

## Alarming rise in sea level on eastern coast

Without proper steps, farmland, infrastructure, and livelihoods will be at risk

A recent scientific study has brought to light a worrying reality for Bangladesh's eastern coast, revealing that it is sinking faster than the central and western coasts amid rising sea levels, posing serious threats to vast swathes of farmland, the livelihoods of millions, and critical infrastructure. According to the report, the sea level on the eastern Chattogram coastal plain is increasing at a rate of 4.73 millimetres per year, the fastest in the country. In contrast, the sea level on the western Sundarbans tidal plain is rising by 3.66 millimetres annually, while the Meghna estuarine floodplain in the central region is experiencing a rise of 2.4 millimetres per year. Reportedly, more than 43 million people live in the country's coastal areas, which lie only about 1 to 1.5 metres above the sea level; so even a small increase in sea level could pose serious risks to the region. Given this reality, the reported increase along the eastern coast justifiably raises concern.

The study—published in the scientific journal Geomatics, Natural Hazards and Risk—also reveals how the combined effect of rising seas and land subsidence has accelerated the sinking of the eastern coastline. The eastern plains of Chattogram and Cox's Bazar are witnessing rapid urbanisation and large-scale infrastructural projects, such as the Matarbari Power Plant. Construction and deep piling for these projects are contributing to subsidence in the region. In contrast, the western coast, protected by the Sundarbans' natural mangrove buffer and subject to less urban development, faces a comparatively slower rate of sea level rise. This difference highlights how poorly planned human activities are intensifying risks along the eastern coast. Moreover, increasing tidal ranges are raising the risks of flooding and erosion in the area.

Another government study recently found that Bangladesh is experiencing a faster rate of sea-level rise than the global average, which will have a greater impact on food production and livelihoods than previously anticipated. As a country already struggling to support and rehabilitate displaced climate refugees, the threat of further loss of livelihoods calls for stronger climate adaptation and resilience measures.

Experts warn that blanket climate policies will fail to address the nuanced challenges that vary between coastal regions. They suggest that disaster preparedness and adaptation strategies should be tailored to each coastal zone's unique environment. Moreover, infrastructure projects need to incorporate climate data from the planning stages to ensure long-term resilience. Additionally, continuous satellite and ground-based monitoring is essential to provide real-time insights for informed decision-making and adaptive management. Equally importantly, harmful human activities that accelerate land subsidence must be prevented to stop further damage to the eastern coast.

## Will Palestinians have a say in their future?

Israeli violence has continued in Gaza despite Trump's peace plan

It is alarming that even after US President Donald Trump's appeal for a ceasefire in Gaza, Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling have continued, wreaking havoc on residential areas and killing at least 20 individuals, including children. These ongoing attacks starkly highlight the futility of any peace plan drafted under such conditions. Trump's 20-point plan, endorsed by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, ostensibly aims to end hostilities, secure the release of hostages, facilitate a gradual Israeli withdrawal, etc. Hamas has indicated a willingness to release hostages but has called for negotiation over the plan's details and for a voice in Gaza's governance. But for any plan to proceed as decided or discussed, Israeli strikes must end first. Even then it may not be enough as the plan sidelines the Palestinian people entirely, offering a "solution" imposed from above without meaningful Palestinian representation.

Some Arab countries have expressed support for the plan, while others have urged more careful deliberation, recognising that any agreement lacking Palestinian input risks failure. Arab nations have a crucial role to play in amplifying Palestinian voices and ensuring that humanitarian relief and protection of civilians remain central to ongoing negotiations. Without this intervention, the plan risks legitimising continued violence while ignoring the urgent needs of Gaza's population.

The absence of any reference to the internationally endorsed two-state solution further weakens the Trump peace plan. For decades, the two-state framework has been the basis for international diplomacy and conflict resolution in the region. Its exclusion, coupled with the ongoing attacks, underscores the imbalance of power in current negotiations and the ease with which Israel's ultra-rightist government can dictate terms. Any durable resolution must centre the Palestinians' rights and aspirations, rather than merely offering a temporary cessation of hostilities.

