

“The notion of a safe zone in the south [of Gaza] is farcical... Bombs are dropped from the sky with chilling predictability.”
James Elder,
UNICEF official



\$5.5 BILLION IMF LOAN Govt meets most conditions for next tranche

Misses revenue target once again

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD ABBAS

Bangladesh has met key conditions like maintaining sufficient foreign exchange reserves and reducing arrears in the energy and fertiliser sectors to secure the next installment of the International Monetary Fund's loan programme.

However, it once again failed to meet the tax revenue collection target. An IMF mission is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on October 29 for a two-week review of progress made until June.

The IMF originally approved a \$4.7 billion programme in January 2023. In June this year, it released the fourth and fifth installments, alongside a six-month extension and a \$800 million top-up, bringing the total package to \$5.5 billion. So far, Bangladesh has received \$3.6 billion.

To unlock the sixth tranche, expected to be around \$450 million, Bangladesh must meet six Quantitative Performance Criteria (QPCs), the most binding IMF conditions. Three of these were introduced in May.

Bangladesh Bank data shows that net international reserves (NIR) stood at \$20.73 billion in June against the IMF's \$17.4 billion target. Even in September, when the target was \$18.65 billion, reserves remained above \$20 billion.

The country had repeatedly failed to meet reserve targets under the previous government, as gross reserves plunged from \$48 billion. But after the interim government took office in August last year, the situation reversed, with reserve targets for December and March met successfully.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at World Bank's Dhaka office, credited the improvement to a surge in remittances and weak imports.

"As money laundering has been stopped, more remittances are now coming through official channels. With imports being low, there has been no pressure on the foreign exchange market," he said.

IMF'S TARGETS AND BANGLADESH'S ACHIEVEMENTS (UNTIL JUNE)		
	TARGET	ACHIEVEMENT
Reserves	\$17.4b	\$20.73b
Foreign dues	Below \$870m	\$314m
Local arrears	Below Tk 28,070cr	Tk 18,000cr
Revenue	Tk 443,530cr	Tk 378,000cr

He added that the Bangladesh Bank, which earlier sold dollars to meet demand, is now buying to prevent the taka from appreciating too much. "The supply of foreign currency is more than the demand... which is gradually increasing the reserve," he noted.

Remittance inflows reached a record \$30.33 billion in the last fiscal year, up nearly 27 percent, and the trend has continued.

FAILING ON TAX

Despite progress on reserves and arrears, Bangladesh failed to meet the IMF's revenue collection target.

Against a target of Tk 443,530 crore until June, revenue stood at Tk 378,000 crore. The National Board of Revenue (NBR), which accounted for 97 percent of the goal, collected Tk 370,874 crore with a growth of only 2.23 percent.

Bangladesh's tax-to-GDP ratio remains among the lowest in the world, which is why the IMF has placed the highest emphasis on raising revenue, making it a key QPC in May. Previously, revenue targets were "indicative" and relatively soft.

A senior NBR official blamed low growth, political unrest during last year's uprising, weak investment, and agitation by NBR staff over the proposed separation of the tax authority.

"In such a situation, the IMF's revenue collection target was very ambitious," he said.

Zahid Hussain said the mass uprising badly hurt July-August collections last year, while subsequent protests and weak imports further dragged revenue down.

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Pro-Palestinian demonstrators protest in Rome, Italy yesterday during a nationwide strike called by the USB union to condemn the Israeli forces' interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla vessels aiming to reach Gaza and break Israel's naval blockade. Inset, the Conscience ship sails towards Gaza as part of a convoy to challenge the Israeli blockade on Gaza.

PHOTO: REUTERS, COLLECTED

Bangladesh slates Israeli interception of Sumud Flotilla

Calls for release of detained activists

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has strongly condemned the interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, which was carrying humanitarian assistance for Gaza, by Israeli forces in international waters.

"This act is a flagrant violation of international law and a brazen manifestation of Israel's use of hunger as a weapon of war," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement yesterday.

The government demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all detained humanitarian aid workers and activists. It called for guarantees of their safety and well-being.

Bangladesh also urged Israel to end its illegal occupation of

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Trump sets Sunday deadline for Hamas

Says it will face 'all hell' if it rejects 'last chance' Gaza deal; Israel kills 49 more Palestinians

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump has given Hamas until 2200 GMT on Sunday to accept his 20-point plan for peace in Gaza, warning the Palestinian militant group faced "all hell" if it did not agree to the terms.

The US leader set the deadline -- which would fall at 1:00am Monday in Gaza -- after an official for the Islamist movement told AFP earlier yesterday that the group still needed time to study the proposal to end nearly two years of devastating war in the Palestinian territory.

"If this LAST CHANCE agreement is not reached, all HELL, like no one has ever seen before, will break out against Hamas," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

The proposal, backed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, calls for a ceasefire, the release of hostages

within 72 hours, Hamas's disarmament and a gradual Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

That would be followed by a post-war transitional authority headed by Trump himself.

"Hamas is still continuing consultations regarding Trump's plan... and has informed mediators that the consultations are ongoing and need some time," the official said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly on the matter.

On Tuesday, Trump gave Hamas "three or four days" to accept his plan, which has been welcomed by world powers, including Arab and Muslim nations.

Mohammad Nazzal, a member of Hamas's political bureau, said in a statement that the "plan has points of concern, and we will announce our position on it soon".

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GAZA AID FLOTILLA Israel seizes last boat

Deports first activists

AGENCIES

Israel yesterday deported four Italian activists, the first of hundreds detained from an aid flotilla bound for Gaza, shortly after the interception of a final boat brought an end to its mission.

- » Another flotilla with 11 ships on the way to Gaza
- » Protests, strikes held across globe in support of Palestinians

The Global Sumud Flotilla set sail last month, ferrying politicians and activists, including Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg, towards Gaza, where the United Nations says famine is taking hold.

The Israeli navy began intercepting the boats on Wednesday, and an Israeli official said the following day that boats with over 400 people on board had been prevented from reaching the Gaza Strip.

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KEY ISSUES

- Eastern coast sinking faster than central, western
- Infrastructure, farmland, livelihoods at risk
- Tidal range increasing, heightening flooding, erosion threats

DATA AT A GLANCE

- Nat'l average sea level rise: 4.58mm per year
- Global mean: 3.7mm per year
- Chattogram coast: 4.73mm/year
- Sundarbans tidal plain (west): 3.66mm/year
- Meghna estuarine floodplain (central): 2.4mm/year
- Coastal zone population: over 43m

Eastern coast sinking faster as sea level rises

Infrastructure, farmlands, livelihoods of millions at risk, shows a new study

WASIM BIN HABIB and PINAKI ROY

Bangladesh's eastern coast, a key zone for development activities, is sinking faster than the central and western coasts amid rising sea levels, posing threats to infrastructure, vast swathes of farmland and the livelihoods of millions of people, warns a new study.

The sea level along the Chattogram coastal plain in the east is rising by 4.73 millimetres a year, the highest rate in the country. In comparison, the sea level along the Sundarbans tidal plain in the west is climbing by 3.66mm and the Meghna estuarine floodplain in the central zone by 2.4mm a year.

On average, the sea level along the country's coastline is increasing by 4.58mm annually, compared to the Global Mean Sea Level (GMSL) of 3.7mm -- the average height of ocean surface -- with land subsidence amplifying the threat in several regions, said the study published in the scientific journal Geomatics, Natural Hazards and Risk in August.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, the GMSL rise has accelerated since the late 1960s, with an average rate of 2.3 mm a year between 1971 and 2018. It increased to 3.7mm a year between 2006 and 2018.

The study found that tidal range -- the gap



between high and low tides -- is increasing, particularly in the east, raising the risk of flooding and erosion.

It also said Bangladesh witnesses distinct seasonal cycles, with sea levels typically peaking in April and dropping in September. These variations are driven by local conditions, including tidal dynamics,

sediment flow, and land deformation.

The country's coastal zone, home to over 43 million people, sits just 1-1.5 metres above the sea level, meaning even modest rises over a short period could spell trouble for the region.

Explaining the contrast between the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Insecurity grips the family of Khagrachhari girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The family of the girl, who was allegedly gang-raped on her way home in Khagrachhari on September 23, said a sense of insecurity is heavily hampering their livelihood.

The girl's father told The Daily Star yesterday that he used to run a small tea stall at a local market.

The situation in Khagrachhari has returned to normal following the fierce protest over the incident, with the resumption of vehicular movement and reopening of shops.

The girl's father, however, is yet to reopen his shop.

"To reach the shop, I had to travel about a kilometre along the main road. I have not been able to reopen the stall yet out of security concern.

"I don't know how I will run my family now. I am an ordinary person, but this single incident has pushed our lives into darkness," he said.

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure banning gatherings is still in force there.

During a visit to the area, locals told this correspondent that both indigenous and Bangalee communities had been living peacefully side by side for years without any conflict.

"This single incident has divided us into two groups. If the accused are truly guilty, they should be punished. But above all, we want peace to return," one resident said.

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KHAGRACHHARI VIOLENCE India dismisses allegation of involvement

Calls it ‘false and baseless’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday termed as “false and baseless” the claim by Bangladesh’s Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury about the involvement of forces from across the border in the recent violence in Khagrachhari.

“We categorically reject these false and baseless allegations from Bangladesh. The interim government in Bangladesh, as I have spoken about on several occasions, is unable to maintain law and order and has this habit of routinely trying to shift the blame elsewhere,” Indian Ministry of External Affairs Spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said in response to a pointed question at the weekly media briefing about the Bangladesh home adviser’s allegation, reports our correspondent in New Delhi.

Jaiswal said, “It would do well for them [Bangladesh] to introspect and conduct serious investigations into the actions of local extremists committing violence, arson, and land grabs against minorities and minority communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.”

Earlier on September 29, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that the recent violence in Khagrachhari following the alleged rape of an indigenous schoolgirl was being fuelled “by a neighbouring country and fascist groups”.

“A vested quarter is trying to create unrest to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of Durga Puja. They attempted to prevent the festival from being celebrated with religious fervour and festivity. This vested group is behind the Khagrachhari incident,” he said.

While talking to reporters at the old Ramna Police Station after an event, he said a journalist asked whether firearms and money were being supplied to Khagrachhari from India.

The advisers said, “He [the journalist] said the violence is being instigated by India or by fascist groups. We are taking all-out measures to ensure that they cannot be successful.

“I did not want to name the country, but our journalist brother mentioned that country’s name. Some terrorists are firing shots from the hills, and these arms are coming from outside,” he said.



Condemning Israel's interception of the ‘Global Sumud Flotilla’, which was carrying humanitarian assistance for Gaza, a protest rally was brought out on Manik Mia Avenue in the capital yesterday afternoon. The rally, organised by Bangladesh Youth Synergy Alliance, demanded protection of the flotilla and the immediate release of detained activists.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

‘We’re here to break the illegal siege’

Shahidul Alam says in latest video message

STAR REPORT

Describing their mission as a stand against what he termed the “illegal siege” of Gaza, photographer-activist Shahidul Alam yesterday said the group’s presence was not primarily for aid delivery.

“This is not primarily for delivering humanitarian aid, though we have supplies with us, so we do not become a burden on our Gaza brothers and sisters. We are here to break the illegal siege,” Alam said.

“We are separate from the Sumud Flotilla. That was always the intention and the strategy,” he said.

According to Alam, eight boats that set out and a larger vessel he’s on remain – a total of nine vessels – and they expect to overtake other boats later in the day.

He acknowledged the risks of being the “front vessel,” saying it was a calculated decision they had prepared for.

The vessel he is on is carrying 96



people, of whom 82 are media and medical professionals, along with some organisers, members of the Flotilla Coalition steering committee, and the ship’s crew, he said.

Information is coming “in dribs and drabs” and cannot always be verified,

Shahidul said in a video posted on his Facebook yesterday.

Alam said the sea was “quite calm” in the morning, but conditions are unpredictable. He said the vessel endured extremely rough seas the previous day; he himself felt briefly unwell but had recovered.

He added the flotilla seeks to protest “the journalists and medical professionals killed alongside the ordinary women, men and children, in Gaza by Israel,” and to confront the “media siege” imposed by a blockade on foreign media.

“Your love and your encouragement give us strength. We shall prevail. Palestine will be free,” the photographer-activist said.

The Israeli military intercepted the last boat in an aid flotilla attempting to reach blockaded Gaza yesterday, a day after stopping most of the vessels and detaining some 450 activists including Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg.

Govt meets most conditions for next tranche

FROM PAGE 1

“Since the revenue target has not been met, Bangladesh will now have to seek a waiver from the IMF,” he said.

ARREARS CLEARED

Bangladesh has also met two new QPC conditions on arrears to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the energy and fertiliser sectors.

By June, foreign dues were required to be below \$870 million and domestic arrears below Tk 28,070 crore.

Foreign arrears stood at \$314 million and local Tk 18,000 crore in June, officials said.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed

last week said the government cleared \$5 billion foreign dues, including to Adani and Chevron, and even \$200 million in fertiliser import bills.

The \$5 billion cleared in foreign dues included \$3.5 billion accumulated during the previous government’s tenure, a senior finance ministry official said.

On the domestic side, Tk 89,000 crore in subsidies was allocated last fiscal year to settle SOE arrears, funded by cuts to the Annual Development Programme and savings in other budget areas.

IMF CONCERNS

Besides reserves and arrears, Bangladesh has met two other mandatory conditions, according to finance ministry officials.

By June, around 18 other programme benchmarks were also due for review by the IMF mission later this month.

The finance ministry official said Bangladesh has met most of these conditions.

Even so, Zahid Hussain said the IMF may express discomfort on two issues: the central bank’s dollar purchases and a recent circular on rescheduling default loans.

Bangladesh slates Israeli interception of Sumud Flotilla

FROM PAGE 1

Gaza and the West Bank, respect international humanitarian law, and immediately cease what it described as a genocidal war and humanitarian blockade in Gaza.

“Israel must allow unhindered access to Gaza,” said the statement, adding that the flotilla symbolised global solidarity with the Palestinian people, who continue to be denied their fundamental rights to life, dignity, and livelihood.

“The government and people of Bangladesh stand in unwavering solidarity with the people of Palestine in this hour of grave distress and continued suffering,” the statement added.

Insecurity grips

FROM PAGE 1

Most of the roadside shops were open, but a sense of fear was still lingering among the people.

The alleged incident took place when the eighth grader was returning home from private tuition around 9:00pm. Her father filed a case the next morning with Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station against three unidentified men.

A man named Shayan Sheel was arrested in connection with the case. However, the accused’s mother Swaraswati Sheel alleged that her son was implicated falsely.

Protests and violence erupted over the incident under the banner of Jumma Chhatra Janata. Amid the violence, three people were shot dead and at least four others were injured on September 28.

Eastern coast sinking faster as sea level rises

FROM PAGE 1

eastern and western coasts, Ashraf Dewan, the lead researcher of the study, said the eastern plains of Chattogram and Cox’s Bazar are witnessing rapid urbanisation and large-scale infrastructural projects like the Matarbari Power Plant.

Construction and deep piling for these projects are contributing to subsidence in the region. Tidal range is also higher there, said Ashraf, also a professor at Curtin University in Australia.

By contrast, the western region, dominated by expansive mangrove forests, has seen less human intervention and lacks dense urban structures, with most of the land used for agriculture.

“In the west, the Sundarbans acts as a buffer, a natural shield... But in the east, most of the land is flat and vulnerable, apart from the hills,” he told The Daily Star.

He also pointed out that a few areas, including Chattogram’s Sadarghat and Teknaf are experiencing a land uplift as the eastern region is a tectonically active zone.

Ashraf said the findings carry urgent implications. “Since our infrastructure is not climate-resilient, many along the eastern coast will gradually be damaged and unusable in the future if the issue is not addressed immediately.”

He warned that farmlands could be submerged and crop yields may decline, endangering the livelihoods of millions.

THE FINDINGS

The study, titled “Estimating Vertical Land Motion-Adjusted Sea Level Rise in a Data-sparse and Vulnerable Coastal Region”, drew on decades of tide gauge records, satellite altimetry, and radar-based remote sensing to measure the changes in both sea levels and vertical land motion.

It flagged changes in tidal range, which is increasing in many coastal

REASONS

- Urban sprawl, mega projects in Ctg, Cox’s Bazar
- Deep piling, construction accelerating land subsidence
- Melting glaciers, warming oceans, sediment loss driving rise
- Human interventions like embankments, polders altering water flow

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop zone-specific climate adaptation strategies
- Incorporate climate data into infrastructure planning
- Regular monitoring using satellites, ground measurements
- Strengthen disaster preparedness tailored to each region
- Conduct proper risk assessments before interventions

areas. Amplified high tides mean greater risks of flooding and erosion, with the eastern coast showing the most pronounced effects.

Researchers noted that melting glaciers, warming oceans,

groundwater extraction, sediment loss, and natural ground shifts are driving the rise, while monsoons and air pressure changes cause short-term fluctuations.

Human interventions such as polders and embankments have further disrupted water flow, altered tidal patterns, and reshaped sediment movement, they added.

CALL FOR LOCALISED ACTION
Stressing the need for localised solutions, Ashraf said, “Our combined data on land subsidence and sea level rise highlight an urgent need for targeted climate adaptation and infrastructure planning in vulnerable regions like Bangladesh.

Blanket policies will not work in a landscape where sea level rise, land motion, and tidal behavior vary widely, Ashraf said, calling for regular satellite and ground monitoring.

“When infrastructure is designed, climate information must be incorporated at the planning stage. Otherwise, at some point, it will no longer withstand the pressure,” he said, adding that disaster preparedness and climate adaptation strategies should also be tailored to the unique conditions of each zone.

Nandan Mukherjee, director at Binks Sustainability Institute in the UK, said that risk assessment remains a missing link.

He said the authorities must first measure and assess risks before taking any steps, especially for those working at the grassroots level.

“One of our biggest knowledge gaps is that we often confuse risk with vulnerability. The first and most essential task is to identify where the risks are, the level at which they exist, and the timeframe over which they may pose a threat – only then can we respond appropriately,” added Nandan, also a teacher at the University of Dundee in the UK.

Israel seizes last boat

FROM PAGE 1

Israel’s foreign ministry yesterday said that it deported four Italian activists who were on board the flotilla, adding that “the rest are in the process of being deported”.

Israeli police said “more than 470 flotilla participants were taken into custody by the military police, subjected to rigorous screening, and transferred to the prison administration”.

Authorities earlier said that none of the vessels had breached its maritime blockade of the territory.

“Marinette, the last remaining boat of the Global Sumud Flotilla, was intercepted at 10:29am (0729 GMT) local time, approximately 42.5 nautical miles from Gaza,” the flotilla organisers said on Telegram.

They added that Israeli naval forces had “illegally intercepted all 42 of our vessels – each carrying humanitarian aid, volunteers, and the determination to break Israel’s illegal siege on Gaza”.

Among those detained from the flotilla were more than 20 journalists, according to media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF), including reporters from Spain’s El Pais, Qatar’s Al Jazeera and Italy’s public broadcaster RAI.

“Arresting journalists and preventing them from doing their work is a serious violation of the right to inform and be informed,” said Martin Roux, head of RSF’s crisis desk.

WORLDWIDE PROTESTS

The interception of the final boat came as a general strike was held across Italy in solidarity, disrupting trains and port traffic.

Over 200,000 people protested across Italy yesterday, condemning the treatment of the Global Sumud Flotilla.

Worldwide protests erupted Thursday, including in Barcelona, where the flotilla began its voyage, and where about 15,000 people marched chanting slogans including “Gaza, you are not alone”, “Boycott Israel” and

Typhoon death toll in Vietnam tops 50

AFP, Hanoi

The death toll from Typhoon Bualoi in Vietnam rose above 50, the government said Friday, with more than a dozen people still missing days after the storm triggered widespread flooding.

