PSG's position in the Champions League after two wins in as many games, but also vindicated the club's restrained approach in the transfer window.

With fewer big-name arrivals than in previous summers, Luis Enrique has leaned heavily on homegrown talent, accelerating the development of Mayulu, Mbaye and Ndjantou.

বাংলাদেশ ক্রিকেট বোর্ড  
পরিচালনা পরিষদ নির্বাচন-২০২৫

Bangladesh Cricket Board

তারিখঃ ০৩রা অক্টোবর, ২০২৫

**বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

বাংলাদেশ ক্রিকেট বোর্ডের পরিচালনা পরিষদ নির্বাচন-২০২৫ নিম্নে বর্ণিত তারিখ, সময় ও স্থানে অনুষ্ঠিত হইবে (শুধুমাত্র স্ব-শরীরে ভোট প্রদানে অগ্রহী ভোটারদের ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য) :

দিন ও তারিখ : সোমবার, ০৬ অক্টোবর, ২০২৫ খ্রি.।  
সময় : সকাল ১০ঃ০০ টা থেকে বিকাল ৪ঃ০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।  
স্থান : বলরুম, হোটেল প্যান প্যাসিফিক সোনারগাঁও, ঢাকা।

প্রধান নির্বাচন কমিশনার  
বাংলাদেশ ক্রিকেট বোর্ড পরিচালনা পরিষদ নির্বাচন-২০২৫



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**AHMAD RAFIQUE**  
(1929-2025)

## The passing of a Language Movement hero

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned cultural activist, Language Movement veteran, Tagore exponent, poet, essayist and columnist Ahmad Rafique passed away last night at Dhaka's Birdem Hospital.

He was 96. Rafique had been on life support at the hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead around 10:12pm, said Ismail Sadi, a teacher at BRAC University who was close to Rafique.

Rafique lived alone in a flat in the  
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



People from around the country start visiting Keokradong, the highest peak in Bangladesh, in Bandarban yesterday as the authorities opened the mountain to tourists after almost three years.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

## Govt fleet to get ex-MPs' 30 duty-free cars

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The government has decided to hand over 30 luxury vehicles imported duty-free by members of the dissolved 12th national parliament to the Directorate of Government Transport after the former lawmakers failed to clear them from Chattogram port.

The vehicles – including Toyota Land Cruisers, Harriers and other sports utility vehicles with engine capacities ranging from 3,000cc to 4,000cc – had been left at the port for months, losing value and attracting little buyer interest at auction, said customs officials.

In January, Chattogram Customs House attempted to sell the vehicles but received bids far below the reserve value (the lowest amount a seller will accept) of about Tk 9 crore.

Under auction rules, vehicles cannot be sold for less than 60 percent of their reserve value.

Bids were placed at less than Tk 2 crore, forcing customs to halt the process.

An inter-ministerial meeting later recommended that the cars be transferred to the government transport pool, a proposal endorsed by the finance division.

The directorate will cover port and freight charges from its fiscal 2025-26 budget, according to official documents.

Subsequently, on September 24, the order instructing Chattogram Customs House to take the necessary steps was issued.

"This will not only save money on government vehicle purchases but also prevent the cars from being wasted at

## Two dead in attack on UK synagogue

Suspect shot dead

REUTERS, Manchester

Two people were killed yesterday when a man drove a car into pedestrians and stabbed a security guard in an attack at a synagogue in England, where worshippers were marking Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, British police said.

Greater Manchester Police said the suspect, who was wearing a vest that appeared to be an explosive device, was shot dead after officers rushed to the scene at the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in the Crumpsall district of the city in northern England.

A video shared on social media and verified by Reuters showed police shooting a man inside the synagogue's perimeter, while another man lay on the floor in a pool of blood, appearing to wear a traditional Jewish head covering.

"He has a bomb, go away!" an armed police officer shouted to onlookers, just seconds before a gunshot rang out.