The persistent humanitarian crisis in Gaza grows more desperate by the day. Even as world leaders call for calm, civilians continue to bear the brunt of Israeli strikes, which have so far claimed more than 66,000 Palestinian lives. It therefore must be reiterated that the moral and political credibility of any peace plan depends on its ability to protect lives, restore basic services, and provide Palestinians with a genuine voice in shaping their future.

Stopping the killing is non-negotiable. Without an inclusive, enforceable, and humane framework, Trump's plan is likely to be yet another paper promise in a long history of failed initiatives. There is still time to rectify this. We urge the Trump administration, the wider international community, and Arab nations to act decisively to ensure that Gaza's people do not remain trapped in geopolitical manoeuvring, but rather receive the protection, justice, and hope that have eluded them for so long.

## Is accuracy too much to ask of a July martyrs' list?



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The listing of July martyrs was never meant to be just another bureaucratic formality. It symbolises the state's pledge to remember our heroes properly—an obligation to honour, not merely record, those who died or bled during the uprising. A credible list is also the stepping stone for ensuring justice and preserving national memory for posterity. Yet, according to a recent investigative report by Prothom Alo, at least 52 of the 834 martyrs listed officially do not meet the legal definition of a July martyr. In other words, these individuals were not July martyrs at all, yet they received the recognition.

This has not only diminished the dignity of actual martyrs but also exposed a failure long entrenched within state institutions—including the ministry responsible for the botchwork—to uphold truth as a solemn public duty.

In matters like this, the importance of truth cannot be overstated. Regardless of what led to the flawed compilation, the fact that it has happened seems inevitable in hindsight, given our history of mismanagement and politicisation in such listings over the decades, most notably in the case of freedom fighters, whose rolls remain questionable to this day. Laz verification, institutional complacency, and the temptation to inflate lists for political or financial gain have created a culture in which errors—and even deliberate falsifications—can pass unchecked. False information misdirects or denies justice, wastes resources, and erodes trust. And when the state itself gets vital facts wrong, the consequences are far graver, as historical truth forms one of the foundations of collective identity.

The July Uprising Martyr Families and July Warriors Welfare and Rehabilitation Ordinance, 2025 clearly states that only those killed by state security forces or ruling party affiliates during the uprising qualify as July martyrs. But the current list, according to Prothom Alo, includes 35 people who died in arson-related fires, three in road accidents, two from illness, one from electrocution, and several killed in personal disputes or clashes unrelated to the uprising. Even three policemen, a Chhatra League leader, and one involved in attacks on July protesters were included. If a newsroom can expose such clearly

verifiable cases of ineligibility within two months, what were the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and the Directorate of July Mass Uprising doing with all their mandate, budget, and resources?

This is not a victimless error. It diverts benefits away from the families of true martyrs, rewards undeserving families, signals to citizens that the



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state's memory can be gamed, thus making a mockery of the whole process. Meanwhile, many families who lost loved ones in the uprising still wait for proper recognition and assistance. Against this backdrop, seeing the roll of honour padded with ineligible names is not just insulting; it is an injustice that prolongs suffering. The benefits attached to state recognition—including Tk. 30 lakh, monthly stipends, and flats in Dhaka—have understandably created strong incentives for cheating. Previously, the July Shahid Smriti Foundation also reported forged papers and photoshopped injuries. This is the

so citizens can see that the law, not connections, is driving decisions.

Second, separate recognition from payment. Create a two-gate process: first, determine status through an independent vetting panel chaired by a retired judge along with medical-forensic and human-rights experts; second, release benefits only after documentary corroboration—FIRs, autopsy reports, medical records, or verified witness statements—has been digitally cross-checked. Publish a redacted case digest for every confirmed martyr.

Third, harden the data. Assign each case a unique digital ID, mandate

the republic will measure itself for generations. Inflating the martyrs' count for politics or personal gain is wrong. What is right is ensuring accuracy, even when it is slow or costly. Accuracy dignifies the dead, steadies the living, and teaches the young that public honour is earned, not invented.