Bualoi slammed into central Vietnam late Sunday with winds of 130 kilometres (80 miles) per hour,

Finland dismisses case over Baltic cable cuts

AFP, Helsinki

A Helsinki court on Friday dismissed a case against three members of a ship from Russia’s “shadow fleet” suspected of cutting Baltic Sea cables, saying it was beyond its jurisdiction.

The captain and two senior officers of the Cook Islands-registered oil tanker Eagle S were accused of dragging the anchor on the seabed for around 90 kilometres (56 miles), damaging five undersea cables in the Gulf of Finland on December 25, 2024.

The EstLink 2 power cable and four telecommunications cables connecting Finland and Estonia were damaged, one of several similar incidents last year.

With tensions mounting around the Baltic Sea since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, many experts and political leaders have viewed the suspected sabotage as part of a “hybrid war” by Russia against Western countries.

The Helsinki District Court said it was “dismissing the charge in the case involving the tanker Eagle S along with the claims for damages... as it was not possible to apply Finnish criminal law”.

Prosecutors had argued the captain, Davit Vadatchkoria of Georgia, and senior officers Robert Egizaryan, a Georgian, and Santosh Kumar Chaurasia from India, neglected their duties intentionally, after leaving the Russian port of Ust-Luga.

The three were charged with “aggravated criminal mischief and aggravated interference with communications”.

Mystery drones fly over Belgian military base

AFP, Brussels

Unidentified drones flew over a military training base in eastern Belgium, near the German border, Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken said yesterday.

The sightings came after several airspace violations by Russian drones in European skies and mysterious drones flying over Denmark late last month before two gatherings of European leaders in Copenhagen.

“Several drones were spotted by local police, both on the Belgian side and on the German side,” the minister told broadcaster RTBF, adding that an investigation had been launched.

Francken said he did not know how many drones had flown or where they came from.

The drones flew over Elsenborn military base overnight Thursday to Friday, a spokeswoman for the defence minister told AFP.

“We are checking, we are looking into what happened, but at this stage, we don’t have more details,” she added.

Nation to pay tribute to Ahmad Rafique today

BSS, Dhaka

Condolences continued to pour in following the death of Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafique.

Ahmad Rafique, also a poet, essayist and Rabindra specialist, breathed his last on Thursday night while undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit of BIRDEM Hospital in the city. He was 96.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafique.

In a condolence message yesterday, Yunus said, "Ahmad Rafique was a prominent witness and a fierce voice of our Language Movement. Simultaneously, he was an exceptional poet, essayist, researcher, and a guiding light in Rabindra studies."

Through writing and editing more than a hundred books, Ahmad Rafique enriched Bangla literature, culture, and the history of the Language Movement, he added.

His contributions in the field of Rabindra studies earned him equal respect in both Bengalis, the chief adviser said, adding, the Tagore Research

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



A mother and father break down in tears while speaking to relatives about their child's health, as he suffers from dengue. It was the third consecutive day of blood tests, with his platelet count still low and his body weak. The photo was taken at the DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

YUNUS AT UNGA Press secretary outlines 6 key achievements

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday highlighted six major achievements during Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' recent tour to the UNGA.

Prof Yunus led Bangladesh's high-level delegation to the 80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York last week, where he addressed the international community, held bilateral meetings with world leaders, and outlined Bangladesh's vision for democracy, humanitarian leadership, and future economic cooperation.

He returned home on Thursday morning.

The press secretary shared a summary of Prof Yunus' UNGA tour achievements.

A MESSAGE OF DEMOCRATIC COMMITMENT

In his address to the General Assembly, Prof Yunus reaffirmed Bangladesh's unwavering commitment to democracy, transparency, and inclusive governance.

Highlighting the government's preparations for free, fair, and participatory elections, he assured the global community that

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Ongoing rains may worsen dengue crisis

Experts warn of extended dengue peak

HELEMUL ALAM

Ongoing rainfall in October is expected to intensify the risk of dengue, with experts warning the situation may worsen in the coming months.

Last year, dengue peaked in October, remained prominent in November, and began declining in December. Experts fear the current rainfall pattern may lead to a similar or worse trend this year.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), light to heavy showers will continue for the next five days.

Between October 5 and 8, most divisions, including Chattogram, Sylhet, Dhaka and Rajshahi, are likely to see light to moderate rain, with some moderately heavy falls.

A BMD warning further stated that heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in several divisions during the 48 hours from 3:00pm on October 2 under the influence of a deep depression over the Bay.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), dengue claimed at least 575 lives last year, with 1,01,214 hospitalisations.

The monthly breakdown shows 14 deaths and 2,669 cases in July, 30 deaths and 6,521 in August, 87 deaths and 18,097 in September, 135 deaths and 30,879 in October, 173 deaths and 29,652 in November, and 87 deaths and 9,755 in December.

This year so far, 202 people have died and over 48,491 have been hospitalised. DGHS reported 41 deaths and 10,684 cases in July, 39 deaths and 10,496 in August, 75 deaths and 15,866 in September, and four deaths with 886 cases in the first three days of October.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said the recent rains may reverse the declining trend seen in August. "On-and-off rainfall creates breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes. Even light showers significantly increase populations," he said.

Mosquito populations expand quickly after rainfall, with a 15 day to one-month growth window, he said, adding, "If Aedes mosquitoes get a week after rain, a new generation emerges. Once matured, they can survive another 22-23 days, remaining infectious throughout that period."

Rahman stressed the need for personal protection measures -- nets, repellents, coils and sprays -- alongside targeted fumigation in hotspot areas.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure year-round mosquito control programmes

Step up hotspot monitoring and source reduction

Strengthen community awareness and participation

Improve household-level cleanliness and waste management

Use targeted fumigation in high-risk zones

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University warned that the dengue peak may be prolonged due to continuing rain, urging intensified source reduction, hotspot control and community engagement.

Brig Gen Imru-al-Quais, chief health officer

of Dhaka North City Corporation, said patient lists from DGHS often contain incomplete or misleading addresses, sometimes including patients from outside Dhaka, such as Gazipur or Narayanganj. This, he said, diverts attention from actual hotspots inside the capital.

Spraying insecticide alone cannot control mosquitoes, he noted, stressing waste management and public awareness.

DNCC initiatives include patient data collection, hotspot marking, source-reduction programmes with BRAC, a dengue dashboard with rainfall-based risk models, and advocacy campaigns through imams, schools and volunteers.

According to DNCC, current measures include collecting patient data and marking hotspots, using community surveys, deploying traps, and conducting source-reduction programmes with BRAC volunteers. DNCC has also launched a dengue dashboard showing hotspots, predictive models and rainfall-based risk analysis, alongside a chatbot for symptoms and free testing at 52 urban primary health centres.

Nishat Parvin, chief health officer at DGHS, said their activities include larviciding, adulticiding, and awareness campaigns.

"We spray outside houses, but dengue mosquitoes often breed indoors, in hidden spots or seemingly clean areas. Without household awareness, controlling them is very difficult," she said.

Parvin added that while resources are sufficient, public participation remains weak. "People know what to do but don't always follow through. That's why we've strengthened both large-scale and small-scale campaigns."

She said the most vulnerable areas include parts of Old Dhaka, where abandoned or waterlogged houses harbour breeding grounds.

"Dengue won't disappear, but with year-round programmes, we can keep it under control," she said.

Child's body recovered after Turag boat capsized Another still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Divers from the fire service yesterday recovered the body of one of the two children who went missing after a boat capsized in the Turag river in Gazipur's Kaliakair upazila on Thursday evening.

The body of Ankita Rani, 2, daughter of Swapan from the Hijaltali area, was recovered around 10:00am, said Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Kaliakair Police Station.

Another child, Tanmoy Moni Das, 7, son of Tapash from the same area, remains missing. A search operation is ongoing to recover his body, said Iftekhar Hossain Raihan, station officer of Kaliakair Fire Service.

The incident occurred on Thursday around 5:30pm during immersion of a Durga idol on the west side of Chapair Bridge.

A small engine-powered boat carrying the children and their families collided with a larger boat and sank. While other passengers managed to swim ashore, Ankita and Tanmoy went missing.

22-day ban on hilsa fishing begins



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The government has imposed a 22-day ban on catching, transporting, storing, selling, and marketing hilsa across the country to ensure safe spawning of the fish during its peak breeding season.

The ban took effect from midnight yesterday and will continue until October 25, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock on September 24.

In Patuakhali, where around 80,020 fishermen are registered, some 75,043 will receive 25kg of rice each as government assistance during the ban, said the district fisheries office.

To enforce the restriction, the district administration has taken up several initiatives, including awareness campaigns, distribution of leaflets and posters, and loudspeaker announcements at markets, riversides, and coastal areas. Fishermen have been instructed to keep their trawlers and nets away from rivers and estuaries during this period, said Md Kamrul Islam, district fisheries officer.

38 rescued from traffickers in Teknaf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A joint operation by the Bangladesh Coast Guard and Navy rescued 38 people, including women and children, from human traffickers in the remote hills of Baharchhara in Teknaf early yesterday.

Two alleged traffickers were also detained during the raid.

Lieutenant Commander Siam-ul-Haque, media officer of the Coast Guard, said the operation was launched around 2:00am following intelligence reports. During the raid, security forces rescued 18 women, 12 men, and eight children from a hideout.

Traffickers were planning to send them to Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries by sea, he said. "The victims were being held captive, tortured, and extorted for ransom by the traffickers."

'No legal barrier to implementing July Charter'

Says attorney general

UNB, Dhaka

Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman yesterday said there is no legal barrier to implementing the July Charter in line with the decision of the National Consensus Commission.

He made the remark while attending a views-exchange meeting with journalists at Johan Dream Valley Park in Jhenaidah town.

The attorney general also said the government will take decisions regarding officials who were involved in major crimes during the Awami League regime, considering their offences.

Asked whether a neutral election is possible under the current administration, he said the Election Commission is aware of the matter and he believes it will form a neutral administration ahead of the polls.

AZIZ SUPER MARKET Factions clash over committee, lock market gates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most shops at the Aziz Super Market near the capital's Shahbagh remained closed since yesterday afternoon due to tension between two factions over the formation of the Shop Owners' Association Committee.

After Juma prayers yesterday, the market's main gates were found locked, prompting many traders to close their shops and leave. Shahbagh police later arrived and opened the gates.

The Daily Star contacted employees of five different shops -- all confirmed that their stores did not reopen in the afternoon.

"There has been tension between the two groups for some days. The market was closed yesterday [Thursday]. Although it opened today [yesterday], trouble started again at noon. The committee leaders then locked the market gates," one shop employee said.

Khalid Mansur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, told The Daily Star, "One faction is not accepting the committee. This is the source of the conflict."

He said that police went to the spot around 3:00pm and unlocked the gates.

"I have learned that the two factions will hold a meeting tomorrow [today] to resolve the dispute," the OC added.



A woman desperately searches for plastic scraps as the sun sets at the Sylhet City Corporation dumping zone in Parirchak, Dakshin Surma. She scavenges for items to sell and survive. More than 100 men and women from different communities comb such dumping zones from morning till evening to make ends meet.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Crocodile attack sparks fear among fishers in the Sundarbans

PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY, Bagerhat

The recent death of a fisherman in a crocodile attack in the Sundarbans has triggered fear among locals, who are demanding stronger safety measures before venturing into the rivers and canals of the mangrove forest.

On September 30, Subrata Mondal, 32, of Khulna's Dacope upazila, was catching crabs when a crocodile dragged him into a canal. Fellow fishermen recovered his body nearly seven hours later.

While such incidents are not uncommon, awareness and safety practices remain inadequate, fishermen said.

"We are helpless. Fishing is our only livelihood. We know the risks, but there is no alternative," said Akkas Sheikh, a fisherman from Kachua.



Pasur river waterkeeper Md Noor Alam Sheikh said the crocodile population has increased, partly due to the Karamjal breeding programme.

Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, divisional forest officer of the East Sundarbans Division, said Subrata was attacked near Karamjal, close to a nesting site.

"Due to increased restrictions this year, the area was undisturbed, allowing a crocodile to lay eggs there for the first time. The fisherman entered the water exactly where the crocodile was guarding its nest. He would have been safe if he had remained on land or in his boat."

Rezaul stressed the ecological importance of predators. "Crocodiles and tigers are the guardians of the forest's water and land respectively. Their presence is essential for protecting the Sundarbans' resources."

Woman hacked to death in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A woman was hacked to death allegedly by a neighbour in Monirampur upazila of Jashore on Thursday evening.

The deceased was identified as Tripti Mondal, 38, wife of Abanish Mondal of Krishnabati village.

A neighbour, Shankar Mondal, 55, allegedly attacked Tripti with sharp weapons near her house and left her critically injured before fleeing the scene, said Md Babulur Rahman Khan, officer-in-charge of Monirampur Police Station quoting locals.

Tripti was initially taken to Monirampur Upazila Health Complex and then to Jashore General Hospital. As her condition worsened, she was being shifted to Dhaka, but died on the way. Her husband alleged that Shankar had long been making advance on his wife and attacked her as she rejected him.

A murder case was filed with Monirampur Police Station accusing Shankar yesterday evening.



Two dead as truck rams auto-rickshaw in Gazipur

3 of a family injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least two persons died and three others were injured as a truck rammed into a CNG-run auto-rickshaw coming from opposite direction in Kaliganj upazila of Gazipur on Thursday night.

The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately, said Inspector Ashraful Islam of Kaliganj Police Station.

The injured are Hafizur, 40, his wife S a l m a Begum, 35, and their son Tamim, 4. All of them were passengers of the auto-rickshaw.

The incident occurred around 9:00pm in Deopara Chattar area on Tongi-Ghorashal bypass road when the truck hit the auto-rickshaw, leaving two passengers dead on the spot.

OBITUARY

Ziauddin Ahmed, Former General Manager, Bangladesh Telephone & Telegraph Board Died on 29 September 2025 in a Hospital. Please Pray for his Departed Soul.

Family Members



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Sand extraction continues in the Padma river in Rajshahi, with dredging taking place day and night, even from protective embankments meant to safeguard this erosion-prone area. Such indiscriminate extraction is damaging the river and embankments, leading to severe erosion that threatens nearby homes. The photo was taken from the Bidhirpur area in Godagari upazila yesterday.

Renovated rail track left unused for 20 months

Officials trade blame while garbage covers unused line

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

A renovated railway track at Chattogram's Soloshohor Junction has remained unused for 20 months since its completion, raising serious questions over planning and accountability.

Track-4 at the junction was renovated under a project to enhance the station's capacity and ease train movement. Instead, it has become a dumping ground, with piles of waste and soil covering much of it and making it impossible for trains to use.

A floating kitchen market encroaches on its upper portion daily.

According to documents, the railway's engineering department renovated two similar tracks at the junction, including this one, at a cost of Tk 99 lakh. The work was carried out by construction firm Namira Trading between June and December 2023.

Soloshohor Junction is a key connecting point under the Eastern Railway, serving at least 12 pairs of passenger and oil-laden trains daily on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar, Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar, Chattogram-Chittagong University, and Nazirhat routes.

Of the five tracks at the junction, only three are currently in operation.

Abdul Hanif, former engineer of Chattogram Railway Division who oversaw the project, said, "Before train services



started on the Cox's Bazar route, the railway's traffic department requested us to renovate the line."

A staff of the junction said, "The entire money spent on renovating the line has gone to waste as no initiative has been taken to use it in the past 20 months."

Officials of the railway's traffic and engineering departments gave conflicting statements over the matter.

Zillur Rahman, sub-assistant engineer of Soloshohor Junction section, said, "The line is fit for operating trains, but the traffic department is yet to start using it."

Arifur Rahman, master of Soloshohor Junction, claimed, "We have a shortage of

rail tracks for trains during shunting, but we are yet to receive any official message from the engineering department to use the renovated line."

Under railway rules, the engineering department is responsible for making train lines operational.

Asked why the line had turned into a dumping ground, Zillur Rahman said, "Even if the line is cleaned, it soon gets filled up with wastes again since no train runs on it."

Contacted, Chattogram Divisional Railway Manager ABM Kamruzzaman said, "I am not aware of this matter. If any department neglects its responsibility and causes the loss of public property even after renovation, action will be taken against them according to the rules."



ECO-TOURISM IN BARGUNA

Neglect dims Harin Ghata's charm

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The once-pristine Harin Ghata eco-tourism site in Barguna's Patharghata upazila is steadily losing its appeal due to prolonged neglect and lack of maintenance.

Situated at the estuary where the Payra, Bishkhali, and Baleshwar rivers meet the Bay of Bengal, Harin Ghata is known for its serene beaches, dense mangrove forests, and diverse wildlife – including over 500 spotted deer, after which the area is named.

Visitors are drawn to its tranquil environment, the melodic chirping of birds, and the rare opportunity to witness sunrise and sunset from the same location.

Developed in 2015 as an eco-tourism site under the initiative of the environment ministry, the forest area features walking trails, rest houses, watchtowers, and shaded huts.



The Forest Department collected Tk 1.2 lakh in revenue from ticket sales over the past year. However, visitor numbers have dropped sharply as much of the infrastructure has fallen into disrepair.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found parts of the foot trail broken, with slabs missing and wooden bridges in precarious condition. The suspension bridge inside the forest shook dangerously when walked upon. Plaster is peeling from structures including the watchtower and rest areas.

Local businesses are also suffering. "We now have better hotels and restaurants, but hardly any customers," said Jasim, a tea vendor near the forest entrance. "The access road is in poor condition, and the broken bridge inside deters repeat visits."

Tourists expressed disappointment as well. "The natural beauty here is unmatched, but the broken trails and lack of facilities are disappointing. Authorities should act immediately," said Shirin Sultana Rakhi, a visitor from Bakerganj.

Abdul Hai, the local forest beat officer, said, "Many structures were damaged during Cyclone Remal. We've been reporting the situation regularly to our higher-ups. We hope repairs will begin soon."

Assistant Conservator of Forests for the Coastal Forest Division in Patuakhali, Tarikul Islam, said a Tk 48-crore project titled Biodiversity Conservation and Eco-Tourism Development Project has been proposed under the ministry. Once funding is secured, major improvements will be made not only in Harin Ghata but also across other protected forest areas in Patuakhali and Barguna.

He said plans include mangrove afforestation on 2,500 hectares, enhancement of 1,000 hectares of existing forest, plantations of nipa palm and casuarina on hundreds of hectares, and the creation of flower gardens, ornamental tree plantations, and coconut and betel nut groves.



A farmer cuts and collects water hyacinths from his field. Heavy rainfall in the month of Ashwin has left large portions of farmland waterlogged. To protect Aman paddy seedlings, the farmer has to remove the water hyacinths from the plant beds. The photo was taken in Uzirpur upazila of Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS



“We are closely monitoring the rising militarisation of Europe... The response to such threats will be very significant. Russia will never show weakness or indecisiveness.

VLADIMIR PUTIN
Russian president



Demonstrators take cover using riot police shields as they clash with the police during a rally commemorating the 57th anniversary of the 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre in Mexico City yesterday.

PHOTO:AFP

Notion of a safe zone in south Gaza farcical: UN

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday insisted there was no safe place for Palestinians ordered to leave Gaza City, and that Israeli-designated zones in the southern Gaza Strip were “places of death”.

Since launching its air assault on Gaza City in August ahead of its ground offensive there, the Israeli military has repeatedly told Palestinians to head south.

“The notion of a safe zone in the south is farcical,” James Elder, a spokesman for the UN children’s agency UNICEF, told journalists in Geneva.

Speaking from Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, Elder pointed to how “bombs are dropped from the sky with chilling predictability; schools, which had been designated as temporary shelters are regularly reduced to rubble, (and) tents... are regularly engulfed in fire from air attacks”.

The Israeli military has urged Palestinians to relocate to a “humanitarian area” in Al-Mawasi on the coast, where it says aid, medical care and humanitarian infrastructure will be provided.