Neighbour Angela Crawshaw told Reuters she had seen three policemen aiming guns at a man in the car park of the synagogue, telling him: "Stay down, don't move or we'll shoot."

"Then they did shoot, and he fell to the floor. Then he tried getting up again and moving again, and they shot him again. And then it was just panic ... just noise and panic."

### CHILD NUTRITION IN BANGLADESH

#### FOOD POVERTY & DIET DIVERSITY

2 in every 3 children under 5 face food poverty

1 in every 5 children under extreme food poverty, consumes only 1-2 food groups against 5 prescribed by WHO-UNICEF

#### NUTRITION STATUS

Stunting (low height for age):  
24% across country  
40% in urban slums  
WHO threshold: 15%

Wasting (low weight for height): 11%, WHO emergency threshold: 5%

Underweight (low weight for age): 22%

#### NUTRITION SPENDING

Per capita allocation: \$18  
98% for broad "nutrition-sensitive" programmes, only 2% for direct interventions

2022 BANGLADESH DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY (BDHS), AND 2024 SANEM STUDY

### CHILD MALNUTRITION

## Country struggles to break free

Poverty, poor diets, and early motherhood fuelling crisis

NILIMA JAHAN

Mitu Akter had the scare of her life when her daughter Raisa began showing alarming symptoms: pale skin, and swelling in her belly, hands, and feet.

Tests revealed that the 15-month-old was severely malnourished, with dangerously low weight and height, anaemia, and nutritional oedema – a condition caused by severe protein deficiency.

"The doctor told me that my daughter was suffering from acute nutritional deficiency," said 23-year-old Mitu, a homemaker in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila.

Herself frail and undernourished, Mitu, a mother of two, didn't exclusively breastfeed Raisa. When Raisa turned six months, she began feeding her a mixture of rice powder and water – a poor substitute for breast milk – as the family could not afford nutritious food. Her seven-year-old elder daughter is also underweight.

Anaemic and weighing just 42kg during her second childbirth, Mitu never regained strength after marrying young and becoming a mother at an

early age.

"I had little breast milk and no means to improve that," said Mitu, whose husband sells jhalmuri (spicy puffed rice).

The family's meals consist largely of rice and vegetables – meat is rare, fish occasional, and milk almost absent.

Mitu's story is far from unique. Her experience mirrors a broader crisis affecting millions of children suffering from malnutrition, primarily due to inadequate dietary intake, across Bangladesh.

This reality is reflected in statistics – a 2024 UNICEF report shows that two in three children under five experience food poverty, and one in five consumes only one to two food groups daily, far below a minimum of five recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Child feeding practices remain inadequate, with exclusive breastfeeding dropping to 53 percent in 2022 from 65 percent in 2017-18. Only 30 percent of children aged between six months and 23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

- Vehicles include Toyota Land Cruisers, Harriers and SUVs of 3,000cc to 4,000cc
- Imported duty-free by MPs elected in Jan 7, 2024 polls
- Only one MP took delivery of their vehicle
- Bids received far below the reserve price of Tk 9cr
- 60% of reserve value needed as per auction rules
- Directorate of govt transport to cover port, freight charges



the port," HM Kabir, deputy commissioner of Chattogram Customs House, told The Daily Star.

Introduced during HM Ershad's regime in 1987, the duty-free car facility has long faced criticism for depriving the state of revenue.

Over the past 15 years, tax exemptions on lawmakers' car imports have cost the government more than Tk 5,147 crore, according to data from the National Board of Revenue.

## Musk halfway to becoming world's first trillionaire

AFP, Washington



Billionaire Elon Musk, the world's richest person, is nearly halfway to becoming the planet's first trillionaire, Forbes magazine reported Wednesday.

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO became the first person to achieve a net worth of \$500 billion, briefly, as the shares in his electric vehicle company rebounded from his clumsy stint in politics, amid other gains.