The government cannot congratulate itself for re-verifying a list it should never have botched in the first place. Until the revised roll is complete, public, and auditable, the only honest verdict is this: the government has broken public trust in this respect, and it must earn it back, line by verified line.

## Can Trump's proposal deliver real peace for Gaza?



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The world welcomed Hamas's acceptance of US President Trump's proposal. Although it was only a partial acceptance, it revived justified optimism that a genuine process to end the massacre and destruction in Gaza could begin. This resolution comes after Israel's war in Gaza killed at least 66,288 Palestinians and wounded around 170,000. Hamas withstood intense pressure from critics who argued that acceptance would constitute a humiliating surrender and mark the liquidation of the Palestinian cause, reinforcing what Israeli media portrayed as Israel's coronation as regional hegemon.

Hamas's acceptance directly undermined Netanyahu's expectations. He found himself forced to tone down his usual rhetoric. He ceased repeating his mantra of "absolute victory," and the Israeli forces amassed in Gaza shifted their stance from attack to defence. This marked a significant change from just a day earlier, when Israeli Defence Minister Katz threatened to unleash "hell" on Gaza.

We remain in the early hours of a long and difficult path towards ending the war. The immediate priorities should include reconstruction of the demolished Gaza Strip, delivery of humanitarian aid, and transitioning the Israeli army from defence to withdrawal. Once all hostages return, maintaining a military presence becomes unnecessary.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and the UAE issued a joint statement welcoming the proposal to rebuild Gaza, prevent Palestinian displacement, and block annexation of the West Bank. The ministers emphasised their readiness to work with the United States to secure a comprehensive deal guaranteeing unrestricted humanitarian aid, the release of hostages, full Israeli withdrawal, and the creation of a Palestinian state integrating Gaza and the West Bank. Their statement highlighted regional diplomacy with the global push for peace.

It is equally important to recognise

that this diplomatic opening would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of activists around the world. For nearly two years, civil society groups, human rights organisations, student movements, and ordinary citizens have kept Gaza at the centre of global attention. They marched in capitals, organised boycotts, pressured their governments, and documented every atrocity to ensure that Palestinian suffering could not be ignored. Most recently, the global Sumud Flotilla and Media Coalition—at the heart of which were renowned Bangladeshi photojournalist Shahidul Alam and Bangladeshi aid worker Ruhি Akhter—attempted to break the siege of Gaza, adding further pressure on Israel. Their persistence helped shift public opinion in Western states, forcing leaders who

once avoided the issue to confront the political costs of silence. In many ways, the growing international recognition of a Palestinian state and the pressure now bearing down on Israel and the United States are the fruits of these grassroots struggles. Without such relentless advocacy, the push for a ceasefire and a just peace might never have gained its current momentum and urgency.

Hope is now rekindled for an end to this war. This is a moment of immense relief for all Palestinians. Our joy lies in the cessation of the insufferable bloodbath that engulfed Gaza for two brutal years, and even earlier. Yet, our victory will not be complete until the occupation and settlement in the West

Bank also end. President Trump must be convinced of this link: what happens in Gaza cannot be separated from the broader path to peace in the Middle East. It is time to open the Palestinian file not only through recognition but through the actual establishment of the state.

The wave of international recognition has revived the Palestinian cause, but it must not stop at Gaza. It must extend to the full Palestinian struggle, resulting in an end to occupation and settlement expansion in the West Bank as well. These recognitions reflect the will of the world, but that will was forged by the sacrifices of the Palestinian people and their steadfast commitment to homeland, freedom, and independence.

Furthermore, Hamas's acceptance of Trump's proposal has backed Israel into a corner. Yet much remains at stake, and the outcome will depend on the painful details of negotiations over hostage exchanges, troop withdrawals, reconstruction, and the long-denied recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. For now, the tide has turned, but it would be naive to believe that power concedes without resistance. The people of the world, whose solidarity and activism helped bring this moment into existence, must remain vigilant—for only constant pressure can ensure that this fragile opening becomes the foundation of a just and lasting peace in Palestine and the broader Middle East.