TRUMP’S GAZA PEACE PLAN

UN experts fear more oppression

AFP, Geneva

Dozens of UN experts yesterday cautioned that key elements of US President Donald Trump’s peace plan for Gaza were inconsistent with international law and risked deepening oppression of Palestinians.

“Imposing an immediate peace at any price, regardless of or brazenly against law and justice, is a recipe for further injustice, future violence and instability,” 35 United Nations independent experts said in a statement.

They voiced serious concerns about more than a dozen aspects of the 20-point plan unveiled by the US president last week, and backed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The experts, who are mandated by the UN Human Rights Council but who do not speak on behalf of the United Nations, said they “welcome part of the peace plan”.

They hailed the demand for a permanent ceasefire, the rapid release of unlawfully detained people, and an influx of aid.

And they celebrated the call for no forced displacement from Gaza, no annexation of the territory and the withdrawal of Israeli forces.

However, they warned that other elements of the plan were “deeply inconsistent with fundamental rules of international law”.

The experts, including Francesca Albanese, the special rapporteur on rights in the Palestinian territory, insisted that any peace plan needed to ensure self-determination and accountability, and “not create further conditions of oppression”.

They slammed the plan’s call for a transitional “Board of Peace” in Gaza, which would be chaired by Trump himself, saying it was “regrettably reminiscent of colonial practices and

must be rejected”.

Similarly, the experts maintained that the proposed “International Stabilisation Force... would replace Israeli occupation with a US-led occupation, contrary to Palestinian self-determination”.

The plan would also leave partial Israeli occupation in place “indefinitely” through a security perimeter inside Gaza, which was “absolutely unacceptable”, they said.

At the same time, they decried that “de-radicalisation is imposed on Gaza only”, despite the fact that “anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab sentiments, radicalisation and public incitement to genocide have been hallmarks of dominant rhetoric in Israel over the past two years”.

The experts also warned that “amnesties offered to Hamas seem to be unconditional... denying justice for victims of international crimes”, while the plan failed to “address accountability at all for Israeli international crimes and human rights violations”.

“The future of Palestine must be in the hands of the Palestinian people,” the experts insisted.

“Not imposed by outsiders under extreme conditions of duress in yet another scheme to control their destiny.”



US kills four in new attack off Venezuela

AFP, Washington

US forces carried out a strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat off the coast of Venezuela yesterday, killing four people, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said.

Hegseth announced the latest strike -- which brings the number of such attacks to at least four, leaving at least 21 people dead -- in a post on X.

The latest military action comes after President Donald Trump’s administration said in a notice to Congress that he has declared that the United States is engaged in “armed conflict” with drug cartels.

INDONESIA SCHOOL COLLAPSE

Death toll rises to 13

AFP, Sidoarjo

The death toll in an Indonesian school collapse rose to 13 on Friday, officials said, but dozens were still believed buried under the rubble without signs of life days after the disaster.

Distraught families have been waiting anxiously near the site in the town of Sidoarjo, on Indonesia’s island of Java, hoping to receive any news of their loved ones since the building collapsed on Monday.

Part of the multi-storey boarding school collapsed suddenly as students gathered for afternoon prayers.

The head of the search and rescue office in the nearby city of Surabaya, Nanang Sigit, told reporters that “in total we found eight bodies” on Friday.

“We have evacuated 116 people; 13 of them were found dead,” he said.

Officials had said 59 people were feared missing before the eight bodies were found.

Some families gathered at the site expressed a desire to join the rescue operation because they wish to hold funerals for their loved ones.

In Islamic teachings, burials of the dead must take place as soon as possible.

Families have been able to follow the search and clearing work live on a television screen set up near the site.

The school collapse was so violent it sent tremors across the neighbourhood, according to residents.

Investigators have been looking into the cause of the collapse, but initial signs pointed to substandard construction, experts have said.

The rescue operation is complex because vibrations happening in one place can affect other areas, officials said.



PHOTO:REUTERS

Members of a forensic team work outside the Manchester synagogue, where multiple people were killed on Yom Kippur in what police have declared a terrorist incident, in north Manchester, Britain, yesterday. British police yesterday said they accidentally shot a victim who died in the attack on a synagogue in Manchester, as well as one of the survivors, as they attempted to stop an attacker who appeared to be wearing an explosive belt.

Trump sets Sunday deadline for Hamas

FROM PAGE 1

On the ground on Friday, Gaza’s civil defence agency reported heavy air bombardment and artillery shelling on Gaza City.

At least 49 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, including 31 in Gaza City alone, according to medical sources speaking to Al Jazeera.

The Israeli military is waging an air and ground offensive on the territory’s largest urban centre, from which hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee.

The UN yesterday reiterated there was no safe place in Gaza and that Israel-designated zones in the south were “places of death”.

Amnesty International condemned a “catastrophic wave of mass

displacement” as Israel intensified its Gaza City offensive.

The rights group said hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom had already been displaced multiple times, were being forced into “overcrowded enclaves in the south... that lack access to clean water, food, medical care, shelter and life-sustaining infrastructure”.

As Hamas mulled Trump’s peace plan this week, a Palestinian source close to the group’s leadership told AFP on Wednesday that the Islamist movement wanted to amend some clauses, including the one on disarmament.

Hamas leaders also want “international guarantees” for a full Israeli withdrawal and that no

assassination attempts would be made inside or outside Gaza, the source added.

Another source familiar with the negotiations told AFP that the group was split over Trump’s plan.

Structurally, the group’s leadership is divided between officials based in the Gaza Strip and those abroad, particularly in Qatar.

Much of Hamas’s leadership has also been wiped out in Israeli attacks throughout the war.

The source told AFP that “the first (opinion) supports unconditional approval, as the priority is a ceasefire under Trump’s guarantees, with mediators ensuring Israel implements the plan”.

“The second has serious reservations regarding key clauses...

They favour conditional approval with clarifications reflecting Hamas’s and the resistance factions’ demands,” the source added.

Hugh Lovatt, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said “ultimately it’s not just about convincing Hamas leadership in Doha, but also the leadership in Gaza, as well as Hamas members and fighters in Gaza”.

“Additionally, Hamas must then be able to convince other factions in Gaza,” he added.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed at least 66,288 Palestinians, according to health ministry figures in the Hamas-run territory that the United Nations considers reliable.

Candidates to get

FROM PAGE 12

be decided through the judicial process.”

Salahuddin also commented on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus’ interview with Zeteo journalist Mehdi Hasan in New York.

“At one stage of the interview, the chief adviser said, ‘The interim government’s time limit was not mentioned when it was formed. They themselves will decide this time limit. Some people want it to stay for 5, 10, even 50 years,’” he said.

It would have been better if the chief adviser did not raise this matter, the BNP leader said.

The chief adviser himself already fixed the time, announcing that the election will be held in February, not December, Salahuddin said. “We are waiting for the election schedule to be announced.”

UN-backed climate banking alliance ceases operations

AFP, Paris

The Net-Zero Banking Alliance, a UN-backed initiative seeking carbon neutral investments by banks, announced Friday its immediate shutdown -- at a time of faltering climate commitments in the United States and Europe.

Launched in 2021 under the UN Environment Programme’s Finance Initiative, the NZBA aimed to get banks to slash the carbon footprint of their loans and investments, and help drive the transition to a net-zero economy by 2050. At its peak, the group counted nearly 150 members.

Don't let malnutrition threaten our future

More targeted interventions required to address the crisis

It is concerning that Bangladesh is not making significant progress in reducing child malnutrition, despite its success in lowering infant and maternal mortality rates. Almost two-thirds of children under age five face food poverty in the country, while one-fifth experience extreme food poverty. This means a large number of young children don't get to eat sufficient amounts of breastmilk, eggs, dairy, grains and legumes, meat and fish, and vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables, as recommended by WHO and Unicef. As a result, 24 percent of children across the country suffer from stunting (shorter height for age), with the incidence being higher in urban slums, 11 percent from wasting (low weight for height), and 22 percent from underweight (low weight for age)—prevalence rates that carry high public health significance as per WHO.

While rising food prices have been limiting people's ability to provide nutritious meals to their families, early marriage is another key contributor to malnutrition. Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia. Adolescent mothers, mostly from low-income families and often suffering from anaemia and malnutrition themselves, give birth to underweight children with poor brain development. This leads to intergenerational malnutrition, with children suffering from stunting, wasting and underweight conditions. Stunting hampers learning ability and academic performance, which can put children at a disadvantage in adulthood and further entrench the cycle of poverty. Meanwhile, wasting weakens the immune system, placing children's lives at a greater risk, according to Unicef.

Although various measures have been taken over the years to address the root causes of malnutrition—such as poverty, lack of education, and inadequate healthcare—these efforts have largely focused on awareness-building. Experts now recommend scaling up direct intervention programmes. Currently, per capita nutrition spending stands at \$18, of which 98 percent is allocated to “nutrition-sensitive” programmes, and only two percent to direct nutrition interventions. Thankfully, the government has decided to restart the School Feeding Programme in government primary schools across 150 poverty-prone upazilas, providing children with eggs, UHT milk, bread rolls, bananas, and fortified biscuits five days a week.

However, according to a *Jugantor* report, the programme is already delayed and allegations of irregularities have surfaced in the tender process for food suppliers. The government must investigate these allegations and ensure that food quality and quantity are not compromised. Strict monitoring is essential to guarantee that the intended beneficiaries of the programme are not deprived. Additionally, separate interventions should be designed for urban slums, where stunting rates are especially high. Efforts such as maternal supplementation, promotion of breastfeeding, dietary diversity, and hygiene practices must be strengthened via frontline health workers. Finally, ministries including health, food, social welfare and education must coordinate effectively to ensure that the allocated resources are fully utilised and that programmes deliver the desired nutritional outcomes.

We must rethink healthcare wages

Low pay is fuelling brain drain, weakening the healthcare system

It is a matter of shame for this nation that its doctors and nurses get the lowest wages and benefits in South Asia. Despite carrying the burden of national healthcare services, their salaries lag far behind those of their regional peers. A recent policy dialogue revealed that, on average, a doctor in Bangladesh earns around Tk 3 lakh annually, while a nurse earns Tk 1.9 lakh. In contrast, doctors in India receive more than Tk 16 lakh, and those in Nepal get over Tk 10 lakh. Nurses in these countries also earn three to four times more than those in Bangladesh. Considering such disparities, it is not surprising to see the dissatisfaction among our medical professionals, the impact of which is already visible on service delivery.

The crisis has both domestic and international dimensions. Young professionals entering the field find that their years of training earn them a little more than a subsistence income, especially in the private sector, where entry-level salaries often range between Tk 18,000 and Tk 25,000. Many have to resort to long hours of private practice for survival. So, the lure of significantly higher pay abroad makes migration a rational choice. As a result, the country's healthcare system is suffering from not only a declining morale but also brain drain.

What makes this more concerning is the absence of a sector-specific pay framework. Doctors and nurses in the public sector are tied to a uniform national pay scale, which does not account for the specialised and life-saving nature of their work. In the private sector, on the other hand, there are no minimum standards, leaving salaries inconsistent and often exploitative. Experts have repeatedly called for a separate salary structure for the health sector, aligned with regional benchmarks. This must include performance-based incentives, allowances for those working in remote or high-risk areas, and enforceable minimum wage standards for the private sector. Such measures are essential not only to retain talent but also to protect patients from the consequences of an overworked, demoralised workforce.

The health of the nation rests squarely on those who deliver care. Failing to compensate them fairly is not only unjust, but is dangerously short-sighted. We cannot afford to lose our doctors and nurses to neglect. Without urgent reform, the quiet exodus of health professionals will continue, eroding one of the country's most vital public services.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Sputnik 1 launched by Soviet Union

On this day in 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, which orbited Earth until 1958. This mission inaugurated the Space Age and heightened Cold War competition between the USSR and the US.



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The new handbook on children's health and the environment, published recently by the Directorate General of Medical Education (DGME) in collaboration with Unicef, offers a harrowing tale of an invisible killer that is hidden in plain sight. Touted as the most polluted country in the world in 2023, with the unenviable reputation of its capital being the second most polluted city globally for four straight years, Bangladesh saw 235,000 deaths, including 19,000 children under age five in 2021. The tally does not even consider the quieter casualties: premature birth and pneumonia because of the pollutants which a child is born into, as well as autism, ADHD, and childhood leukaemia related to PM2.5 exposure.

Have you ever wondered why many households have nebulisers and why children are calling in sick more than ever? Every cough has an economic cost. The health sector thrives on the sick without any remorse. They make money as our children are forced to take medicines and supplements instead of food. They make money when aggressive medical interventions are administered. Conversely, pollution, responsible for many of these illnesses, is more than a health crisis. It is an economic time bomb. Sick children become less productive adults. Cognitive impairment from lead and PM2.5 exposure lowers learning outcomes, reducing lifetime earnings and workforce capacity. Repeated respiratory illness keeps parents away from work.

According to the World Bank, air pollution alone shaves off around three to four percent off of Bangladesh's GDP annually through lost productivity and healthcare costs. Crores of taka thus literally vanish in thin air. The impact of pollution on our children needs immediate attention from those who have come to power in a movement powered by the youth

and sacrifices made by many children. It is a time when the NGO/GO divide is at its thinnest in our known history to make pollution a top priority. So next time when we talk about Zero Carbon, we must take responsibility for some of the imported poison responsible for turning our country into an



Exposure to various pollutions is causing premature birth, a number of lifelong and fatal diseases, cognitive dysfunction, and even premature death of our children.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

environmentally hazardous one. The crisis is far deeper than pouring water from a glass jug, ignoring the plastic jars in which the water was brought into the venue.

Let us consider the imported toxicity disguised as industrialisation. We have opened our borders to industries that other nations have shut down for poisoning their people: tanneries, ship-breaking, toxic dyeing units, lead smelters, and informal e-waste recyclers. We allow plastics below global safety grades to be produced and then see the fashionable rejection of bottles by our leaders in public events. We flood our markets

dismantling the carcasses of other people's progress. Lead joins the rank of air to become another silent killer of our children. Unicef tells us over 3.5 crore Bangladeshi children have high blood lead levels, impacting their intelligence and emotional health. Every day, our children dance with disasters.

And who do you think is offering the dance beats? Our capital is a huge boombox where the average sound levels reach 119 dB, more than double the 55-dB limit advised by WHO. Seventy-five percent of that comes from traffic. Vehicles of our bosses and rulers are decorated

UN HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

Global community too diplomatic to find pragmatic solutions



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is a humanitarian policy analyst. He can be reached at ashrafjmcj@hotmail.com.

SHAIKH ASHRAF ALI

The High-Level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, held at the UN General Assembly Hall in New York on September 30, has once again confirmed that the Rohingya crisis, now in its eighth year since the 2017 exodus, remains one of the world's most protracted humanitarian tragedies. This was not just another diplomatic gathering, but an event that reaffirmed that the plight of over 10 lakh Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar has not been forgotten.

The conference achieved something concrete on the humanitarian front. Both the US and the UK announced fresh aid commitments, with the US pledging \$60 million and the UK \$36 million. When donor fatigue has become a pressing concern, this renewed commitment is significant. It reinforces the collective resolve to alleviate the immediate suffering of the Rohingya refugees while acknowledging Bangladesh's extraordinary burden as the host.

This conference was the result of consistent diplomatic effort. Bangladesh Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, during the 79th UNGA last year, appealed to the global community to sustain focus on the Rohingya crisis. His call bore fruit in the form of this high-level meeting—a clear diplomatic victory for Bangladesh. During his speech in this year's conference, Yunus laid out a seven-point plan

to address protection, repatriation, accountability, and sustainable development for the Rohingya.

The conference featured a long list of influential voices: UNGA President Annalena Baerbock, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, UN human rights chief Volker Türk, UN Special Envoy Julie Bishop, and representatives of over 20 member-states, including the US, the UK, Germany, Indonesia, and Bangladesh as well as the EU and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation representatives. The National Unity Government of Myanmar, the civilian government ousted by the military junta, was also given the platform to speak.

But silence can speak louder than words. The absence of China, India, Thailand, Malaysia, and Russia was glaring. These are countries that either host Rohingya or other displaced minorities or hold the geopolitical keys to resolving the crisis. Also absent was Myanmar's military junta, the very regime whose actions have forced more than 50 lakh people across Myanmar into displacement.

Many of the speeches were empathetic yet predictably cautious. The EU stressed that “we take a clear stance against measures that could lead to premature repatriation of Rohingya refugees in conditions that are not safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable.” The US reaffirmed its commitment by saying it will

continue to stand with the Rohingya refugees and other minorities who have suffered under the Myanmar military. These are welcome words, but they underscore the reality that rhetoric far outweighs enforcement.

Filippo Grandi captured the essence of the problem when he said, “The most important, however, is not to forget that this crisis originates

Bangladesh has little room for error. Hosting over 10 lakh refugees has placed immense social, economic and environmental strain, particularly on Cox's Bazar. Yet, Dhaka must tread carefully; any politically insensitive move risks destabilising delicate relations with Myanmar and alienating powerful neighbours. For Bangladesh, this is not just an abstract humanitarian crisis, but also a pressing question of national security, development, and regional diplomacy.

in Myanmar. And that is where the solution lies.” The problem is that under the UN Charter, the UN cannot interfere in a sovereign state's internal affairs unless the UN Security Council invokes Chapter VII and declares the situation a threat to international peace and security. But in practice, repeated attempts to pass binding resolutions have been blocked by China and Russia. This leaves the UN confined to humanitarian assistance, advocacy, and documentation—

with hydraulic horns and hooters to separate them from the mere mortals. Our emergency services use them as priority passes even when not required. Our construction works, microphone mania, and not to mention our street rage—all contribute to noise pollution. Experts believe that noise-induced stress raises cortisol, impairs learning, and can even affect foetal development. There will soon be a time when we will all be deaf to the crying of our own children.

As a developing country, we need to build a lot of basic infrastructure. The rapid urbanisation has initiated us into a race towards development. But that race does not have to be louder, dirtier, and faster. What good is a growth model that replaces GDP for oxygen? How beneficial are our bridges and skyscrapers when the next generation remains neurotoxic, asthmatic, or half-deaf? There are many models of “just transition” to progress. Implementing those models requires professional responsibility, integrity, and convictions.

Try to imagine 19,000 coffins in front of the Parliament House. Then do a cost-benefit analysis before you negotiate with the transport syndicate unwilling to retire unfit vehicles, before you convince the real estate moguls to comply with rules related to kilns, before you force factories to implement clean energy transitions. Quit assuming that drinking water from a glass as a public display discourages the use of substandard plastic and dyes. And how difficult is it to deploy community policing to create noise safe zones around schools? And how about greening the city to reduce both carbon and noise? With so many Formula 1 battery rickshaws in the city, we are so focused on protecting ourselves from physical harm that we often don't think of the e-waste: our discarded batteries, laptops, phones, and other gadgets. Can we expect a system of e-waste recycling from our eco-conscious government?

It is high time we included child health as a measurable indicator in every development project. As Prof Abu Jafor warned in the handbook, around 90 percent of brain development occurs in the first six or seven years of life. Pollute those years, and you pollute the nation's mind. And don't forget the tally of dead children that will stain our conscience forever.

worthy but ultimately insufficient tools.

Listening to the speeches, I could not help but notice the absence of Myanmar's immediate neighbours—India, China, Thailand, and Malaysia, countries that host hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees and other displaced minorities. These nations are not passive bystanders; they are active players whose policies shape the lives of Rohingya refugees. Without these regional actors, the conference could reaffirm principles but not chart practical pathways.

Russia's absence was equally significant. Moscow maintains warm ties with Myanmar's military rulers and has consistently wielded its veto to block stronger UNSC measures. For any meaningful progress, the participation or at least the acknowledgement of these actors is essential. Their absence risks reinforcing the perception that the conference was more about moral posturing than actionable diplomacy.

Bangladesh has little room for error. Hosting over 10 lakh refugees has placed immense social, economic and environmental strain, particularly on Cox's Bazar. Yet, Dhaka must tread carefully: any politically insensitive move risks destabilising delicate relations with Myanmar and alienating powerful neighbours. For Bangladesh, this is not just an abstract humanitarian crisis, but also a pressing question of national security, development, and regional diplomacy.