The 54-year-old's net worth hit \$500.1 billion Wednesday before dipping back to \$499.1 billion, the publication's "Real-Time Billionaires" tracker reported.

Ranked after him are Oracle CEO Larry Ellison with a net worth of \$350.7 billion, followed by Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg with a net worth of \$245.8 billion on the Forbes list.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania and dropping out of Stanford University, Musk banked his first millions when he sold an online publishing software company to US computer maker Compaq for more than \$300 million in 1999.



**THE FLOWER HOPPER ...** A Common Mormon drinks nectar from a peacock flower, locally known as Radhachura, in Rajshahi city. This swallowtail butterfly ranges widely across South and Southeast Asia, from Bangladesh and India to the Philippines and Japan. It flourishes in both forests and gardens, feeding mainly on flower nectar. Notably, females display polymorphism, mimicking toxic species like the Common Rose to evade predators. The butterfly shelters in bushes and shaded spots, most active under the sun. Listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, it remains vital for pollination and ecological balance. With its mimicry, elegance, and adaptability, the Common Mormon endures as one of nature's most resilient and captivating creatures.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## G7 to target those buying Russia oil

AFP, Washington

G7 finance ministers pledged Wednesday to take aim at those who are continuing to step up purchases of Russian oil, since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago.

In a statement after a virtual meeting, officials from the Group of Seven advanced economies – Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States – agreed that it is time to "maximize pressure on Russia's oil exports."

This would hit at revenue Moscow needs for the war.

"We will target those who are continuing to increase their purchase of Russian oil since the invasion of Ukraine and those that are facilitating circumvention," the ministers said in a joint statement.

They added that they agreed on "the importance of trade measures, including tariffs" and import or export bans in efforts to cut off Russian revenues.

The statement came after the United States indicated last month that it was ready to broaden tariffs targeting buyers of Russian oil if the European Union takes similar moves.



# NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY of the REPUBLIC OF KOREA



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2025



**Lee Jae Myung**  
President of the Republic of Korea

### Message from the Ambassador

The Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of Bangladesh established diplomatic ties on December 18, 1973. Over the past five decades, this close relationship has grown into a dynamic partnership that continues to expand across many fields. Our two countries have witnessed a remarkable journey of cooperation in various sectors, including trade, investment, development, and people-to-people exchanges.

The substantial bilateral relationship between Korea and Bangladesh traces back to the beginning of Bangladesh's RMG industry. The well-known story goes back to 1979, when Bangladesh Dosh Garment partnered with Korea's Daewoo Corporation, planting the seed of what would become Bangladesh's RMG sector. Since then,

Korean garment enterprises have made great contributions to the rapid growth of this industry, which accounts for over 85% of the country's exports. The Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) in Chattogram — the first privately developed, country-specific export processing zone — stands as a symbol of Korea-Bangladesh business ties, currently generating about 1.25 billion USD in exports and employing more than 70,000 workers in Bangladesh.

Today, the scope of Korean investment reaches far beyond textiles. Korea is currently the fourth largest FDI investor in Bangladesh. In recent years, investment has grown in manufacturing industries such as automobiles, mobile phones, and consumer electronics through joint ventures with local partners. Samsung Electronics produces consumer goods, including mobile phones, while Hyundai and Kia cars are also being assembled locally. These companies are creating high-quality jobs through domestic manufacturing. Korean firms would like to see opportunities for further investment as the business environment continues to improve — particularly in areas such as timely visa issuance and renewal, smooth customs clearance, lower tariffs on raw materials and intermediate goods, prompt payment in U.S. dollars after project completion, and the ability to repatriate profits with ease.

Trade between the two nations has gained remarkable momentum. Korea currently provides preferential market access to around 95 percent of Bangladeshi products through the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) arrangements. Bilateral trade reached a record high in 2022, surpassing 3 billion dollars for the first time. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), now under negotiations, is expected to further expand trade and investment in mutually beneficial ways. Korea hopes these talks will conclude in the near future.

Infrastructure has become one of the most promising areas for deeper Korea-Bangladesh cooperation. Bangladesh holds strong potential for infrastructure development, supported by more than two decades of steady economic growth averaging over 5 percent annually.

Its planned graduation from the Least Developed Country status in November 2026 is expected to attract essential foreign capital needed for the ongoing infrastructure development in Bangladesh. Korea aspires to remain a vital partner in Bangladesh's infrastructure journey, just as it has been in the RMG sector. Since 1973, 144 Korean companies have participated in 257 infrastructure projects in Bangladesh, representing investments totaling 8.82 billion USD as of April 2025.

Korean companies can bring distinct advantages that can significantly strengthen Bangladesh's infrastructure development. They consistently deliver high-quality projects — whether roads, bridges, or railways — while creating local jobs by hiring Bangladeshi workers and ensuring timely completion without unnecessary delays or inflated costs. In addition, the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) is available to Bangladesh on highly favorable terms, offering interest rates as low as 0.01–0.05 percent and repayment periods of up to 40 years. The fund has already been expanded to 3 billion USD through 2027, with the possibility of further increase. As not every infrastructure project can be financed by government budgets or international loans alone, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) offer an important alternative, with initiatives such as the Mirsharai Water Supply Project already under discussion.

Korea's support for Bangladesh's development is not limited to infrastructure alone. Bangladesh has long been an important partner in Korea's development cooperation efforts and currently ranks third among Korea's ODA recipients. Several ongoing projects focus on education, water sanitation, health, public administration, and transportation. This assistance also supports the strengthening of Bangladesh's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. There are more than 110 vocational training centers across the country, but they face significant challenges, including a shortage of qualified trainers, limited technological skills, and outdated teaching equipment. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is well positioned to help address these gaps by developing capacity-building projects that equip the Bangladeshi workers for future growth.

Korea's development partnership with Bangladesh also includes humanitarian support. Since 2017, Korea has provided USD 3 to 5 million through international organizations to support the Rohingyas and their host communities in Bangladesh. In 2024, the total amount of humanitarian aid reached USD 36.6 million, and, in addition to this funding, Korea made its first rice donation — 15,000 tons, enough to feed one million Rohingyas for one and a half months. This aid has supported a range of activities under the Joint Response Plan, including the provision of food, LPG, and education.

People-to-people exchanges continue to strengthen the bond between Korea and Bangladesh. Korea has become an important destination for Bangladeshi migrant workers; between 2008 and 2023, about 33,000 workers went to South Korea under the Employment Permit System. Korea's labor laws apply equally to domestic and foreign workers, and wages for Bangladeshi workers are generally higher than in many other countries. The Korean government remains committed to ensuring a safe and supportive working environment for them.

Cultural exchange is deepening mutual understanding. Korean culture — including K-dramas, K-movies, K-pop, K-art, K-food, and K-beauty — is gaining popularity in Bangladesh. This trend reflects the shared values and creative expressions that bridge the geographical distance between our two nations. I anticipate that the Hallyu (Korean Wave), a cross-border cultural phenomenon, will further strengthen mutual understanding and help build long-lasting cooperation between Korea and Bangladesh.

Looking ahead, there is great potential to expand our partnership into new sectors. Korea's approach centers on practical cooperation and shared prosperity. I am confident that our two countries can further deepen bilateral relations by collaborating in areas such as footwear and leather, ICT, pharmaceuticals, light industries, shipbuilding, the blue economy and deep-sea fishing, agriculture and agricultural machinery, greenhouse technology, and carbon trading. Korean companies will bring advanced technologies, while

Bangladeshi companies can create new businesses. There is strong potential for this kind of investment that combines technology and capital to flourish in Bangladesh.