So, what comes next? Will this meeting open new doors to dialogue among Bangladesh, Myanmar, and regional interlocutors? Or will it simply add to the long list of international declarations that never move beyond paper? More than 50 lakh displaced people in Myanmar, including over 10 lakh Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, are waiting for an answer.

Bangladesh can't afford to remain a one-legged economy



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

Bangladesh likes to tell the world that it is marching towards middle-income prosperity. The numbers, at first glance, seem to prove the point. About \$30-40 billion worth of garment exports annually over the last few years. Millions of workers—mostly women—lifted out of poverty. A name etched on the global textile map. But scratch the surface, and the shine begins to fade. This is not the story of a balanced economy, but of one standing on one leg, wobbling under the weight of its own success.

The RMG sector has undoubtedly been a blessing for the country. But it has also become a curse. Today, more than 80 percent of the country's total export earnings come from one industry alone. When products from one sector, sold to a handful of buyers, underwrite your entire economy, what you have is not resilience, it is exposure.

Exposure to whom? To the West, primarily. The United States and the European Union together absorb the lion's share of Bangladesh's exports. They know it, and they use it. Market access comes wrapped with conditions: improve labour rights, clean up environmental practices, reform your politics. These demands sound noble—and often they are—but in practice they function as pressure points. When Washington or Brussels wants something, it can reach straight into the heart of Bangladesh's economy and twist.

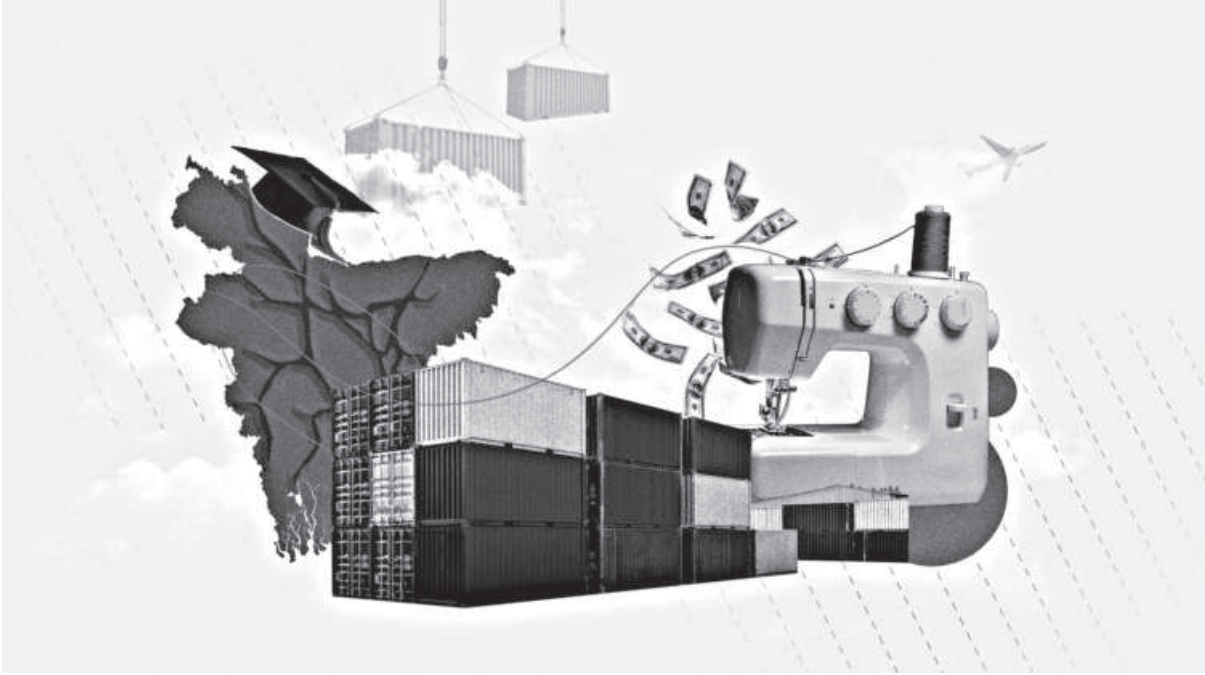
And if that weren't enough, the supply chain has its own irony.

Bangladesh sources most of its raw materials and machinery from China. But the finished products are shipped to the very markets that are not friendly to Beijing. That means Bangladesh is caught in the middle: dependent on China to produce, dependent on the West to sell. As the world polarises, Dhaka is left to juggle its diplomatic relations.

Graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status adds yet another complication. The tariff cushions that sheltered exports

When the US recently reduced tariffs, it was not an act of generosity. It was a transaction. In return, Bangladesh agreed to buy more American agricultural goods and aircraft. That is what happens when your economy is one-dimensional: your bargaining power collapses, and trade deals start to look more like ultimatums.

for decades are about to disappear. Once those vanish, Bangladesh will find itself in direct competition with Vietnam, India, and Indonesia—countries that did their homework



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

and diversified their export portfolios. While they built resilience, Bangladesh kept its eggs in one basket and called it development.

The consequences are already visible. When the US recently reduced tariffs, it was not an act of generosity. It was a transaction. In return, Bangladesh agreed to buy more American agricultural goods and aircraft. That is what happens when your economy is one-dimensional: your bargaining power collapses, and trade deals start to look more like ultimatums.

Economists have been warning for decades about the dangers of overreliance on the RMG sector. Successive governments have pledged diversification. Leather was touted as the next big thing. Frozen food once had promise. Agro-processing, IT services, pharmaceuticals, light engineering—all carried potential.

But none of these have been allowed to grow into true counterweights. Risk aversion and policy inertia kept everything else stunted.

The private sector is not without blame either. Too many entrepreneurs chose the comfort of garments over the challenge of new ventures. The profits were immediate, the risks minimal, the model already tested. Instead of spreading capital across industries, they funnelled it into the same familiar ground. Short-term gain became long-term vulnerability.

The irony is that the government even had a ready-made diversification plan. Back in 2017, the World Bank-backed Export Competitiveness for Jobs (EC4J) project was launched with a clear mandate: strengthen leather, footwear, plastics, and light engineering, and create 90,000 jobs. Since then, the project has become a case study in slow motion.

Delays in land acquisition. Delays in procurement. Blame passed from one desk to another. Meanwhile, costs ballooned from Tk 941 crore to Tk 1,264 crore, thanks partly to exchange rate changes. And what has happened to export dependence in all this time? It has increased: from 81.23 percent in FY17 to 81.49 percent in FY25. A project meant to diversify has coincided with even greater concentration.

Officials sound optimistic. Construction is nearly complete, tenders will be floated, machinery will be installed. Technology centres in Gazipur, Chattogram and Munshiganj will finally emerge. But even if they do, the delay has cost the country dearly. Each year wasted means more loans to repay in devalued local currency. Each year wasted means fewer industries developed before LDC graduation. Each year wasted means the RMG sector increasingly becomes the only

pillar holding up the economy.

This is the paradox of Bangladesh's growth story. The very sector that powered its rise is now the lever others can pull at will. Garments gave jobs, dignity, and foreign exchange—and also dependency, vulnerability, and imbalance. It is no longer a question of whether diversification is desirable. It is a question of whether survival without diversification is even possible.

The way forward is not to abandon the RMG sector. That would be folly. The industry will remain central to the country's economy for decades to come. The task is to build alongside it. Higher-value apparel products, technical textiles, IT-enabled services, pharmaceuticals, agro-processing, renewable energy technologies—all need investment, policy attention, and export promotion. And just as importantly, the export map must shift. The West will remain vital, but Asia, Africa, and the Middle East must be turned into real markets, not afterthoughts.

The window is closing fast. Graduation from the LDC status is not a distant prospect anymore—it is imminent. Tariff shields will fall away. Climate compliance will become a trade condition, not an option. Buyers will tighten standards on governance, labour rights, and carbon footprints. In this new world, a country that depends on one product and two buyers is not a rising economy; it is a hostage waiting to be taken.

Bangladesh has two choices. It can continue to wobble on one leg, hoping that the ground beneath it never shifts. Or it can learn to stand on two, three, even four legs, spreading its weight, balancing its risks. The time for promises and plans is over. Diversification is not an agenda item; it is an existential demand. Without it, Bangladesh's much-celebrated strength may yet prove to be its greatest weakness.

Global South must demand more than symbolic recognition for Palestine



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

ZAKIR KIBRIA

The dust rising from the rubble of Gaza has begun to settle in the Western power corridors. In a move that sent diplomatic shockwaves, the UK, Canada and Australia—core members of the US-led alliance and traditional shields for Israel—announced their recognition of Palestinian statehood. Portugal soon followed. The headlines bloomed with a sense of historic shift, a long overdue correction. But from the perspective of the Global South, particularly for nations like Bangladesh that have long stood in solidarity with Palestine, this moment demands a clear-eyed and critical interrogation.

For decades, the Palestinian struggle was relegated to the margins of Western diplomatic seriousness, often framed as a complex conflict rather than a straightforward case of colonial displacement and occupation. Nations in the Global South, many of whom won their own independence from colonial masters, saw through this obfuscation. They

recognised Palestine decades ago not as a bargaining chip but as an inalienable right. This latest wave of recognition from powerful Western states is, in one sense, a stunning admission that the Global South was right all along. It is a testament to the unyielding power of global public opinion, forged in the horror of over 60,000 deaths in Gaza (since October 7, 2023) and the relentless witnessing of a genocide live-streamed in real time.

These recognitions are a significant diplomatic defeat for Israel and its chief patron, the US. They formally legitimise the Palestinian right to self-determination on the pre-1967 borders and make it impossible to dismiss their aspirations as illegitimate. They are, undeniably, a symbolic victory wrested from the jaws of unimaginable suffering.

Yet, symbolism is the currency of the powerful when they wish to appear moral without incurring any cost. We must see this move for what it is not. It has not stopped the

bombs. It has not lifted the siege of Gaza. It does not dismantle a single illegal settlement in the West Bank. The Israeli government has already dismissed these recognitions as irrelevant, and they are correct in one chilling aspect: on the ground, nothing changes—the military occupation, the apartheid system, the relentless expansion of settlements.

This is where the gesture curdles into hypocrisy. The UK, even as it moved to recognise Palestine, continues to arm Israel. It has supplied the very weapons that have enabled the destruction we see in Gaza. This recognition, then, feels less like a principled stand and more like a cheap, cost-free act of reputation laundering. It allows these nations to don the cloak of morality while their hands remain stained. It is the equivalent of offering a bandage to a victim while continuing to supply the assailant with the knife.

As Palestinian scholar Joseph Massad has long argued, Western policy often seeks to manage the conflict rather than resolve it, perpetuating a cycle of violence that serves certain geopolitical interests. This recognition, without concrete action, fits neatly into that cynical framework.

The Global South, therefore, must not be placated. Our response should not be gratitude, but a strategic and unified demand for consequential action. We must accept their symbolic victory and immediately raise the stakes.

First, we must expose the double standard

with relentless clarity. When Russia launched the Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine, the West unleashed the most severe sanctions in modern history within days. Yet, in the face of a confirmed genocide, as ruled by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the responses to Israel have been tepid concern and continued arms sales. This double standard in the application of international law is glaring, and the Global South must be the primary accuser. We must weaponise this contradiction in every international forum, from the UN to regional blocs.

Second, we must lead where the West fails. Our role must be to pursue tangible justice, not symbolic gestures. This means i) vigorously supporting the cases at the ICJ and the International Criminal Court (ICC), providing political and legal backing to ensure these proceedings are not sabotaged by geopolitical pressure; ii) strengthening and expanding the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, using our collective economic weight to impose a cost for this oppression; and iii) demanding an immediate and total arms embargo on Israel from all nations and pushing for sanctions against officials responsible for war crimes.

Third, we must unite and amplify our voice. A fragmented response is easy to ignore. Through the African Union, the Arab League, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, we must coordinate a singular, powerful diplomatic front. A bloc representing billions

of people cannot be dismissed.

The path forward must also involve a radical shift in the discourse itself. We must begin to criminalise the denial of this genocide, much as the denial of the Holocaust is rightly condemned in many parts of the world. As Iranian-American scholar Hamid Dabashi has proposed, the denial of a genocide while it is still going on is not just an opinion, it is a form of complicity. It is a deliberate act of obscuring reality to allow the killing to continue. Making such denial a punishable offence would be a profound step in breaking the cycle of impunity and the disinformation that fuels it.

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, who has meticulously documented the ethnic cleansing of 1948, refers to Israel's actions as an "incremental genocide." The world can no longer plead ignorance. The recognitions from London, Ottawa and Canberra are a belated admission of this reality. But admissions are not absolution.

The true importance of this moment will be determined by what happens next. The Global South must seize this diplomatic opening not as an endpoint, but as a lever. We must use it to demand that words are finally transformed into action—that the bombs are stopped, the occupation is ended, and justice is delivered. The Palestinian people have waited more than seven decades for their freedom. They deserve more than a symbol.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

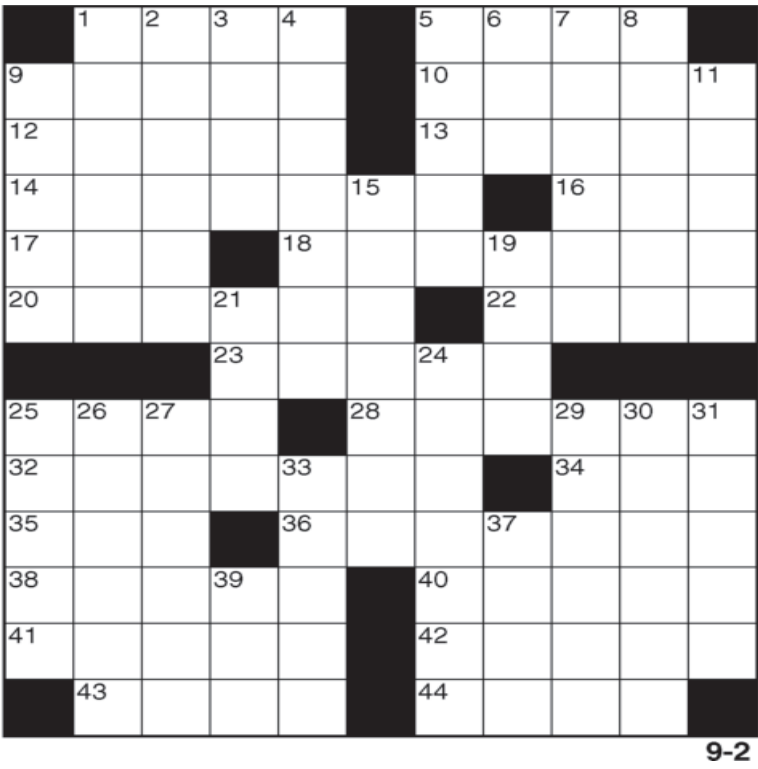
- 1 Deep cut
- 5 Bustles
- 9 Magna —
- 10 Silent performers
- 12 Singer Lavigne
- 13 Collectively
- 14 White-hot
- 16 "The Matrix" hero
- 17 Pie dish
- 18 Scared of
- 20 Corner
- 22 Takes advantage of
- 23 Town west of Philadelphia
- 25 Epic tale
- 28 "The Little Mermaid" villain
- 32 Senate event
- 34 Writer Anaïs
- 35 Go wrong
- 36 Getting close
- 38 Defame in print
- 40 Nary a soul
- 41 Unfaithful
- 42 Central

43 For fear that

- 44 Play group

DOWN

- 1 Surrendered
- 2 Unmitigated
- 3 Agitate
- 4 Nova Scotia port
- 5 Friendly señorita
- 6 Racket
- 7 Muscat natives
- 8 Moon goddess
- 9 Social group
- 11 Moves through mud
- 15 Sea god
- 19 Diamond scores
- 21 Bring up
- 24 Like some produce
- 25 Volume setting?
- 26 Reception aid
- 27 Missy
- 29 Labor groups
- 30 European finch
- 31 Fury
- 33 Cove
- 37 Writer Jaffe
- 39 Slalom maneuver



9-2

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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

NAWBA TAHIYA

eases into the spotlight

In an industry where young actors often crumble under the weight of early fame, Nawba Tahiya Hossain has managed to do something rare—grow naturally into the spotlight. Barely out of her teens, she has already carried dramas that racked up millions of views and made her OTT debut alongside big names. Her story begins at the premises of Bangladesh Shishu Academy, where a little girl once sat with other children on Thursdays, learning how to recite poems and speak with confidence.

NAVEEN ISLAM TOREE

"I was asked to host a show out of nowhere, and I just went with it. Looking back, I think it was a sign."

That "sign" turned into appearances on BTV children's programmes, then hosting, then dramas. Tahiya insists none of it was planned. "It wasn't my dream—it was my mother's vision," she reflects. "She wanted me to never stutter in anything—not in words, not in life."

For a time, she was simply another familiar face in lighthearted romantic dramas. But then came *Chupi Chupi*, written and directed by Imraul Rafat. Opposite Niloy Alamgir, Tahiya played the comedic female lead. The drama exploded, crossing 19 million YouTube views and trending at number one for two weeks.

That opportunity solidified her position as more than just another fresh face—it proved she could carry a project, and it introduced her to a far wider audience.

Her first step into streaming came with *Punormilone*, directed by Mizanur Rahman Aryan, where she acted alongside Siam Ahmed and Tasnia Farin. It could have been easy to be lost in such a star-heavy ensemble, but her role stood out.

After that, she has ventured into her recent project, the web film *Noya Note*, directed by Anonno Proteek Chowdhuri, which added fresh momentum to her career.

If there's one thing audiences notice, it's her refusal to overdo a role. Even in the web film, Tahiya plays her character with authenticity.

"If a rich girl falls for a middle-class boy, her accent shouldn't drip with money. It has to feel real," she said.

Unlike many child stars, Tahiya has never let her studies slip into the background. While talking about balancing her work and studies, she said, "I don't try to balance. When I study,

I only study; when I work, I only work. Even if I get home at 7 am from a shoot, I'll still open my books before class."

That matter-of-fact approach has made her stand out as a Gen Z actress who values education as much as professionalism.

In the past two years, the actress has often been paired with Partho Sheikh in audience-favorite dramas including *Mitthe Kabber Ful* and *Amar Thikana Tumi*. Their on-screen chemistry has sparked an online ship-culture, but she is careful to keep perspective.

"We're very good colleagues. We keep it professional because the audience loves us—but we both have our own lives."

For now, she's in no rush to make the jump to the silver screen. "I don't think I'm going to do films in the next five years," she says firmly. "I want to flourish here first—then earn my poster on every wall."

Her list of dream directors includes Shihab Shaheen, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, and Shalayet Mansoor Rana, whose *Closeup Kache Ashar Golpo* telefilms inspired her as a child.

From a girl reciting verses at Shishu Academy to a trending star of YouTube dramas and Chorki web films, Nawba Tahiya's rise has been natural. Guided by her mother's foresight, and admired for her honesty on-screen, she has become a Gen Z inspiration—one who doesn't chase fame but lets it come naturally.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Jokes in Progress-Comedy Open Mic
Oct 4 | 8 pm onwards
The Nest, 1/6, Noorjahan Road, Mohammadpur



Cosmic Anime Monsoon 2025
Oct 4 | 10 am onwards
Paragon Convention Hall, Dhanmondi



'The Human Voice' by Jean Cocteau
Oct 9-11 | 7 pm onwards
Alliance Française de Dhaka

TV TALKIES

DO YOU WANNA PARTNER

Do You Wanna Partner, now streaming on Amazon Prime, stars Tamannaah Bhatia and Diana Penty in a refreshing buddy comedy. The web series follows best friends Shikha (Tamannaah) and Anahita (Diana) as they take on

the challenge of launching their own craft beer brand in an industry largely dominated by men. With its mix of humour, friendship, and a dash of social commentary, this series makes it a fun watch for weekends.