Our shared history continues to light the path toward a stronger future. The great Bengali poet and first Asian Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, wrote a poem in 1929 for the Korean people, calling Korea "the Lamp of the East." His words inspired courage and determination among Koreans. Guided by Tagore's vision and our shared values of democracy, a market economy, and human rights, Bangladesh and Korea have cultivated a deep and reciprocal partnership across many fields. Building on what our two nations have achieved together over the past 50 years, we are committed to making the next 50 years even brighter and more prosperous in every area of cooperation.



**H.E. Park Young-sik**  
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Bangladesh

রিপাবলিক অব কোরিয়ার জাতীয় প্রতিষ্ঠা দিবস এক সাথে উদযাপন করার জন্য আপনাদের ধন্যবাদ। আমি আপনাদের সুখ, শান্তি ও সমৃদ্ধি কামনা করছি।



**Shahab Uddin Khan**  
President, KBCCI



### Message from the President of KBCCI

On the occasion of Korean Day, I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings to our Korean friends and well-wishers. This day stands as a celebration not only of Korea's rich heritage and achievements but also of the deepening ties of friendship and cooperation between Korea and Bangladesh.

In recent times, Bangladesh has faced certain political and economic challenges, which led to a lower-than-expected inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the last financial year. Nonetheless, with the national elections expected in February 2025, we are optimistic that political stability will return, creating a more favorable environment for foreign investors. This confidence was also reflected in the recent meeting between the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) and KBCCI, where we discussed strategies to attract and facilitate Korean investment in Bangladesh.

At the global level, ongoing economic unrest—partly arising from tariff policies introduced by the United States has highlighted the need for countries like Bangladesh to diversify their export destinations. In this regard, Korea presents itself as a strong and reliable partner. Bangladesh must focus not only on expanding its current exports but also on identifying new sectors and product diversification to enhance trade with Korea.

Another critical area for future cooperation lies in the development of skilled human resources. Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS) has already created valuable opportunities for Bangladeshi workers, but to fully realize this potential, we must modernize our vocational training institutions. I earnestly request the Government of Korea, along with KOICA, to collaborate with Bangladesh in upgrading and reforming these institutions. By equipping our workforce with world-class skills, both nations will benefit: Bangladesh through employment generation and remittances, and Korea through the contribution of well-trained, dedicated workers.

On this Korean Day, let us reaffirm our shared vision of prosperity built on trust, collaboration, and mutual respect. I am confident that the Korea-Bangladesh partnership will continue to grow stronger, paving the way for new opportunities and enduring friendship between our two nations. Long live Korea-Bangladesh friendship.

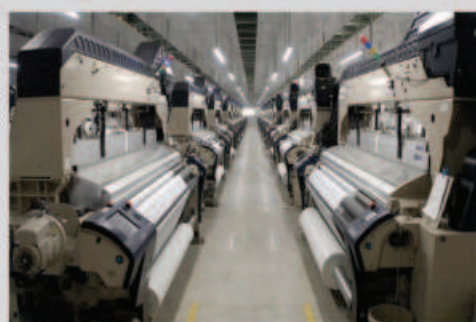
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**개천절**

OUR HEARTIEST FELICITATIONS  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

**Materials Division e-mail**

jaeyongpark@youngone.com  
ilchoi@youngone.com , kmuddin@youngonedhk.com  
chiranjib.acharjee@youngonectg.com  
bskim@youngone.com

**KEPZ e-mail**

jsaadat.kepz@gmail.com  
mdshahjahan@youngonectg.com  
kepzdhk@youngonedhk.com



# NATIONAL DAY of the REPUBLIC OF KOREA

## MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY CONSUL, CHATTOGRAM.

On the auspicious occasion of the National Foundation Day of the Republic of Korea, on 3rd October 2025, I extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt wishes to the people of Korea. On this historic day, the people of Bangladesh join in friendship and shared goodwill with the people of the Republic of Korea.

The Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of Bangladesh have enjoyed close and enduring bilateral relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1973. We fondly recall the momentous celebration of the 50th anniversary of these relations in 2023, marked with great pride and significance. More recently, in September 2024, I had the honor of leading a business delegation to Korea, where we signed an MoU between KBCCI and various Korean business associations to further strengthen trade and investment cooperation between our two countries.

Today, more than 200 Korean companies are successfully operating in Bangladesh, particularly in Export Processing Zones and other sectors, contributing substantially to our economy. Their success underscores the depth of our partnership and the promise it holds. Looking ahead, there remains immense scope for expanding collaboration in trade, investment, and cultural exchange for the mutual benefit of both nations.

As the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Korea in Chattogram, I remain dedicated to fostering these strong economic and cultural bonds. I am confident that the friendship between our two nations will continue to grow and thrive in the years to come.

On this special occasion of Korea's National Foundation Day, I once again convey my sincere greetings to the people of Korea and to the Korean community living in Bangladesh.

Long live Korea-Bangladesh friendship.

**Mostafa Kamal**  
Honorary Consul  
The Republic of Korea in Chattogram.



## CELEBRATING KOREAN FOUNDATION DAY



## 재 방글라데시 한인회

As the Chairman of the Korean Community, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all on the auspicious occasion of Korean Foundation Day 2025. This day holds deep meaning for us, as it honors the spirit, resilience, and cultural heritage of Korea that continue to inspire generations.

Korean Foundation Day is not only a celebration of our proud history, but also a reflection of the values that unite us through hard work, perseverance, and harmony. It reminds us of the sacrifices of our forebears and calls on us to carry their legacy forward by strengthening friendship, cooperation, and cultural exchange within our community and with our Bangladeshi friends.

On this occasion, let us reaffirm our commitment to fostering unity, embracing diversity, and creating new opportunities for mutual growth and understanding. Together, we can nurture a vibrant community that honors its heritage while striving toward a brighter and more prosperous future.

May Korean Foundation Day 2025 inspire us all to cherish our traditions, strengthen our bonds, and continue walking hand in hand toward shared progress and harmony.

Happy Korean Foundation Day!

**Mr. Yu Yongoh**  
Chairman, Korean Community in Bangladesh



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## OUR HEARTFELT FELICITATIONS ON THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY 2025 OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA



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# NATIONAL DAY of the REPUBLIC OF KOREA

## Harmony in Progress: the Friendship of Korea - Bangladesh

**K**orean National Foundation Day reflects on the nation's journey and its contributions to the international community, standing as a testament to how its vibrant partnership with Bangladesh has evolved from a donor-recipient relationship into a strategic, forward-looking alliance.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) serves as a fundamental pillar of the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and the Republic of Korea. Its development programs, funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA), are strategically designed to support Bangladesh's national development goals.

**Major Projects:** KOICA has been contributing significantly in different sector of Bangladesh for the last nine months. Major contribution includes commitment of \$55 million to key sectors: health insurance (\$15M), ICT education (\$12M), climate-resilient infrastructure in Dhaka (\$20M), and local governance (\$8M).

**Economic Impact:** The agency's work indirectly bolsters trade and commerce by upgrading crucial infrastructure and enhancing workforce skills through vocational training. Furthermore, its efforts to improve the investment climate through regulatory reforms and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are vital for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Despite political turbulence in Bangladesh, Korean FDI is expected to grow as stability returns.

**Social & Cultural Bonds:** Beyond economic development, KOICA fosters strong people-to-people ties. Its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives include deploying volunteers and partnering with Korean corporations on community projects. Culturally, it strengthens bilateral relations through exchange programs and by sponsoring training in Korea for over 1,500 Bangladeshi officials annually.

In essence, through its strategic financial contributions and diverse projects, KOICA plays an instrumental role in fostering sustainable development in Bangladesh, thereby deepening economic cooperation and cultural bonds between the two nations.



A delegation of KOIPA visited the office of KBCCI on January 2025



Chief Advisor Professor Mohammad Yunus presenting the Honorary Citizenship of Bangladesh to Mr. Kihak Sung

**I**n a landmark event in April 2025, the Bangladesh Investment Summit honored Youngone Corporation Chairman Mr. Kihak Sung with the prestigious Honorary Citizenship of Bangladesh. The award was formally presented by Chief Advisor Professor Mohammad Yunus at the Hotel Intercontinental, Dhaka, in recognition of Mr. Sung's decades of dedication to Bangladesh's industrial growth and economic progress.

Mr. Sung's pioneering vision in establishing the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ), the first privately owned EPZ in the country, has been a catalyst for attracting large-scale foreign investment, generating employment, and promoting sustainable industrial practices. Beyond economic impact, his initiatives have also contributed to advancing environmental stewardship and community development in Bangladesh. The recognition also highlights Mr. Sung's enduring efforts in strengthening Bangladesh-South Korea economic relations, creating new avenues of bilateral cooperation, and setting a model for long-term partnership between the two nations.

From pioneering investments to knowledge sharing and technology transfer, Korea has consistently stood as a trusted partner in advancing Bangladesh's industrial and social progress. This honor reflects not only Mr. Sung's personal legacy but also the strength of the Bangladesh-Korea friendship, setting a shining example of how collaboration between the two nations can drive sustainable growth and prosperity for generations to come. KBCCI (Korea-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry) is proud to have Mr. Kihak Sung, Chairman of Youngone, as a valued member since its inception.

**T**he Korea-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KBCCI), in collaboration with LG, hosted a highly anticipated event dedicated to K-Pop and Korean cuisine at the prestigious Gulshan Club on December 14, 2024. The event successfully brought a vibrant slice of modern Korean culture to Dhaka, drawing a large and enthusiastic audience from diverse backgrounds. Attendees were treated to an immersive experience, featuring electrifying K-Pop dance performances by talented local groups, interactive sessions celebrating Korean entertainment, and the opportunity to savor a wide variety of authentic Korean dishes prepared with care.

This cultural evening was more than just an entertainment showcase; it created a festive atmosphere that encouraged cross-cultural appreciation, dialogue, and connection. Distinguished guests, including representatives from both Bangladeshi and Korean communities, graced the occasion, further underlining the spirit of friendship and cooperation. The initiative not only highlighted the universal appeal of the Korean wave (Hallyu) but also positioned KBCCI as an active facilitator of cultural diplomacy, bridging communities through shared experiences. By blending music, food, and cultural expression, the event marked another milestone in strengthening people-to-people ties and fostering deeper understanding between Bangladesh and South Korea.



K Pop Event & Korean Food Festival by KBCCI in Collaboration with LG

**A**s we celebrate Gaecheonjeol (National Foundation Day of Korea), the story of Korea in Bangladesh is one of tangible impact. From the life-saving medical equipment donated by KOICA to public hospitals to the policy frameworks shaped by KDI, the Korean flag flies not just as a symbol of a nation, but as a symbol of partnership, innovation, and shared future.

It is proven that the Korea-Bangladesh relationship is built on a solid foundation of mutual respect and common ambition. As both nations look ahead, this partnership stands as a proud achievement on Korea's foundation day—a bridge of friendship and prosperity spanning across Asia.