WHAT'S PLAYING

'Tomake Bhulte Shomoy Lagbe'

by Joy Shahriar

After six years, singer-songwriter Joy Shahriar returns with *Tomake Bhulte Shomoy Lagbe (It Will Take Time to Forget You)*, the lead single from his upcoming album *Boka*. The track blends heartfelt vocals with intricate instrumentation, a sound that honours Bangladesh's rich musical storytelling tradition.

This marks Shahriar's fifth studio album. He's not just

the vocalist—he's the songwriter, composer, and creative force behind the project, collaborating with musicians like Tanim Hasan on bass, Mahaan Fahim on guitar, and Jalal Ahmed on flute.

As for the dedication? It's in the heart: Shahriar honours late poet Abul Hossain Khokon, weaving his verse into a deeply personal tribute.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Steve



Hulu
Chad Powers



Prime Video
Play Dirty



Chorki
Jaya Aar Sharmin



Apple TV+
The Lost Bus



STYLE STATEMENT

Mehazabien Chowdhury

At the special screening of her film *Saba*, Mehazabien Chowdhury won the audience with a look that redefined elegance. Draped in a regal saree by Anzara, featuring intricate patterns and rich textures, she struck the perfect balance between heritage and modern sophistication. Paired with a sleek blouse and complemented by jewelry from Elor, the ensemble exuded refined glamour. With flawless makeup by Zahid Khan Bridal Makeover and her graceful presence, Mehazabien carried the look with understated charm and timeless poise.



8 injured as BNP, Jamaat activists clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

At least eight people were injured in a clash between local leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat in Chandpur's Hajiganj upazila yesterday over the sharing of "distorted images" of two central BNP leaders on Facebook.

The incident took place in Palishara village of Gandharbypur North union. Several injured were admitted to upazila health complex and Chandpur General Hospital.

Kazi Jasim, former member secretary of Hajiganj Jubo Dal, said Gandharbypur union Jamaat Ameer Ilias Hossain had shared the images on Thursday night. "When BNP activists questioned him this [yesterday] morning, Jamaat men launched a sudden attack," he alleged.

Union Jubo Dal leader Nesar Ahmed, who was also injured, claimed at least five BNP men were hurt.

Confirming the post, upazila Jamaat leader Maulana Mozammel Hossain Poran said, "The post was deleted, and Ilias later expressed regret. At a mosque committee meeting this morning, BNP men attacked Ilias. While resisting, five to six Jamaat activists were injured."

Ilias said, "The photo was shared mistakenly. After being alerted, I deleted it and posted an apology."

Hajiganj Police Station OC Mohammad Mohiuddin Faruk said police were deployed in the area to maintain order. "We have reports that eight to nine people were injured. Action will be taken if a case is lodged."

ISLAMI BANK Terminated staff demand reinstatement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited's terminated employees and those placed on OSD yesterday demanded reinstatement to their original posts and immediate withdrawal of the OSD status imposed on thousands.

The announcement came at a press conference at the Chattogram Press Club, where they outlined their six-point demands, which include cessation of conditional assessment tests imposed on employees; putting an end to "punishment transfers"; and return of all employees to workplaces.

At the press conference, they said that nearly 5,500 families are now in crisis due to the move. They alleged that the bank authorities escalated the situation by blocking their official IDs and personal salary accounts.



A trader transports rice straw (bichali) on a locally-made vehicle. During the monsoon, when pastures are submerged, grass becomes scarce and the demand for rice straw as cattle feed rises. Collecting straw from villages, traders bundle it into stacks and carry it to markets or farms. Each bundle sells for Tk 3-4. The photo was taken from the Phuitala-Damodar area on the Khulna-Jashore highway recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

PARKING BAN IN LAWACHHARA

A win for wildlife, a headache for visitors

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The Forest Department has recently imposed a restriction on parking vehicles of visitors in Lawachhara National Park in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar.

The ban came into effect on October 1 and has been hailed by environmentalists as a necessary step to protect the park's wildlife species.

However, it has caused considerable inconvenience to visitors, many of whom have been left stranded as there is no designated parking area near the park's entrance.

Previously, visitors were allowed to park their vehicles in a space near the main entrance. That facility has now been removed, with a 'No Parking' signboard erected in its place. As a result, vehicles are being parked along both sides of the Kamalganj Sreemangal road,

causing disruption to traffic flow.

Many visitors expressed frustration over the lack of alternative parking arrangements. "We bought

some others, unable to find a spot, had to turn back," said Sadeq Ahmed, a visitor.

Visiting the park premises on Thursday, this correspondent, however, saw



tickets and entered the park, only to find that the parking space had been closed. We were forced to park on the road, and

some visitors continuing to park their vehicles around the entrance, defying the restriction in place.

Sohel Shyam, founder of Stand for our Endangered Wildlife (SEW), expressed concern over the possibility of further deforestation if parking spaces are created within the park, and urged for alternative facilities outside the protected area.

Shamsul Haque, general secretary of Lawachhara Peoples' Forum, said a drop-off point near the entrance could be a feasible solution, allowing tourists to access the park while keeping vehicles outside the sensitive forest area.

Abul Kalam, divisional forest officer in Sylhet, said the restriction was imposed following the ministry's decision to stop parking within the park to protect wildlife and reduce the number of visitors.

He said the main purpose of the no-parking order is to ensure protection of the park's ecosystem.

Part of Gohala river leased out illegally



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A portion of the Gohala river in Ullapara upazila of Sirajganj has been illegally leased to a businessman by a local mosque committee and influential, sparking widespread criticism.

The Udhunia Bazar Jame Masjid committee, along with some local elites, reportedly called an open tender on Thursday noon to lease out part of the river flowing through Udhunia village.

According to locals, a group of lease seekers attended the quotation process at Udhunia Bazar, where local trader Eusuf Ali Mollah secured the lease of a 2.5 kilometre stretch of the river for a year at Tk 1.6 lakh.

Hazi Abdul Hamid, vice president of the mosque committee, confirmed the matter to a local journalist.

Asked about the legality of leasing out a river, he could not provide an answer. The Daily Star has obtained a recording of the conversation.

This correspondent tried to contact the mosque committee president, but his phone remained switched off.

Meanwhile, local fishermen protested, saying they are being restricted from fishing in the open waterbody.

Md Abdul Mannan, a fisherman from Udhunia village, said, "We have been fishing in the Gohala river for the past four decades, but nobody ever restricted us. This year, I have to catch fish by paying money to a leaseholder."

"More than a hundred fishermen from the village are now worried about their livelihood," he said, adding that local influential have begun setting up bamboo enclosures in the river for fish projects as monsoon waters recede.

"Gohala is one of the key rivers of the Chalan Beel region for the flow of water to and from the wetland. There is no scope to lease out a river in this manner," said SM Mizanur Rahman, organiser of Chalan Beel Movement.

Contacted, Ullapara UNO Abu Saleh Md Hasnat said, "No one can lease out a river in this manner. It is obviously illegal. I have heard about the matter. Steps will be taken following investigation into it."

More than a hundred fishermen from the village are now worried about their livelihood. Local influential have begun setting up bamboo enclosures in the river for fish projects as monsoon waters recede.

MD ABDUL MANNAN
A fisher from Udhunia village

With crutch and courage, he rows the Bay



SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

For fisherman Sohrab Hossain of Kuakata in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila, life has been a relentless struggle. A decade ago, a road accident claimed one of his legs, leaving many to believe he would never return to the sea.

Defying all odds, he still sets out before dawn, leaning on his crutch and relying on a single leg to battle the waves.

The sea has always been inseparable from his life. From childhood, he accompanied his father on fishing trips in the Bay of Bengal. Losing his leg in 2015 could not break that bond. Today, he rows out in a small boat, starts the engine himself, grips the tiller, and faces the turbulent waters head-on, because the sea remains his only means of survival.

Sohrab, 28, lives with his family in a government-built

house under the Ashrayan Project in Kuakata Municipality's Ward-3 fishermen's colony.

But life is weighed down by NGO loans and advances from fish traders.

"My family includes my elderly parents, wife, and three children. The eldest son, only eight, helps by running a small tea stall on the beach. The middle son has just started school, though uncertainty looms over how long he can continue. The youngest is only seven months old," he said.

"All my struggles and hard work... it's for them," Sohrab added.

His father, Kalam Majhi, recalled the day of the accident: "A rod pierced his leg. Doctors said keeping it risked cancer, so we had no choice but to amputate. Since then, he has gone to sea every day, risking his life for his family. When he goes, either I or his mother wait by the

shore until he returns."

Age and hardship have left Kalam exhausted. "We spent all we had on his treatment. Now I am destitute," he said.

Yet Sohrab's wife Halima carries no complaints. "We married in 2016, a year after his accident. I never left him because we loved each other."

Local fishing leader Nijam Sheikh described Sohrab as an inspiration. "Despite such a tragedy, he never gave up. He still works tirelessly, and we stand by him through the fishermen's association."

Kalapara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Kawsar Hamid said, "Sohrab's life is not just one man's struggle – it is a symbol of resilience against all odds. He is a registered fisherman and receives government rice assistance three times a year, but it is not enough. We are exploring ways to do more for him."

Man drowns in Ramna Park lake

UNB, Dhaka

A man died after drowning in the lake at Ramna Park in the capital yesterday. The deceased is Wasimul Haq, 55.

Ramna police SI Mizanur Rahman said the man was found unconscious around 6:00pm and was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Eyewitnesses said he had come to the park in the morning and was seen washing his hands and face while leaving his shoes on. A short while later, although his shoes remained, he disappeared and was later seen floating in the lake.

Police identified him through fingerprint records.

Nation to pay tribute

FROM PAGE 3

Institute in Kolkata honored him with the title 'Rabindratattacharya (Rabindra Exponent),' a recognition of his scholarship.

He also conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Meanwhile, in separate condolence messages, Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki,

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Sharmeen Murshid, and Information Adviser Mahfuj Alam prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family.

On behalf of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, its Director General and poet Rezauddin Ahmed Stalin expressed deep shock and profound respect at the demise of the Language Movement veteran.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan also expressed deep grief at the death of Ahmad Rafique.

Meanwhile, the nation will bid a solemn farewell to Ahmad Rafique today, as his

body will be brought to the Central Shaheed Minar for the public to pay respects.

His body will be kept there from 11:00am to allow people from all walks of life to offer their tributes to the celebrated intellectual and cultural icon.

Leaders from cultural, literary and political spheres are expected to attend and pay homage.

Born on September 12, 1929, in Shahbazzpur under Brahmanbaria district, Rafiq was a noted figure in the 1952 Language Movement. He worked closely with students from various campuses and was the only student from Dhaka Medical College to have an arrest warrant issued against him in 1954.

In 1958, he published his first book Shilpo Songskriti Jibon (Art, Culture, and Life), and went on to write extensively on language, culture, and society.

For his outstanding contributions to literature and thought, he received numerous accolades, including the Ekushey Padak, Bangla Academy Award, and Rabindra Sahitya Award.

Press secretary

FROM PAGE 3

Bangladesh is ready to uphold the democratic values cherished by its people and partners.

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENTS WITH GLOBAL LEADERS

The chief adviser held a series of high-level bilateral meetings aimed at strengthening Bangladesh's global partnerships and advancing shared priorities.

Key engagements included talks with leaders from Italy, Finland, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Australia, Albania, Kosovo and Bhutan, focusing on democratic governance, trade, climate resilience, and human development.

He also met with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, Unicef Executive Director Catherine Russell, UN Under Secretary General Rabab Fatima, World Bank President Ajay Banga, Queen Maxima of the Netherlands, and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva.

Prof Yunus attended a dinner hosted by US President Donald Trump, where he met a number of top world leaders.

Significant discussions also took place with a special envoy of the US, underlining Bangladesh's pivotal role in regional cooperation and multilateral diplomacy.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP ON THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

A central focus of Prof Yunus' mission was the Rohingya crisis, where he emphasised Bangladesh's continued leadership in providing shelter and humanitarian assistance to over a million displaced people.

In meetings with UN agencies and donor nations, he called for renewed global action to ensure safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation to Myanmar and urged the international community not to let the crisis fade from global attention.

Prof Yunus was able to gain the commitment of \$96 million from the US and UK to aid the Rohingya refugees.

NEW ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Bangladesh's engagement at the UNGA also opened new doors for overseas employment and labour mobility, Alam said.

Chief Adviser Yunus held productive discussions with officials from Kosovo, Albania, and other European countries, exploring avenues for Bangladeshi workers to contribute to their growing labour markets. These opportunities are expected to bolster remittance inflows and strengthen people-to-people ties with new partner nations, said the press secretary.

A VISION FOR A COLLABORATIVE FUTURE

Yunus' participation in the UNGA underscores Bangladesh's role as a responsible global actor committed to democratic governance, humanitarian solidarity, and constructive international cooperation.

PRAYER TIMING

OCTOBER 4

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

INTERVIEW

The ghosts of memory, regret, and guilt return: A conversation with Ayman Asib Shadhin

Ayman Asib Shadhin has spent much of his life in a focused, almost ascetic pursuit of cinema, a passion that's made him fluent across a wide range of world film.

LAMIA SULTANA KAKON

He debuted as a screenwriter with the dark comedy-thriller *Mainkar Chipay* (2020), the first Bangladeshi ZEE5 original film, followed by *Contract* (2021), the platform's first Bangladeshi original series, which he co-wrote and adapted from Mohammad Nazimuddin's bestselling thriller. In 2022, he penned the screenplay and dialogue for Hoichoi's hit detective series *Kaiser*, also working as post-production supervisor and director's assistant. Most recently, he wrote the feature film *Utshob* (2004), which seemed to be a loose adaptation of the novella *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens.

Beyond production, Shadhin spent four years as a film critic and translator, publishing essays in Bangla and English, and co-authored the nonfiction book *Cine-loid* (Chaitanya Publishers, 2017), which received an enthusiastic response from cinephiles. I spoke with him about *Utshob*—its ghosts, its griefs, and the

too far. They abuse that control. That doesn't make it okay. I don't think there's a black or white answer here. But we shouldn't excuse him. We can still feel for him, though. Remember, in the end, Jasmine says, "You did this crime to me in cold blood." And Jahangir answers, "And I got the lifetime punishment too."

Your storytelling reminded me of *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Vonnegut—fragmented, non-linear, showing life in pieces rather than in order. Was that structure hard to write? Did it challenge you emotionally or creatively?

Not at all, actually. We didn't set out to be non-linear just for the sake of form. The structure came naturally because we followed emotions, not timelines. For us, the core was Jahangir's realisation—his memories, his regrets. It was more about how much emotional weight a moment carried. So you might go from his future to his past marriage to the present—all based on what he's remembering or feeling.

for example, is very close to me. He had nothing to lose. His mother died, his father left, his brother was broken. He did everything right but still ended up alone. I understand that feeling.

So yeah, there's no direct insert of "Shadhin equals Jahangir" but the guilt, the regret, the way people destroy what they love out of fear, I am scattered in all of them.

There was a full disclaimer on the film: "This movie is not allowed to be watched without family." And I couldn't stop thinking about your father. I know he passed away not too long ago, and I didn't even know if I should bring it up. Because...

Because you never know how or where you might strike a nerve. Someone else asked me this after the film came out, and I kept thinking about it. Honestly, I don't know how to answer this. I really don't. My father passed away before *Utshob* was released. I had thought about dedicating the film to him—it felt like the right gesture at the time. But when the moment came, I didn't do it. I decided to let that memory stay where it is. I didn't want to turn that absence into a line. I didn't want to decorate it.

There's something about grief that doesn't want to be translated. So I left it untouched. It lives with me, though. But the work continues. And sometimes, that's all you can do when grief doesn't move with you.

The film doesn't lack anything—it's funny, it's tragic, it's introspective. And somehow, nothing feels overdone. Does that emotional balance come naturally to you? Or do you have a process? A ritual? Maybe a place where the emotions unfold while you write?

I wish I could say there's a ritual or a process, but honestly, it's just about trusting my instincts. I spend a lot of time procrastinating, thinking, rewriting scenes in my head. I don't rush to type. And then suddenly, the emotion clicks and the scene comes. I remember the scene between Jahangir and his daughter where he says something completely unexpected—almost ridiculous—and the whole theatre laughs. But the interesting thing is, it wasn't meant to be funny, but honest. I knew it was a strange line, but I trusted that it belonged there. And people respond to honesty, especially when they're laughing.

So yeah, I think balance comes from not trying to over control the tone. It's about keeping things true to the emotional logic of the character. If a moment feels too poetic, I may let it flow. But if a scene gets too heavy, I let it stumble. If something feels unnatural, I cut it even if I liked the line. It's like cooking. You keep tasting while it simmers. You don't dump all the spices at once.

Do you believe that people carry their regrets forever? Or do you think it's possible to really, fully change after hurting others?

I think about regret a lot. And whenever I do, I feel like I'll carry it forever. Even if I live another 40 years—it doesn't matter. That regret doesn't shrink. It stays. For me, it feels like capital punishment.

What people don't realise is, the hardest part of remorse isn't saying it out loud. It's how slowly your body digests it. You go through something intense—some crisis—and then immediately try to act normal again. But you haven't processed anything. You've just bandaged it. That's when it gets dangerous. You start hurting people again, thinking the worst is over. But it isn't. You can't just flip a switch and expect the people around you to adjust to your sudden clarity. They didn't sign up for this, you know?

Lamia Sultana Kakon is a journalist, fiction writer, poet, and translator. She is currently a tutor in English Language Research at Independent University, Bangladesh. Reach her at: kakonsultana1908@gmail.com.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

difficult mercy of looking again.

The three ghosts that arrive to "fix" Jahangir's life at the last moment—under the name CGPA—felt almost symbolic to me. As if they're here to raise the CGPA of his life before it's too late. Was that just playful, or was there a deeper layer? Why do they help people like Jahangir? What do they truly represent?

It's actually interesting that you noticed that. A lot of people didn't.

Most of the chaos we create comes from our failure to read the neutrality of a situation. We enter moments carrying separate films in our heads, and a small misunderstanding snowballs. In *Utshob*, that snowball rolls through time. In our stream of experience, the past, present, and future all overlap. We don't always know which one is gripping us.

The ghosts, then, aren't omens. They're not curses. They're prompts. Their presence isn't eerie—it's corrective. A call to re-read the moment, to try again. The film doesn't offer them as rewards, and it doesn't pretend Jahangir is worthy in the conventional sense.

In your opinion, was Jahangir a bad person for hiding his wife's admit card? Or was it just raw human insecurity? Should we judge him, or feel for him?

I don't think he's a "bad" person. I think he's human. And when people who've felt powerless for too long finally feel in control, they often go

That's how memory works. When we look back on our lives, we don't think in sequence. We remember by charge, not chronology. And because we were working from that emotional centre, the writing wasn't difficult in a technical sense. It was fluid. The challenge wasn't how to write it—it was how deep we were willing to go.

What, in your eyes, was Jahangir's fatal mistake, his hamartia that left him alone, was it simply stinginess, or something larger?

I think his stinginess is just a surface symptom of something deeper. His real fatal flaw is control. It's the way he tries to assert power over the only thing left in his life: people.

Jahangir is a man who had no control for most of his life. He lost his parents, his brother, his sister—he was powerless. And then suddenly he has a family, a wife, a daughter—and he starts to believe, "This time, it's mine." That's when he starts clinging, becoming controlling, and hoarding. It's not just money. It's emotional tightness.

In a way, that stinginess is capitalism at its most personal. We live in a society where it's okay to be miserly—emotionally and financially. We treat relationships like assets. And Jahangir starts to see people as extensions of himself—as things he can manage.

Do you personally relate to any of the characters in *Utshob*? Is there a piece of Shadhin in Jahangir, or someone else?