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# NATIONAL DAY of the REPUBLIC OF KOREA



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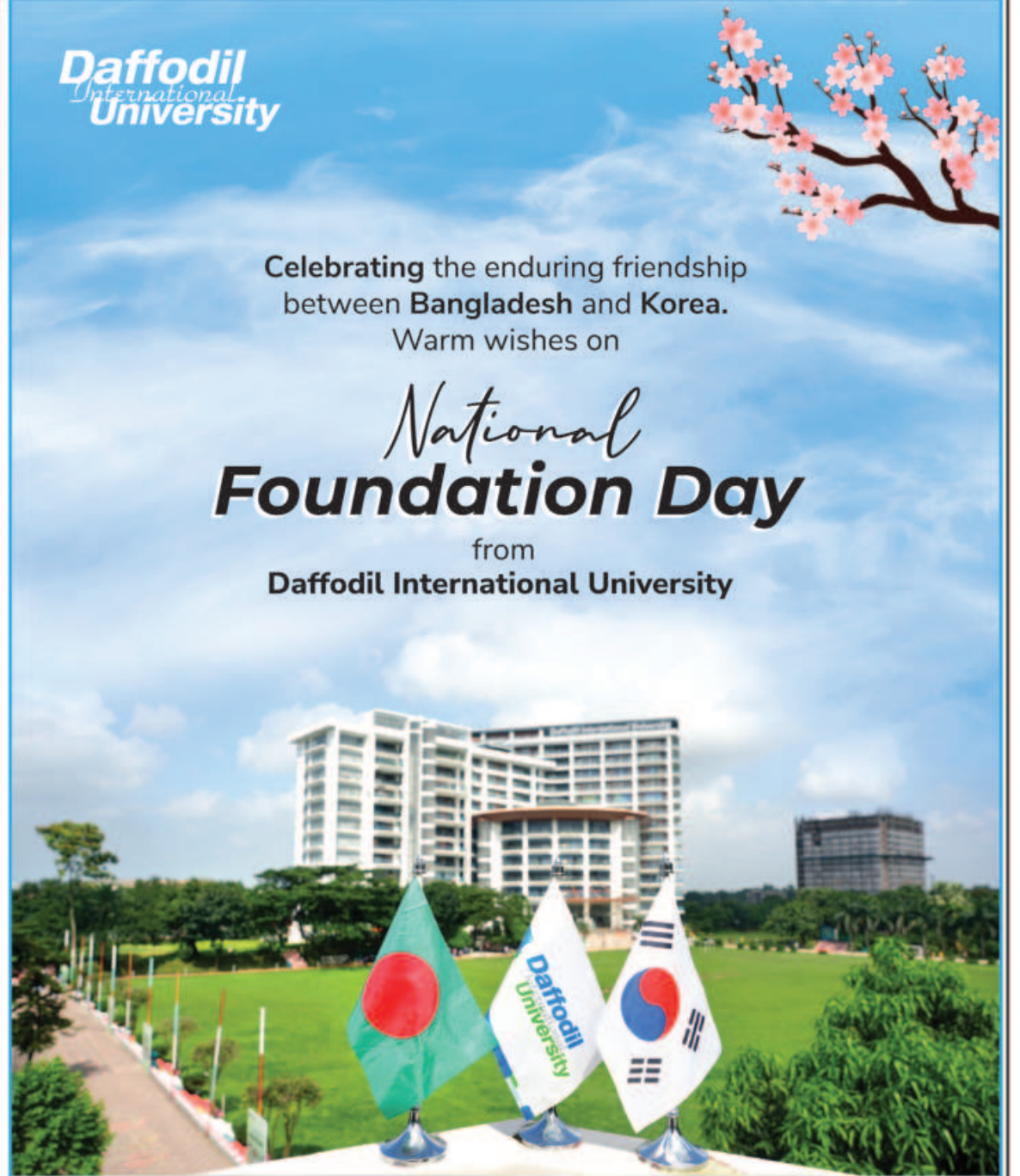
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Celebrating the enduring friendship  
between Bangladesh and Korea.  
Warm wishes on

## National Foundation Day

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DIU Press published এই কতি তি সেই কতি written by Korean Prof. Dr. Kikwan Yoon



DIU students studying at Chungnam National University under GKS 2025.



H.E. Park Young Sik, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh delivered an exclusive lecture session for DIU students

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Happy National Foundation Day to the Republic of Korea,  
with hopes for continued Prosperity and Success

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