Not one character, but fragments. I see parts of myself in multiple people across the film. Joy,

POETRY

Durga

SNATA BASU

In the hush—footsteps fill the laden streets,
grasshoppers teeth to return home. Veiled divine mother,
she blooms in shards—from under the rain
from beyond the fallow moon
in her lion's gait... tidal sorrow
pushing through
your swallowing metropolitan heap.
a residue, an imprint,
Something true lost in process,
something found within;
a fractured, ceramic deity doll
recoils,
her hurt spreads thin. Into a
a trident
a discus
a conch, a spear.
Steed beneath her chariot of flesh
her raven locks soar in black air;
This is a mounting vision in the heath
smudged clean
by her long, cascading armour-limbs.
in the trail of mist she devours—a
thousand feline shadows
march in cold respite. this is a
sacred call to the earth:
she asks you to take notice,
to remember the bare joy of becoming
to relent
in your raw, pulsing armour.

Snata Basu is a writer based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her poetry has appeared on numerous literary platforms including The Opiate, Visual Verse: An Online Anthology of Art and Words, and Small World City.

DESIGN: MAHMUDA EMDAD

POETRY

Inheritance Of luck

NUBISHA RABYA TOPOTE

I train myself not to meet their eyes—
those begging at corners,
those dragging rickshaws swollen with bodies,
those bartered like cattle,
sold into brothels where flesh has a price.
I look at everything else—
billboards, dust and the indifferent sky—
as if distraction could bury the question,
"what chance kept me from their place?"
Was it mercy, or accident?
Or is it only ego,
whispering that I am safe—
while blindness lets me walk unbroken
through their hunger?

Nubisha Rabya Topote, a class 10 student at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, is a budding poet who finds inspiration in every opportunity to write. Find more of her work @ nubishawrites.

Spooktober BHOOTER ADDA

Email us your spooky submissions for this month's Khero Khata prompt, 'Bhoooter Adda', at dsleditor@gmail.com.

Submission categories:

- Flash fiction or poetry (500 words)
- Two-sentence horror

Deadline: Oct. 20, 2025

‘Never thought of giving up despite several injuries’

Rubya Haider Jhelik was a surprise inclusion in Bangladesh’s 15-member squad for the ongoing ICC Women’s World Cup. Having never represented Bangladesh in the 50-over format and only featuring in six T20Is, she made an instant impact in their opener against Pakistan in Colombo on Thursday. On her ODI debut, the 28-year-old scored an unbeaten 54 off 77 balls, guiding the Tigresses to a commanding victory. Speaking to The Daily Star’s Samsul Arefin Khan over the phone from Guwahati on Friday, Jhelik reflected on her debut, her struggles with injuries, and Bangladesh’s World Cup ambitions.



The Daily Star (DS): Congratulations on your debut innings. What did it mean to you?

Rubya Haider Jhelik (RHJ): Receiving the debut cap on such a big stage was a different kind of feeling. I was excited, but I knew I had to make it memorable by contributing to the team’s victory. I didn’t take any pressure, didn’t overthink, and stayed focused on finishing the game.

DS: Chasing 130, what was going through your mind?

RHJ: We knew the wicket had movement, and they had two quality pacers. So, [Farzana Hoque] Pinky apu and I planned not to lose our wickets in the first 10 overs and aimed to score 30-35 runs in the Powerplay. Unfortunately, she got out, soon followed by [Sharmin Akhter] Supta apu. When their spinners came on, skipper [Nigar Sultana] Joyti and I decided to target different bowlers. I told her I would take on the left-arm spinner [Nashra Sandhu], and she would go after the off-spinner [Rameen Shamim]. In two overs, we

hit three boundaries each, and that’s what helped us.

DS: Being a surprise inclusion, picked mostly as a backup opener and wicketkeeper-batter, did you feel pressure on such a big stage?

RHJ: If it had happened earlier, I might have felt pressure. But now I just enjoy the game a lot. I don’t want any kind of negativity, and I think I’ve built the confidence to overcome such challenges. My focus is simply on doing my job.

DS: Bangladesh women’s team haven’t had many left-handed batters. Why did you choose to bat left-handed?

RHJ: When I started playing cricket, I naturally batted left-handed. I admired [Kumar] Sangakkara’s batting and followed him a lot. I also like Shakib [Al Hasan] bhai’s batting.

DS: Few players make their debut at 28, especially in our country. What kept you motivated to push for the national team after so long?

RHJ: I faced several injuries in different stages of my career, and that put me on the backfoot. I was selected for the 2016 T20 World Cup but missed out due to injury. During an Emerging team series in Hong Kong, I tore my ACL and couldn’t play for over a year. Despite the injuries and setbacks, I always thought that I wouldn’t give up and try my level best to fulfill my dream of representing the national team.

DS: What’s your goal for this tournament? And how is the dressing room atmosphere after the victory?

RHJ: The dressing room environment is very positive. Everyone supports each other, regardless of performance. We are preparing match by match and not overrating opponents, so we don’t feel dominated. I think we need to be calm before facing our next opponents. Inshallah, our target is to reach the semifinal. As for my personal goal, I want to keep it to myself.

Liverpool seek response in tricky Chelsea trip

AGENCIES

If Arsenal secure all three points against West Ham earlier in the day, Liverpool could be knocked off the top of the Premier League table before they kick off against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Liverpool will seek a response as they arrive in London reeling from back-to-back defeats for the first time under Arne Slot. After winning their opening five league matches, the champions were undone by Eddie Nketiah’s late goal in a 2-1 loss at Crystal Palace last weekend, before suffering a 1-0 Champions League defeat at Galatasaray in midweek. With none of those early-season wins being entirely convincing, their current stumble has opened the door for rivals to close the gap.

Chelsea, meanwhile, are also seeking a turnaround. Enzo Maresca’s side have collected just one point from their last three league matches and are already seven points adrift of the leaders in eighth place. Trevoh Chalobah’s red card shifted the momentum in a 3-1 home defeat to Brighton last weekend, while goalkeeper Robert Sanchez was sent off early in the recent loss at Manchester United. Since the start of last season, the Blues have collected 118 cards – the most in the division.

Injuries have compounded the problems, with defenders Levi Colwill, Wesley Fofana and Tosin Adarabioyo all sidelined alongside Dario Essugo, Liam Delap, Cole Palmer and Andrey Santos. Despite the setbacks, Chelsea did edge Benfica 1-0 in midweek, a result that kept morale alive.

Maresca insisted Liverpool remain “the best team in England,” while stressing that Chelsea “will be there and close” once the squad regains stability.

Liverpool are also winless in their last four league visits to Stamford Bridge, adding another layer of intrigue to Saturday’s clash.

Saif earns maiden ODI call-up

SPORTS REPORTER

In-form batter Saif Hassan earned a maiden call-up to the ODI side, as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 16-member squad for the Tigers’ upcoming three-match series against Afghanistan on Friday.

The side, however, features just two changes from the Tigers’ last ODI series away to Sri Lanka in July this year. Litton Das, who is still recovering from a side strain that kept him out of the Tigers’ final two Asia Cup games last month, and opener Parvez Hossain Emon miss out.

Saif has been the Tigers’ standout performer in the recently concluded Asia Cup, rewarded for his 178 runs in four games at an average of 44.50.

Five players – ODI skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Hasan Mahmud, Tanvir Islam, and Nahid Rana – were scheduled to travel to the UAE on Friday night to join the rest of the squad, who are currently involved in a three-match T20I series against the Afghans.

BCB, in a press release, informed that Naim Sheikh will depart after getting visa clearance.

The ODIs will take place at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on October 8, 11, and 14.

Bangladesh ODI Squad: Mehidy Hasan Miraz (Captain), Tanzid Tamim, Naim Sheikh, Saif Hassan, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Rishad Hossain, Tanvir Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Sakib, Hasan Mahmud, Nahid Rana



England’s Tammy Beaumont (L) and Amy Jones celebrate their 10-wicket win against South Africa in a group stage fixture of the ICC Women’s Cricket World Cup at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati on October 3, 2025. Beaumont scored 28 not out while Jones remained unbeaten on 40 as England chased down South Africa’s paltry total of 69 in 14.1 overs.

PHOTO: AFP

Flawed constitution leaves BCB polls open to interference?

What is happening around the Bangladesh Cricket Board elections is not unexpected because the flaws lie in the very constitution of the board. It contains all the provisions that allow for government interference. To ensure a truly democratic election, free from political influence and with the participation of genuine organisers, the constitution must first be democratised. Only then can we talk about a functional board. The mindset of cricket’s key stakeholders also needs to change – to move away from club dominance and centralise power. The current interim government had the best opportunity to bring about such reforms. But the hope of realising that now seems far-fetched. The Daily Star’s podcast Pitch Perfect sheds light on the issue during an extensive discussion ahead of the BCB’s much-talked-about polls, set to take place on October 6.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO

Women’s football team ‘enjoying’ KEPZ camp

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven days into their preparations for next March’s AFC Women’s Asian Cup in Australia, Afeida Khandokar and her teammates are relishing the opportunity to train in a new, refreshing environment at the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) in Anwara, Chattogram.

Having spent years training at the crowded BFF dormitory, the women’s team now enjoys better facilities following their historic qualification for the Women’s Asian Cup. The new setting offers fresh air, open space, and home-grown food – creating an ideal atmosphere for focused preparation.

“The girls are really happy to be in such an environment – open air, spacious surroundings, fresh food, clean accommodation, and a good practice ground. They were getting bored of staying at the BFF dormitory for so long,” assistant coach Mahabubur Rahman Litu told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

“It’s a wonderful place – perfect for mental and physical refreshment. The players have been training attentively and are enjoying every bit of it since the camp started on 27 September. Today is their day off, and they’re scheduled to visit a mandarin orange garden inside the KEPZ,” he added. The team trains twice a day for



three consecutive days, followed by a single session on the fourth.

Korea-based Youngone Corporation has generously provided its own facilities after the BFF reached out to around 30 government organisations, including all EPZs and BEPZA, seeking training venues for the women’s team.

BFF President Tabith Awal, vice-President Fahad Karim, and other officials visited the KEPZ on Thursday to meet the players and coaching staff and expressed their gratitude to Youngone Corporation’s Chairman and CEO, Kihak Sung.

“The girls are thrilled. They told me they never imagined training at such a wonderful place. The food is excellent – milk, chicken, meat, fish, and vegetables are all grown inside the KEPZ. They said they’ve never had such fresh meals before. The accommodation is also hygienic, with rooms cleaned twice daily,” said Fahad, adding that head coach Peter Butler was initially hesitant about moving outside Dhaka but is now pleased with the facilities.

Of the 30 organisations contacted by the BFF, only four – Youngone Corporation, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force, and the Jashore IT Park – expressed interest in supporting the team’s training.

“The Chairman of Youngone told us they represent Bangladesh globally through garments, and the women’s football team is also creating a powerful image of the country abroad. That’s why they wanted to contribute to this journey,” said Fahad.

The team is scheduled to return to Dhaka on 17 October to continue training with the 10 players returning from Bhutan on the same day before departing for Thailand on 21 October, where they will play two friendly matches later in the month.

Fahad also confirmed that Bangladesh will host a tri-nation series in November, featuring Azerbaijan and Vietnam, who have already confirmed their participation.

Saving three penalties on the trot is rare and unique -- and that’s what Lille goalkeeper Berke Ozer did against AS Roma in the Europa League on Thursday. The 25-year-old Turkey international pulled off a stunning hat-trick of saves in stoppage time to secure Lille’s 1-0 victory, following an early Hakon Haraldsson goal in Rome. After twice denying Artem Dovbyk, who was forced to retake due to the goalkeeper’s infringements on both occasions, Ozer thwarted Matias Soule on Roma’s third attempt, and that save finally stood. “It was like being in a dream,” said Ozer, who had promised his fiancée a clean sheet. Coach Bruno Genesio called it something he had “never seen before.”



PHOTO: REUTERS



Journo hacked to death in Bagerhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bagerhat*

A journalist was hacked to death by armed assailants in Bagerhat town last night.

Hayat Uddin, 42, a staff reporter of the daily Bhorer Chetana, was a resident of the town's Harikhali area, said police.

Quoting locals, Mahmud-ul-Hasan, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Model Police Station, said a group of armed assailants attacked Hayat with sharp weapons in the Harikhali area.

Seriously injured, he was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, added the OC.

A friend of Hayat, seeking anonymity, said he was attacked while having tea at a stall in Harikhali. He was first taken to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital before being taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

OC Mahmud said a police team has been sent to the victim's house, and law enforcers have already started an investigation.



Bangladesh players celebrate the dismissal of Afghanistan opener Sediqullah Atal during the second T20I in Sharjah yesterday. Having restricted the hosts to a modest 147 for five in 20 overs, the Tigers turned it into a tricky chase by losing quick wickets at the death. They eventually prevailed, securing a two-wicket win with five balls to spare to take the three-match series 2-0 with a game in hand.

PHOTO: ACB

Tigers clinch T20I series

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh sealed the three-match T20I series against Afghanistan with a dramatic two-wicket win in the second game at Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The Jaker Ali-led side turned a modest 148-run chase into a thriller, much like their four-wicket victory in the opener, when they lost three wickets in just six balls late in the innings.

Despite the collapse, Nurul Hasan Sohan struck a six and Shoriful Islam followed up with a four off Noor Ahmad in the penultimate over, reducing the target to two runs in the last over. Shoriful then hit Azmatullah Omarzai for a boundary off the first ball of the 20th over to secure victory with five balls remaining.

The late drama came after Bangladesh slipped from 122 for five in 16.5 overs to 129 for eight in 17.5, losing Nasum Ahmed (10 off 11), Mohammad Saifuddin (4 off 2), and Rishad Hossain (2 off 2).

A similar collapse had occurred in the first T20I, when the Tigers lost six wickets after a 100-plus opening stand but still managed to chase down 152 in the penultimate over. Friday's game differed only in that the middle order contributed instead of openers Tanzid Tamim and Parvez Hossain Emon, who both fell for two runs each after fifties in the first game.

Sohan again proved vital, scoring 31 not out after useful knocks from Jaker (32 off 25), Shamim Hossain (33 off 22), and Saif Hassan (18 off 14). The final T20I will be played at the same venue tomorrow.

Candidates to get signal soon to start campaign

Says BNP leader Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday that single candidates in each constituency would soon be given the nod to begin campaigning for the next election.

"Till now, no green signal has been given. We are still in the selection process. We have sent messages to all possible candidates that everyone should give the same statement: all are in favour of the 'sheaf of paddy' [BNP's electoral symbol]. Whoever the party gives the symbol, all will work together for him," he said while talking to reporters at his Gulshan residence.

The BNP will announce the candidates' names after the Election Commission declares the polls schedule.

Not only does the party have two aspirants in each seat, but in many places, it has five, seven, or even 10 qualified candidates, he added.

Discussions are underway with like-minded parties over sharing seats, Salahuddin said. "We will probably share with the alliance partners the seats where we hope they can win with our support."

Asked about the party's objection to a proposed amendment to the Representation of the People Order, he said, "We have given our objection ... everyone thinks the old system should stay. That means if the partners of an alliance want, they can contest with their own party symbol or with the symbol of any alliance partner."

The EC has proposed that candidates contesting under an alliance must use the symbol of their own party, not the one leading the alliance.

Regarding the trial of Awami League as a political party, the BNP leader said the government should file a case quickly with the International Crimes Tribunal to bring the AL to book. "The fate of the Awami League will

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Four AL leaders likely to be charged soon

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Four senior Awami League leaders, including former law minister Anisul Huq and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's former adviser Salman F Rahman, may soon be formally charged with crimes against humanity in connection with the July uprising, according to the prosecution.

The International Crimes Tribunal's investigation agency has nearly completed its probe against the four, and formal reports are expected to be submitted to the Chief Prosecutor's Office in the coming days, said prosecutor Mizanul Islam.

The other two leaders under investigation are AL joint general secretary and former Kushtia lawmaker Mahbubul Alam Hanif, and former state minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

Mizanul, a key prosecutor who holds the rank of additional attorney general, said the agency may submit a separate report for Palak, while Hanif could be charged alongside several local AL leaders in Kushtia over killings in the district during the uprising.

The prosecution will later decide whether charges against Anisul and Salman will be brought jointly or separately based on the evidence.

These four are among 45 individuals already named in an ongoing case related to crimes against humanity under ICT investigation. Of the 45, at least 19 are high-profile political figures, including



ANISUL HUQ



SALMAN F RAHMAN



MAHBUBUL ALAM HANIF



ZUNAI AHMED PALAK

former ministers Amir Hossain Amu, Obaidul Quader, Shahjahan Khan, Qamrul Islam, Mohammad Faruk Khan, Abdur Razzaque, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Kamal Ahmed Majumder, Golam Dastagir Gazi, and Dipu Moni, as well as former PM's adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury.

On September 25, ICT-2 formally charged Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) president and former information minister Hasanul Haq Inu in a separate crime against humanity case.

He is the sole accused, with 20 prosecution witnesses listed. The tribunal

has scheduled a charge-framing hearing for October 14.

Responding to a query on the case involving 45 accused, Mizanul clarified that if an individual is charged and tried separately, their name may be dropped from the multi-accused case, provided all allegations against them are addressed.

Another prosecutor, seeking anonymity, said before the general election scheduled for February next year, the prosecution aims to complete investigation reports for at least 20 additional cases of crimes against humanity, including several involving enforced disappearances.

HASINA CASE UPDATE

Arguments in the ongoing case against Hasina and two of her top aides may be completed within two weeks. Mizanul said arguments could conclude between October 15 and 20. Once completed, it will be up to the tribunal to decide when to deliver the verdict.

The other accused in the case are former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who has turned approver. On Tuesday, investigation officer Md Alamgir concluded his statement before ICT-1 as the 54th and final prosecution witness.

State-appointed defence counsel Md Amir Hossain, representing the absconding Hasina and Kamal, will resume cross-examining the IO on Monday.

Several other cases are also under trial or nearing trial.

Jamaat may leave up to 100 seats for allies: Porwar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Jamaat-e-Islami may leave up to 100 constituencies for like-minded political parties if an alliance is formed ahead of the next national election, party's Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said yesterday.

Speaking as chief guest at a reunion of Islami Chhatra Shibir's Khulna city unit at the Al Faruk Society auditorium, Porwar said Jamaat has already prepared a candidate list for all 300 constituencies but is willing to compromise to forge unity with other parties.

"Although we have finalised 300 candidates and completed preliminary selection, the ultimate decision will depend on those we reach an understanding with. Unity cannot be achieved without leaving some seats," he said.

Calling this "the most opportune time to convey the message of Islam to parliament," Porwar urged former student leaders to return to active politics.

The event was chaired by Arafat Hossain Milon, president of Chhatra Shibir's Khulna city unit, and conducted by its secretary, Rakib Hossain.

Jamaat's Khulna Regional Assistant Director Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, city Ameer Prof Mahfuzur Rahman, district Ameer Maulana Emran Hossain, city Nayebe-Ameer Prof Najibur Rahman, city Secretary Advocate Sheikh Jahangir Hossain Helal, and several other leaders also addressed the event.

Sarah Mullally first woman to lead Church of England

REUTERS, *Canterbury*

The Church of England named Sarah Mullally yesterday as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, the first woman to serve as ceremonial head of Anglican Christianity worldwide, prompting immediate criticism from conservative church leaders in Africa.

The 63-year-old bishop, who once served as England's top nurse, will, like her predecessors, face a Communion divided between conservatives and more liberal Christians over the role of women in the Church and the acceptance of same-sex couples.

While the appointment was welcomed by many religious leaders in Britain, Laurent Mbanda, archbishop of Rwanda and chairman of a global grouping of conservative Anglican churches, told Reuters that Mullally would not unite the Communion.

In an address in Canterbury Cathedral yesterday, Mullally said she would seek to help every ministry to flourish, "whatever our tradition".



Homes nestled in a sea of white kans grass appear like something out of a daydream. Drawn by the delicate bloom, many, especially young people, are flocking to the chars on the Jamuna to witness autumn's fleeting magic. The photo was taken recently on a char in Saghata upazila of Gaibandha.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

KSA unveils new licensing system for hajj accommodations

BSS, *Dubai*

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrath of Saudi Arabia has announced a new licensing system for pilgrim accommodations in Makkah and Madinah for the 2026 hajj season.

Licences will now be issued through the temporary hostel licensing service, developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Municipalities and Housing, according to Saudi media reports.

Applicants must register through the Nusuk Masar platform to qualify for leasing pilgrim accommodations. Licences are to be obtained via the Ministry of Tourism's electronic platform, in line with approved requirements, before the contracting period closes on February 1, 2026.

The process does not apply to hotels that already hold year-round licences from the Ministry of Tourism.

The temporary hostel licensing system aims to boost service quality, streamline bookings, and enhance the hajj experience in the holy sites of Makkah and Madinah. The new system is designed to improve service quality by issuing seasonal licences that meet regulatory standards.

The struggle against concrete invasion

Bangladesh's natural beauty at risk from unplanned tourism



Lama, Bandarban

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, DWOHA CHOWDHURY, SOHRAB HOSSAIN and RIKORS CHAKMA

From the beaches of Cox's Bazar and Kuakata to the hill slopes of Sajek Valley and the wetlands of Sylhet, Bangladesh's major tourist destinations are expanding without proper planning or regulation.

Makeshift shops, unauthorised hotels, risky embankments, and unregulated boating threaten the environment, tourist safety, and long-term sustainability.

Experts and stakeholders warn that unless coordinated master plans are enforced, the country's most attractive sites risk losing their natural beauty and appeal.

COX'S BAZAR

Arif Khan, who travelled from Dhaka's Bashundhara area with his wife and two children, was roaming around Cox's Bazar sea beach. Asked whether the area was tourist-friendly, he said nothing appeared to be developed in a planned manner.

"Shops have sprung up everywhere, making it hard to walk because of hawkers. Umbrellas are lined up across the shore, blocking tourists' movement."

At Sugandha point on Friday, he saw nearly thirty thousand people, most of them entering the sea but with no modern changing rooms or proper shower facilities. "A few shabby sheds offer bathing and toilet services, but the condition inside is so poor no one wants to use them."

He also pointed out that there is no control over rentals. "Vehicle fares and hotel rents are unusually high. The money one spends in Cox's Bazar could easily cover a foreign trip."

Hasem Ali, a businessman from Dhaka's Sutrapur, said the main beaches -- Sugandha, Kolatoli, and Laboni -- become unsafe at night. "Even nearby areas feel risky, and the isolated spots in the hotel-motel zone are not safe for tourists," he said, urging stronger security.

"People come here seeking open spaces, but the congested hotel-motel zone is no different from the city. Cox's Bazar has a 120-kilometer beach, so why are all the hotels crammed into just a few kilometers?"

Nasima Khatun, a homemaker from Bogura, compared her visit with Thailand. "There, you find beautiful walkways and sitting areas by the beach, but there is nothing like that here. The Marine Drive is attractive, but it takes a long journey to reach."

A visit to the three beach points revealed countless makeshift shops, their numbers

growing daily. On social media, many have compared these tarpaulin-covered stalls to Rohingya camps.

Abu Morshed Chowdhury, president of Cox's Bazar Chamber of Commerce, said tourism has not developed in a planned way. "The city is turning into a prison of brick and concrete. If unplanned hotel construction continues, Cox's Bazar will lose its charm. Waste management is absent in the hotel-motel zone, and untreated garbage is dumped into the sea, creating a public hazard."

Mukim Khan, general secretary of the Cox's Bazar Hotel Owners Association, said roads in the hotel-motel zone are in terrible condition. Construction drags on for years, and during the monsoon tourists suffer greatly. With proper planning, he said, the industry could serve tourists better and grow further.

Sea Safe Lifeguard, which provides services at Cox's Bazar beach, is on the verge of shutting down due to a funding crisis.

Regional manager Imtiaz Ahmed said that without new funding, they would be forced to suspend operations from October 1. "Due to climate change, tidal waves have grown higher during the monsoon, causing erosion and putting tourists' safety in danger."

Abul Kashem Sikder, president of the Cox's Bazar Hotel and Guesthouse Owners' Association, said that about six million tourists visited in 2023, seven million in 2024, and the number is expected to exceed



Sajek valley, Rangamati

eight million this year. "Although numbers rise every year, no new entertainment facilities or amenities are being developed."

Chowdhury of the Chamber of Commerce added that there is no accurate data on tourist numbers -- a key obstacle to building a planned industry.

SAINT MARTIN'S ISLAND

Unplanned expansion is also visible on Saint Martin's Island, where over 200 hotels and resorts have sprung up haphazardly. Experts warn that the island's biodiversity

COX'S BAZAR
Unplanned hotels, hawkers, trash turning beach into concrete sprawl
Lifeguard services may shut as rising tides make visits riskier
SAINT MARTIN'S ISLAND
Haphazard resorts driving coastal erosion, biodiversity loss
Tourist limits failing to stop habitat damage
SAJEK
Fire exposed dangers of unplanned resort boom
Waste burned openly, no fire station in place
SYLHET
Pollution and noise degrading haor, swamp forest
Safety lapses highlighted by child drowning
KUAKATA
Tourist surge outpacing roads, facilities
Long-term plan needed for marine drive, beach upgrades
BANDARBAN
Hills razed, forests cleared for illegal resorts
No waste management; streams, rivers polluted



Kuakata sea beach in Patuakhali

is under severe threat.

The government allows only 2,000 tourists daily, restricts overnight stays, and limits services to two months a year, but excessive influx has already caused biodiversity loss.

Abdul Aziz, an environmental activist, said hotels and resorts built along the coast have accelerated erosion. He alleged that resort owners cleared coastal bushes that once protected the island and that unplanned geo-tube installations have worsened the situation.

SAJEK

For years, Sajek Valley in Rangamati has been filled with unregulated resorts and cottages. The risks became clear on February 24 this year, when a massive fire destroyed around 95 structures, including more than 30 resorts.

After the incident, the Rangamati Hill District Council announced that no new establishments can be built without its approval. In August, it began issuing licenses and design approvals. So far, 72 resort owners have received licenses, with others still in process.

Resort owners welcomed the move. Indra Chakma, owner of Sajek Hill View Resort, said, "Now that we have licenses, running our business will be easier. Earlier we just paid revenue, there was no formal system."

Council Chairman Kajol Talukder told The Daily Star, "Unplanned construction has spoiled Sajek's beauty. From now on, anyone wanting to build must obtain approval, and no structure taller than two stories will be allowed."

Locals said waste management is poor, with most of it burned. Pranto Roni, of CHT's Nature and Biodiversity, said emphasised the struggle to tackle plastic waste. "The impact may not be immediate, but it will appear in the future. A proper waste management plan is urgent."

Despite the devastating fire, no fire service station has yet been established in Sajek.



Tanguar haor, Sylhet

SYLHET

Sylhet's natural gems -- Tanguar Haor, Jafllong, Ratargul Swamp Forest -- are under stress from unplanned tourism. Water pollution, plastic waste, loud noise, and unregulated boating threaten breeding grounds and rare species.

On August 15, five-year-old Masum Miah drowned while visiting Tanguar Haor on a houseboat with his family.

No accurate data exists on tourist numbers, according to multiple sources.

KUAKATA

Since the opening of the Padma Bridge, tourist numbers in Kuakata have surged. But weak infrastructure and unplanned urbanisation continue to hold back the beach town's potential as a modern hub, locals alleged.

BANDARBAN

Unregulated tourism is rapidly expanding across Bandarban's hills, raising concerns of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

In recent years, areas around Nilgiri, Nilachal, Merinja Valley, Nafakhum, and Boga Lake have seen mushrooming resorts and entertainment centres. Environmentalists warn that most lack permits or environmental clearance.

Zuam Lian Amlai, president of the Hill Forest and Land Rights Protection Movement Committee, said, "Before building any structure in such a fragile environment, environmental impact assessments must be carried out. Instead, hills are being cut and forests cleared in the name of tourism. This is disastrous."

Residents allege that unchecked growth is damaging waterfalls, streams, forests, and wildlife habitats.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, assistant director of the Department of Environment in Bandarban, told The Daily Star that none of the spots have environmental clearance.

"Resorts and hotels have been built without waste management. Waste is dumped directly into hills and forests, eventually flowing into rivers, harming biodiversity. Due to manpower shortages, we cannot conduct regular drives."

He warned, "If planned measures are not taken immediately, Bandarban's tourism sector will face a crisis. Both the environment and economy must be protected together."

Lama Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Moin Uddin told The Daily Star that around 80 spots have emerged in Lama upazila, including Merinja Valley. "While some have permits, many do not. We are urging owners to obtain approval, but several are still building on hilltops without clearance. Waste, including plastics, is being dumped indiscriminately, posing a serious threat."

Bangladesh's most treasured landscapes are being consumed by unchecked tourism. Without urgent planning, strict enforcement, and sustainable practices, the country risks trading its natural wonders for concrete sprawl and polluted waters.

The choice is clear: either protect these fragile ecosystems now or watch them vanish.



HOW SALINITY CORRODES the lives of Sundarbans women



Momotaj and her daughter are carefully pouring out the final drops of precious rainwater from a plastic container — their only remaining reserve amid the relentless water crisis caused by acute salinity in the coastal region. In their quiet struggle for survival, every drop is a lifeline.

MD RAHAMATULLAH

Every morning, as soon as the sun rises, the struggle for drinking water begins for 40-year-old Momotaj Begum. A resident of Chalkbara village in Gabura Union, she lives with her family of four. Her day starts with fetching water for the household from a neighbour's pond, located nearly a kilometre away from her home.

On a typical day, Momotaj fetches water twice. "Early in the morning, I go to my neighbour's pond to collect water for cooking and drinking. After finishing the household work, I fetch water again in the late afternoon. This is my regular routine," she says. She adds, "Water is everywhere, but there is an acute scarcity of safe drinking water due to salinity. Salinity is a curse for us. I feel a sense of relief during the monsoon season, as the rainwater provides drinking water that lasts for about three to four months."

Gabura is an island union located in Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira district. Like other coastal districts, Satkhira is one of the areas most affected by salinity, where both surface and groundwater are increasingly saline. Salinity is further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. As a result, the scarcity of fresh drinking water has become much more severe than before. Each year, groundwater levels drop rapidly due to erratic rainfall, prolonged dry seasons, and excessive water extraction.

In addition, being a coastal district, saltwater intrusion caused by natural factors—such as sea-level rise, tidal surges, and cyclones—has a significant effect on freshwater sources. Scientific findings and ethnographic research suggest that, alongside these natural causes, the cultivation of shrimp and, more recently, soft-shell crab farming are notably intensifying salinity levels in both water and soil.



An abandoned tubewell stands as a silent witness to the region's deepening water crisis — rendered unusable by high levels of salinity, arsenic, and iron. PHOTOS: MD RAHAMATULLAH

As an alternative source of drinking water, people sometimes resort to using tubewells. However, the water from most tubewells is saline and often contaminated with arsenic and iron. Although deep tubewells generally provide arsenic-free water, their high installation costs and the presence of dense slate layers often make installation difficult.

Momotaj narrated, "We suffer for water, and our suffering comes from water. Most of the people are aware of the water crisis that we face. How many of you care about our physical burden caused by fetching water? I am sick. Yet

In the coastal area, salinity has become a curse. The women of the Sundarbans are paying the highest price for salinity. The use of saline water damages their hair and skin. Their bodies are turning darker. The signs of ageing on their skin tend to appear at a faster pace than in other parts of Bangladesh.

I have to collect water every day. After carrying the water, my body and legs often start to ache. Even during my menstrual period, I have to fetch water to run the family. I do not have any option to skip it."

Sometimes the scarcity of fresh drinking water forces them to use saline water. It has diverse negative impacts on all, though pregnant women are at increased risk of high blood pressure, miscarriage, and premature birth. Research reports say that saline water is

no longer an individual problem; rather, it has become a serious concern across the coastal area of the Sundarbans.

Salinity is now no longer confined to physical or climatic phenomena. It has become a social stigma in the coastal belt. Momotaj said, "People from freshwater areas are not willing to marry off their daughters here due to the water crisis caused by salinity. They are also reluctant to marry anyone from this area. Like others, I am worried about my daughter." She continued, "Even my relatives who stay in the freshwater area often avoid visiting my home. They say, you don't have fresh water. Where will we bathe? Saline water will darken our skin." In the coastal area, salinity has become a curse.

The women of the Sundarbans are paying the highest price for salinity. The use of saline water damages their hair and skin. Their bodies are turning darker. The signs of ageing on their skin tend to appear at a faster pace than in other parts of Bangladesh. Late marriage costs a large amount of dowry. Thus, parents always try to arrange an early marriage for their daughters.

Today, in the coastal areas of the Sundarbans, salinity and the scarcity of safe drinking water create the greatest divide between the people—the people of saline water and the people of freshwater. Most affluent households are migrating to urban areas in order to build a better and more secure life. But for people like Momotaj, who have nothing left, how do they survive?

Unless the nation listens to these voices and acts with urgency, the salt that seeps into their water will continue to seep into their lives, hardening lines of suffering for generations to come.

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Encroached and evicted The vanishing Rakhines of Bangladesh

MIFTAHUL JANNAT

For centuries, the Rakhine community has called the shores of Patuakhali and Barguna home. They were the first settlers there, long before the area became part of the former Bakerganj district, and later Barishal. The very land that the Rakhines once regarded as their mark of existence is now shrinking from under their feet.

Their villages are vanishing, their temples and burial grounds are being seized, and their lands are increasingly claimed by ruthless encroachers. What was once a thriving population of over 50,000 in the area, has dwindled to barely 2,500, leaving behind a legacy of dispossession and a future hovering on the edge of extinction.

RAKHINE'S ANCESTRAL LEGACY

Before the arrival of the Rakhines on the southernmost coastal belt of Barishal in 1784, the area was an uninhabited, dense forest teeming with wild animals. They transformed this region into arable farmland. Whatever land they cleared and cultivated was officially recognised as their own property by the government at that time.

Gradually, in the coastal, silt-laden lands of what are now Patuakhali and Barguna districts, particularly in Galachipa, Kalapara, Amtali, and Barguna, the Rakhines expanded their settlements. During the period between 1908 and 1930, Rakhine leaders established many important Buddhist structures to spread their faith and develop the region's infrastructure, turning it into a prosperous Rakhine-inhabited area.

Under the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950, the Rakhines of Patuakhali were recognised as indigenous people under the term "Magh" of Bakerganj, and Section 97 of the Act was included specifically to safeguard their interests in land transfer.

Yet, according to various records, today more than 90% of Rakhine families living in this area are landless. Looking back, before the Partition of India in 1947, only 20-25% of them were landless. Today, that figure has swelled, encompassing almost the entire community.

Even with legal records of ownership, influential land grabbing groups have repeatedly dispossessed them of their land — using forged deeds, intimidation, legal loopholes, and endless lawsuits.

Sanjeeb Drong, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum, said, "Kalapara, Taltoli, Kuakata, Amtali — these areas were once entirely Rakhine. There were waterbodies and forests, and no one else was here. Over 250 years, the population should have grown, but instead, it has drastically

decreased. Many returned to Arakan, some moved to Dhaka, and others were lost to floods and natural disasters."

Once a thriving community across 237 villages, today there are only 44 villages remaining — 27 in Kalapara, 13 in Taltoli and Barguna Sadar, and 4 in Rangabali. Caritas research estimates roughly 2,500 Rakhines now live in these areas, but most of their villages are dominated by Bengali settlers.

forged documents to withdraw around 3 crore BDT. The actual owners never received a single taka," Maung added.

Aung Cho San, a member of Kalachan Para Rakhine Palli, illustrated how deep this forgery runs: "The headman of our community, who served until 1996, had his name left on records even after he was removed. He passed away in 2001, but a case was filed against him in the local

their cultural and spiritual practice. "Ponds are sacred and they keep the water holy," explained Drong. "Temples can be simple tin-roofed structures, but they are vital. Cremation and burial grounds are also required. Without these, the Rakhines



Much of this Rakhine burial ground in Kuakata's Latachaplee area has been encroached upon by local influentials under the guise of tourism expansion. This is not an isolated case — numerous lands belonging to the indigenous community in Kuakata and Barguna have faced the same fate. The photo was taken in May 2022.

PHOTO: STAR

UNYIELDING GRIP OF LAND GRABS

Land grabbing has become rampant, often sanctioned by the powerful or facilitated by legal loopholes. "Due to various kinds of forgery and document fraud, 90-95% of the Rakhines have lost their lands," said Maung Miya, Land and Case Monitoring Officer at the Caritas Barishal Regional Office. "Among the existing Rakhine Pallis, the ownership of land in nearly 26-27 Pallis has been forged."

He cited the eviction of six families from Chho-Ani Para for the construction of Payra Port as an example. "The compensation they were promised for their land was claimed by someone else — a non-Rakhine who produced

land office as if he were still alive." Legally, no case can be filed against a deceased person, yet through forgery, a verdict was obtained in favour of the occupiers.

"Later, another headman died in 2019, but in 2021 a case was filed against him, and the court ruled in favour of the occupiers. We were not informed until the union land office called a meeting about the transfer — only then did we realise what had happened," added San.

SACRED SPACES UNDER THREAT

For the Rakhines, land is more than property — it is sacred. Each village traditionally requires a temple, a holy pond for worship, and a burial ground. These sites are essential to

cannot maintain their community — and soon, there may be none left."

Myenthein Promila, an Adivasi human rights activist, echoes Drong's concerns. "Many Rakhine villages now have only one or two families. They're barely able to maintain their traditions." People from surrounding areas are planting crops on their cremation grounds. Temples and ponds are being encroached upon or polluted.

THE LEGAL VACUUM

The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 applies to the Rakhines, but enforcement is weak. Families with legal deeds still face eviction, and cases drag on for decades.



A partially encroached burial ground of the Rakhines.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN/THE DAILY STAR

Ordinary courts cannot resolve these cases in a timely or just manner, and no special tribunal exists for them either. Families often have to sell dispute-free land just to fund ongoing legal battles.

"The occupiers change with power, but the tendency to occupy does not," said Promila. "Almost all families have on average at least two land-related cases ongoing, some stretching back 40-50 years, passed down from their grandparents. This is causing the Rakhines immense financial and emotional strain."

ACTION OR EXTINCTION Experts and activists agree that special interventions are urgently needed:

- » Establish a special tribunal to resolve land disputes efficiently and fairly.
- » Protect sacred ponds, temples, and burial grounds.
- » Implement social development packages for economic and cultural support.
- » Enforce land rights with consistent monitoring to prevent encroachment.

Maung Miya of Caritas Barishal emphasised the importance of local oversight in land matters: "Before any case reaches the court, the local administration has a responsibility to investigate. There are multiple layers — Zila, Upazila Parishad, and Union Parishad. For transferring land, Rakhines must first obtain a succession certificate from the Union Parishad, then approval from their Rakhine union, and finally permission from the UNO. If these protocols were properly followed, fraudulent transfers could have been detected long before cases reached the courts."

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BANGLADESHI UNIVERSITIES IN DECLINE

Why teacher recruitment must change now



HASINUR RAHAMAN KHAN

Bangladesh today has 171 universities—55 public and 116 private. In less than five decades, the number of higher education institutions has grown more than tenfold. Yet the explosion in quantity has not translated into quality. In the QS World University Rankings 2025, only two Bangladeshi universities, Dhaka University and BUET, appear in the 800–1000 bracket, while none make it to the top 500. In the Times Higher Education rankings, Bangladesh is entirely absent from the global list and performs poorly even in Asia. By contrast, India has 45 universities in the global ranking tables, Pakistan has six, and Sri Lanka two.

Employersechothesamefrustration year after year: graduates often lack analytical skills, problem-solving capacity, creativity, and exposure to research. The World Bank's 2022 education report noted that less than 20% of Bangladeshi graduates are "job ready" for knowledge intensive industries, compared with 40–50% in neighbouring India. The problem is systemic, but at its heart lies one issue we dare not ignore: how we recruit our teachers.

Despite the rapid expansion of universities, recruitment policies remain frozen in outdated and, in many cases, politicised practices. It is a quiet crisis that undermines every attempt to lift higher education to global standards.

Take the example of recent recruitment rules at Jahangirnagar University, as reported in an editorial in *Banik Barta* on September 22, 2025. Candidates were to be scored based on SSC and HSC results, with 15 marks reserved for these high-school grades, while a PhD—a qualification universally recognised as the foundation of university teaching—earned only 5 marks. In Dhaka University's Urdu department last year, a PhD holder with excellent undergraduate and postgraduate results was disqualified simply because his SSC marks fell short of a threshold. This inversion of priorities is not just absurd; it is destructive. It tells a generation of young scholars that world-class research matters less than their teenage exam results.

Worse still, the written exam process for recruiting lecturers in many universities, introduced recently, reduces the selection of future academics to a low-level, rote-based test. Candidates are often asked long or short questions similar to those given in school, college, or university-leaving exams. These exams:

Do not evaluate research ability, critical thinking, or teaching potential. Favour memorisation over creativity, reinforcing exactly the kind of education universities should be moving away from.

Allow scope for manipulation, since grading is opaque and often influenced by internal politics.

Discourage internationally trained PhD holders, or even nationally trained ones, who find it insulting to prove their worth through tests designed for undergraduates rather than scholars.

In most countries, academic recruitment involves evaluating a candidate's PhD research, publications in peer-reviewed journals, teaching philosophy, and research presentation before peers and external experts. In Bangladesh, by contrast, a brilliant PhD from Cambridge or Tokyo might be asked to sit through a two-hour exam testing textbook definitions, while someone with connections or the right SSC marks could sail through.

Bangladesh is not unique in its struggles, but it is increasingly an outlier in South Asia and far behind global standards. To see why, we must first look at how others do it.

THE REGIONAL REALITY

India, with over 1,100 universities, made a PhD mandatory for assistant professor posts more than a decade ago. Its University Grants Commission (UGC) requires candidates to pass the National Eligibility Test (NET), ensuring that even at the entry level, teachers have both depth and breadth. Institutions like the IITs and IIMs have thrived under this model, climbing into global rankings and producing graduates who lead in technology and business worldwide.

Pakistan's Higher Education Commission, formed in 2002, tied faculty recruitment to doctoral training and research output. Thousands of scholars were funded to pursue PhDs abroad, many of whom returned to strengthen Pakistan's universities. Today, institutions such as Quaid-i-Azam University consistently outrank Bangladeshi universities.

Sri Lanka, despite limited resources, requires postgraduate qualifications and often recruits PhDs from abroad. The result: universities in Colombo and Peradeniya appear in the QS Asia rankings, while Bangladesh's larger and better-funded institutions remain absent. Even Nepal's Tribhuvan University demands doctoral or MPhil degrees for senior appointments. Bangladesh's failure is therefore not only global but regional. Within SAARC, we are slipping behind.

GLOBAL STANDARDS

Compare this to the developed world. In the United States, tenure-track faculty positions demand a PhD, a portfolio of publications, and evidence of teaching ability. Hiring committees are independent, external references are mandatory, and candidates present seminars open to colleagues and students alike. Salaries vary but are competitive: assistant professors in state universities earn the equivalent of 6–8 lakh taka per month, far above the starting salary of a Bangladeshi lecturer, which hovers between 35,000–60,000 taka. Research funds, travel grants, and start-up packages for laboratories are routine.

In the UK, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) ties faculty hiring and institutional funding to the quality of research publications. A single paper in *Nature* or *Science* can transform a department's reputation and budget. Germany, with its long Humboldtian tradition of higher education, requires doctoral degrees for virtually all permanent university posts and evaluates candidates primarily on their research output and

ability to secure competitive grants. Professors at public universities often earn the equivalent of 7–9 lakh taka per month, with substantial access to European Union research funds and sabbatical opportunities.

In Asia, Singapore's NUS and NTU openly recruit PhDs from top global universities, offering salaries often exceeding 10 lakh taka per month, housing benefits, and guaranteed research grants. China, too, has made aggressive reforms: Peking and Tsinghua Universities now recruit globally, demanding publication in top-tier journals as a condition of hiring and offering return packages to attract Chinese PhDs from the US and Europe. Faculty salaries have risen sharply in the past two decades, and universities compete to provide housing, research assistants,

choose not to return.

Research support is equally disappointing. According to University Grants Commission (UGC) reports, most public universities allocate on average less than 1% of their annual budget for research. At Dhaka University, the country's premier institution, the research allocation per faculty member often falls below 50,000–75,000 taka a year, barely enough to conduct a small field survey or pay for journal submission fees. Laboratory-based disciplines fare even worse, with outdated equipment and little prospect of replenishment. International travel funds, conference grants, or start-up research packages that are routine in developed countries are virtually absent.

Training and professional development opportunities are



A jam-packed classroom at Dhaka University in the 1960s. Martyred intellectual Mufazzal Haider Chaudhury — a prominent Bengali essayist, prized scholar of Bengali literature, educator, and linguist — is seen delivering a lecture at the Arts Faculty. This powerful image recalls a time when great minds inspired generations.

and start-up funds. South Korea's Seoul National University follows a similar model, tying recruitment and promotion directly to Scopus- or Web of Science-indexed research output. This is the world Bangladesh's universities claim to compete with.

THE BANGLADESHI PICTURE: SALARIES, FACILITIES, TRAINING, CULTURES

The reality at home is sobering. Under the 2015 National Pay Scale, a newly appointed lecturer in a public university starts with a basic salary of 35,500 taka (9th grade). With allowances, the monthly take-home rises to roughly 45,000–50,000 taka. An assistant professor (grade 8) earns about 50,000–70,000 taka, while associate professors (grade 6) may draw 80,000–95,000 taka. A full professor (grade 4) can expect a total package of 1,00,000–1,15,000 taka, sometimes slightly higher with senior allowances. Even at the very top, these salaries rarely exceed 1,30,000 taka per month.

Put in perspective, a mid-level manager in a private telecom company or commercial bank in Dhaka easily earns 2–3 lakh taka monthly, while fresh IT graduates at multinational firms often start above a public university lecturer's salary. The gap is stark, and it explains why many bright graduates hesitate to enter academia, and why PhD holders abroad often

limited. The UGC occasionally arranges workshops on pedagogy or academic writing, but systematic postdoctoral fellowships, sabbaticals, or structured faculty development programmes are almost unheard of. A lecturer who joins at 28 may spend his entire career without a meaningful opportunity for advanced international training unless he secures an external scholarship.

Private universities, while offering slightly better salaries (entry-level faculty often earn 60,000–80,000 taka per month), impose punishing teaching loads. It is common for a faculty member to handle four to five courses per semester, leaving little time for research. Many rely heavily on adjunct or part-time teachers, sometimes professionals with little academic background, eroding long-term institutional growth. Research rarely receives priority; the emphasis falls almost entirely on teaching.

This financial and institutional neglect has created a vicious cycle. Talented Bangladeshi PhD holders, many trained in Europe, North America, or East Asia, prefer to stay abroad, where research facilities, salaries, and academic freedoms allow them to flourish. Those who return face bureaucratic hurdles, low pay, and limited research opportunities. As a result, universities are too often staffed not by the best minds but by

the best-connected. Mediocrity begets mediocrity: underqualified teachers produce underprepared graduates, who in turn lack the skills to lift the nation's knowledge economy.

The decay in teacher recruitment is not merely financial; it is deeply political. For decades, university hiring in Bangladesh has been riddled with nepotism, favouritism, and partisan influence in many cases. Political loyalty often counts for more than academic excellence. The cost of this culture is devastating. Students are taught not by passionate scholars but by teachers chosen for their allegiances. The classroom becomes a space of mediocrity rather than inquiry. Research stagnates, mentorship weakens, and the pipeline of innovation dries up. Graduates emerge with degrees but without skills, unprepared for the demands of a global knowledge economy. Employers complain of "unemployable graduates", while policymakers feign surprise at why universities fail to break into world rankings.

TOWARDS A NEW MODEL

If Bangladesh is serious about building universities that can compete globally, reforming recruitment is non-negotiable. Several changes are urgent:

PhD as the baseline: No appointment should be made at the lecturer or assistant professor level without a PhD, except in rare professional disciplines such as fine arts or law where global practice differs.

Research-weighted criteria: At least 50 percent of recruitment evaluation should depend on international publications, research projects, patents, and citations. A candidate with a PhD from a globally ranked university and Q1 publications must outrank one with only good SSC marks.

Transparent committees: Recruitment boards must include external experts, ideally from outside Bangladesh, to reduce local bias. Open seminars or teaching demonstrations by shortlisted candidates should be mandatory.

Public disclosure: Candidate lists, evaluation criteria, and final scores must be published online for full transparency.

Link pay to research: Salaries should be raised to regional competitive levels, at least tripling current scales. Research allowances, housing, health insurance, and sabbaticals must be built into contracts.

Capacity building: Structured training programmes for early-career faculty should cover pedagogy, research methods, grant writing, and digital teaching tools. Mid-career faculty should have access to postdoctoral training and sabbatical opportunities.

Internationalisation of recruitment: Universities should actively recruit foreign faculty or Bangladeshi diaspora PhDs, offering competitive salaries and research facilities. Joint appointments with international universities should be encouraged.

Diversity and inclusion: Recruitment policies must ensure gender balance, representation of minorities, and fair opportunities for all candidates. Countries like Canada and the UK

have shown that inclusive hiring strengthens institutional reputation.

Academic freedom and autonomy: Candidates should be assured freedom of thought and independence from partisan pressures. Strong faculty governance, as practised in the US and Europe, helps protect this principle.

Digital infrastructure for hiring: Recruitment applications, evaluations, and interviews should be digitised and archived, minimising human manipulation. Remote interviews can also allow international experts to participate at low cost.

Global benchmarking of promotions: Promotion should depend not on seniority but on measurable research impact, teaching evaluations, and service to the academic community. Scopus-indexed publications, citation counts, and international collaboration should be weighted.

Accountability through audits: An independent national academic audit body should review recruitment decisions annually, flagging irregularities and publishing findings publicly.

Link to national priorities: Recruitment should also prioritise expertise in areas critical for Bangladesh's future—climate science, artificial intelligence, public health, and energy—so that universities directly serve the country's development goals.

WHY REFORM CANNOT WAIT

Some will claim that Bangladesh cannot afford sweeping reforms in teacher recruitment. The harsher truth is that we cannot afford not to. Without competent, research-active faculty, our universities will remain little more than factories of certificates, producing graduates unfit for global competition. The ambition of transforming into a knowledge-driven economy will collapse under the weight of mediocrity.

Universities are meant to be engines of national transformation. Stanford's faculty helped give birth to Silicon Valley. Peking and Tsinghua drive China's innovation machine. Even in our own neighbourhood, India's IITs and IIMs nurture the engineers and managers who now lead Google, Microsoft, and global corporations. Bangladesh's universities can and must play a similar role, but only if we dare to recruit teachers based on merit, research, and vision rather than connections and convenience. The cost of inaction is nothing less than the slow strangulation of our future. The time to reform is not tomorrow, not next year, but now.

Bangladesh now stands at a crossroads. One path leads to the comfort of the old order—nepotism, underinvestment, and policies that reward mediocrity. The other demands courage: to embrace global best practices, to value research and merit above all else, and to make teacher recruitment the true foundation of excellence in higher education.

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73 years on, New Market still a shoppers' haven. Here's why

For some, shopping at the market is a test of patience; for others, it is about memories, trust, tradition, and loyalty. Yet for everyone, New Market remains a place where one can find almost anything and, if they know how, at the best price possible

MD ABU TALHA SARKER, SUKANTA HALDER AND JAHIDUR RAHMAN

On Friday afternoons, the footpaths outside New Market are nearly impassable. Shoppers carry bags filled with books, clothes, or crockery, while rickshaws inch forward alongside street vendors frying snacks. Inside, narrow lanes are packed with students, families, and office workers all searching for deals, ignoring the crowd, noise, and dust. Hagglng between sellers and buyers fills the air.

For some, shopping at the market is a test of patience; for others, it is about memories, trust, tradition, and loyalty. Yet for everyone, New Market remains a place where one can find almost anything and, if they know how, at the best price possible.

Seventy-three years after it was built, the Dhaka New Market remains one of Dhaka's busiest commercial hubs. Despite its chaotic atmosphere and the rise of polished shopping malls like Bashundhara City and Jamuna Future Park, the market continues to attract thousands daily. Fires, waterlogging, traffic gridlock, and occasional clashes between customers and sellers have not diminished its pull. The reasons are straightforward: location, affordability, trust, and a deep sense of tradition that binds generations of Dhakaites to the place.

According to the Dhaka New Market Business Association, the market currently has 444 shops and provides employment to

wouldn't come as often," he admits. "But if you have specific needs like I do, New Market is the place. If not, local shops or online orders are fine. Still, I find the visits mostly worth it."

"A month ago, I bought a certificate file for Tk 480 here. The same one is sold for Tk 1,200 elsewhere. Garbage bags cost Tk 240 per kilogramme here, Tk 260 in Mirpur or Savar, and the quality isn't the same. Ceylon cinnamon, Tk 1,260 a kg here, Tk 1,600 in Mirpur. And not available in Savar," he added.

His loyalty extends beyond bargains to personal connections. "I go to the same trustworthy shops every time. They would

students, the steady flow of young customers is one reason the market never seems to slow down.

For many of the shop owners at the market, it is a generational business inherited from their ancestors.

For instance, Jibon Shahadat, who runs the Siraj Magazine Centre near Gate No. 1, has carried forward his father's shop since 1999. According to him, it's the loyalty that keeps his business running.

"Digital media has cut demand for storybooks and magazines, but loyal readers keep coming back," he said. "During Durga

customers had to source pens and erasers abroad. Now they come here for the same items. Even distant shoppers visit, especially for rare products. Sales have doubled since we opened."

Mohammad Anik Khan, a relatively new ceramic goods retailer at the market, described another side of the market. He offers daily household essentials such as bowls, plates, mugs, and salt shakers, per piece priced at Tk 100, catering to a diverse clientele, including middle-class families, students, and hostel residents.

Despite being relatively new to the market, Anik has observed a positive customer response.

He attributes this to the budget-friendly pricing and the good quality of the items, which often leads to customers making repeat purchases.

Even jewellery finds its market here. Mohammad Al Amin, manager of New Milon & Hashem Jewellers, has served for 12 years. "Most customers are repeat buyers because of honesty and quality," he said. "A grandmother once shopped here, now her grandson is also a customer. Gold prices have made business harder, sales dropped by around 50 percent. But people trust us, and that keeps them coming."

Sarees are one of the most popular items. Mohammad Khaled Mamun, owner of Jesimun Sarees, "We stock Katan, Tangail, and Jamdani sarees. Prices range from Tk 800 to Tk 15,000. People know they can find reasonable prices here, unlike malls where everything is expensive."

Imitation jewellery also thrives. Rabbi Hossain, manager of a shop selling antique-style pieces, said: "Students, homemakers, professionals — they come for design, quality, and trust. Daily sales average Tk 20,000–Tk 25,000. We opened a second outlet because customers kept coming."

FROM ELITE BEGINNINGS TO A MARKET FOR ALL

When New Market first opened in 1952 and completed in 1954, it was meant to serve Dhaka's elite. Its futuristic triangular shape, 35 acres of land, and 440 shops made it a modern alternative to Old Dhaka's alleys. At the time, only 25-30 shops opened, leaving ample space to browse. Imported goods, luxury items, and clothing were the primary offerings.

Over time, the market evolved. By the 1980s, it had become a hub for middle-class families seeking household essentials. Today, it serves everyone ranging from students, business owners, working middle-class residents, to occasional affluent visitors. Its location near universities, offices, and healthcare centers ensures constant footfall. Surrounding markets such as Gausia, Globe, Chandrima, Noorjahan, and Nilkhet Book Market have turned the area into a comprehensive shopping hub offering nearly everything at affordable prices.

Even as Dhaka is filled with malls and online shopping platforms, New Market offers flexibility. Customers can buy a single spoon or a whole dinner set, a secondhand book or the latest fashion item. They can spend hours browsing or pick up what they need in minutes. Students, homemakers, and small business owners all find something suited to their needs.

For Dhaka's residents, New Market is more than a shopping complex. It is a place where traditions continue, where students grow into professionals but still return, and where generations of families have bought everything from school uniforms to wedding sarees. It is noisy, chaotic, and sometimes overwhelming.

But after 73 years, its popularity shows no signs of fading.



around 3,000 people. Annual transactions are estimated to exceed Tk 500 crore.

For some, like Sakib Mridha, a landlord from Hazaribagh and a former lecturer at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication at Daffodil International University, the allure lies in both price and reliability.

"I've been coming here for 20 years," Mridha, a regular at the market, said. His usual list includes magazines, garbage bags, utensils, condiments, stationery and other household items.

Even though he now lives in Savar, Sakib often combines errands with a trip to Hazaribagh and the market. "If I didn't need to go there, maybe I

never sell me bad or faulty items. I can't say the same for online shops. I also love the human connections. I've known these people for two decades. We talk, we listen to each other. That matters."

There are downsides too. New Market doesn't offer the most pleasant shopping experience. "It's always crowded, chaotic, everyone shouting, haggling. Professionalism is lacking. The commute is terrible. But still, everything you need is here. Any day, every day."

A large chunk of New Market regulars consists of students from nearby school, college and universities. Located near Dhaka University, Buett, Eden Mohila College, Dhaka College, Dhaka City College among others, it has become an extension of student life.

Hasan Bashir, who studied in the early 2000s, remembers it as a place of freedom where love bloomed. "Back then, there weren't many places where young couples could go without drawing attention. New Market's eateries offered an escape. The people were hospitable, and I still have connections with them."

With a laugh, he added, "My girlfriend from those days is long gone, but I still know the people there. Every visit feels like a trip to that old era, when the crowds weren't so bad and you could spend hours browsing or eating."

For today's students, the reasons are more practical. Everything they need — books, pens, clothes, jewellery, even hostel supplies — can be found at affordable prices. With alone housing n e a r l y 50,000

Puja, one customer ordered every Sharadiya magazine available for his 85-year-old mother. People still value printed material."

Despite economic pressures, the shop nets about Tk 1 lakh a month, reflecting both the challenge and resilience of print media in Dhaka.

Bargaining is a core trait attributed with New Market. The haggling is so intense, that many often brag about the experience and their victory at securing a good deal.

"You need to know how to deal with it," said Sakib. "If you don't know the product and its price, you can get cheated. But that's the same everywhere in the world. I've been to Malaysia, India, Thailand, South Korea — haggling exists everywhere."

For traders, haggling is not just tolerated, it is expected. "Prices are never final," said Abdul Kader, a clothing retailer. "We always leave room for negotiation. If you refuse, the customer feels offended. If you give in too quickly, they think something is wrong with the product."

This culture, combined with the market's accessibility, is a central reason people return.

For many middle-class families, the market is an essential stop during festivals. Parents haggle for clothes, accessories, and gifts, while children wander between bookstores and toy shops. The variety means that everyone, from students to professionals, can find something suited to their budget.

Consistent quality is a deciding factor for drawing in customers. Mohammad Sentu, in business for 25 years, sells car accessories, plastic items, birthday supplies, and stationery. According to him, his customers range from affluent buyers to middle-class families. "Most products come from Chawkbazar and Gulshan, some from China via agents. You have to know your sources and your customers."

At a newly opened Pentel showroom, Rasel Rana spoke about bringing Japanese stationery directly to Dhaka. "Earlier,



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS