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25 former, serving military officers charged at ICT

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

The prosecution yesterday formally charged 28 people, including ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 23 top and mid-ranking current and former army officers, at International Crimes Tribunal-1 in two cases of enforced disappearances, secret detention, and torture in the 15 years of her rule.

In a third case, formal charges were pressed against former Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials Lt Col Redwan Islam, Major Md Rafat Bin Alam Mun and two police officers over the killings of 28 people and crimes against humanity in Rampura during the July uprising last year.

Altogether in the three cases – two over enforced disappearance and one over killings in Rampura – 25 former and serving army officers have been formally charged.

In both cases of enforced disappearance, Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former defence and security adviser to Hasina, is a co-accused of the deposed prime minister. Former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal is also accused in one of these cases.

A prosecutor told The Daily Star that in the two cases, nine of the accused are former and 13 are serving army officers. They had served in the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). It could not be confirmed whether another brigadier general accused in one of the cases is currently in service or retired.

The tribunal took cognisance of all the charges in the three cases and issued arrest warrants against the accused. The three-member panel fixed October 22 for the next hearing and directed the authorities concerned to produce the accused that day.



This is an unprecedented development. In the past, no military officers were ever charged with crimes against humanity, so the question of their trial in a civil court simply did not arise.

Maj Gen (retd) ANM Muniruzzaman



This is the first time in Bangladesh's history that serving military officers have been charged in a civil court for alleged crimes against humanity.

"This is an unprecedented development," said Maj Gen (retd) ANM Muniruzzaman. "In the past, no military officers were ever charged with crimes against humanity, so the question of their trial in a civil court simply did not arise. Offences by serving officers were typically tried in military courts under service regulations," he told The Daily Star.

Speaking to journalists after filing the charges, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said that under the amended law, individuals can no longer be treated as serving officers once they are formally charged in the ICT.

On Monday, the government amended the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, barring individuals facing formal charges from holding or running for public office. They are also ineligible for appointment to or for holding any service of the republic.

During the hearing, Tajul read out the formal charges, naming the accused and the specific allegations against them.

Several victims of enforced disappearance, including former Brig Gen Abdullahil Aman Azmi, son of late Jamaat-e-Islami chief Ghulam Azam, Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem, son of late Jamaat leader Mir Quasem Ali, Human Quader Chowdhury, son of late BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Mikel Chakma, and former army officer Hasinur Rahman, were present in court.

Tajul said the tribunal instructed relevant agencies, including the police and the services where the accused are employed, to carry out the arrests.

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EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

Ex-Rab men give chilling accounts of Ziaul's role

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances with the support of the cultural ministry produced a documentary titled "Unfolding the Truth" in which former Rab officers directly implicated Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan.

Ziaul Ahsan, now behind bars, led Rab's intelligence wing as its additional director general (operations) and served as the director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre until August 5, 2024.

Nur Khan Liton, a commission member, in the documentary said, "There is an army camp at the foot of that bridge. A trawler had been brought there from the Sundarbans... the boat recovered from

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Displaced Palestinian children search for items that could be used as fuel for cooking amid a pile of garbage at the Bureij camp for refugees in the central Gaza Strip.

PHOTO: AFP

JULY CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION Parties sharply split over referendum timing

Commission likely to give options to govt by Sunday

MD ABBAS

The National Consensus Commission's talks with political parties ended yesterday with no agreement on the timing of a referendum to secure public approval for implementing the July Charter.

While the BNP and its allies proposed holding the referendum on the same day as the next general election in February 2026, the Jamaat-e-Islami, the National Citizen Party (NCP), and several others insisted it be held earlier, preferably by November.

As the meeting, which began in the afternoon and continued until 11:15pm, concluded without a consensus, commission members said they would now prepare a proposal package for the interim government based on the opinions of both political parties and constitutional experts.

The commission's term ends on October 15, and it plans to submit its final report, including the completed charter, to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus by next Sunday. A signing ceremony for the charter is expected before the commission's term expires.

After the meeting, Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz told reporters that experts made five key recommendations, including a special order to implement the charter; a referendum under that order; and two

questions on ballot to reflect both agreement and dissent.

The experts also recommended elections to both a Constitution Reform Assembly and the next parliament. They said the approved reforms from the charter must be incorporated into the constitution within a fixed timeframe.

According to commission sources, after collecting opinions from all sides, the commission will hold an internal meeting today to finalise its written recommendations to the government on implementing the July Charter.

Riaz added that the commission would finalise its advice within one or two days and send it to the government while informing all participating parties.

Earlier in the day, the commission also held a two-hour consultation with constitutional experts, who warned that holding the referendum under an ordinance could create legal complications since such ordinances

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Israel detains Shahidul Alam and 144 others
Bangladesh approaches Middle Eastern ally to secure his release

STAR REPORT

Another Gaza-bound aid flotilla, this one carrying Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam and over 140 journalists, doctors and activists from all over the world, was intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters yesterday.

As part of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC), Shahidul's ship, the Conscience, along with eight other smaller vessels, was sailing toward war-ravaged Gaza to challenge Israel's blockade and deliver humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the besieged enclave.

This is the second such interception, after Israel last week stopped about 40 vessels and detained more than 450 activists in an aid convoy, the Global Sumud Flotilla, that was also attempting to deliver supplies to Gaza.

In a prerecorded video message posted on Facebook around 10:20am yesterday, Shahidul introduced himself and said, "If you are seeing this video, we have been intercepted at sea, and I've been kidnapped by the occupation forces of Israel, the country conducting genocide in Gaza with the active collaboration and assistance of the USA and other Western powers."



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NEWS ANALYSIS

Public admin adrift amid leadership vacuum

BAHARAM KHAN

For the first time in two decades, the public administration ministry has been running without a secretary for more than two weeks.

The vital position remains vacant at a time when the ministry is struggling to restore stability and a sense of ease in the civil administration that descended into disarray following the Awami League government's fall on August 5 last year.

What the administration needed was firm steps from the interim government to navigate its way out of troubled waters. Instead, the government made some decisions that sparked controversies, with the latest one being the transfer of the public administration secretary to the Planning Commission as a member.

To the astonishment of many, the secretary accepted the transfer to a less significant post, slipping from the third-highest position in bureaucracy to one of less importance.

Over the past two decades, no public administration secretary has been reassigned to such a role.

Secretaries appointed on contract are expected to complete their terms since the very purpose of such practice is to bring in qualified and experienced individuals to carry out specific responsibilities. Once the purpose is fulfilled, the logical course of action is to either release them or extend their contracts.

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Khawaja Naim Murad, right, and his daughter Nameera Naim display ornament designs at the family home in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



The Ahsan Manzil, a government museum and the former residence of Sir Salimullah Bahadur -- the former prince or Nawab of Dhaka, in Dhaka.



Khawaja Naim Murad shows a painting of the Daria-i-Noor during an interview with AFP in Dhaka.

PHOTO: AFP/MUNIR UZ ZAMAN

Daria-i-Noor, 'sister' to Koh-i-Noor, awaits first light in 117 yrs

Committee to inspect legendary diamond mortgaged by Nawab Salimullah in 1908

BAHARAM KHAN

For over a century, one of the world's most legendary gemstones has remained hidden -- locked in silence, shrouded in myth, and cloaked in official secrecy.

Bangladesh government has decided that the time has come to finally lift the veil on the Daria-i-Noor (Sea of Light), a diamond many believe to be the "sister gem" of the famed Koh-i-Noor (Mountain of Light).

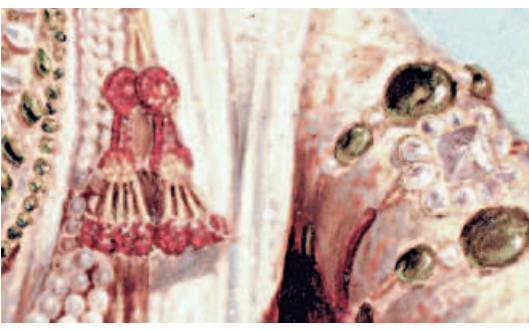
Next week, a high-powered committee led by Cabinet Secretary Abdur Rashid is set to inspect the Daria-i-Noor inside Sonali Bank's vault, where it has been kept for an astonishing 117 years.

According to the Land Reform Board, the saga of the Daria-i-Noor began when Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka mortgaged the diamond along with 109 other ornaments to the government of the then province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in exchange for a loan of 1.4 million rupees. That could amount to Tk 1,320,1848 crore in 2025 if the average annual inflation rate is 4.5-5% over 117 years.

The loan, which was supposed to be repaid in 30 years at an annual interest rate of 3 percent, remains unsettled to this day.

Since then, the diamond has remained under government custody -- its location marked in official records but unseen by human eyes. Over the decades, those tasked with safeguarding it never dared to open the sealed box. The fear of being held accountable for any discrepancy, or worse, the discovery of an empty casket, kept everyone from verifying its contents.

Ali Imam Majumder, the current land adviser, has long called for clarity. After taking office, he renewed



Daria-i-Noor Diamond on the left hand of Maharaja Sher Singh painted by August Schaefft, circa 1841-42.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

his plea to the government, urging that the matter be made public. It was at his initiative that a nine-member committee -- comprising senior bureaucrats, security officials, and a gem specialist -- was formed under the leadership of the Cabinet Secretary.

After two rounds of meetings, the committee resolved to open the box and reveal the truth to the nation. To ensure a smooth and secure operation, a six-member subcommittee carried out a preliminary "rehearsal" at Sonali Bank on October 5. The procedures to be followed during the actual unveiling are now being finalised.

"If we do not open the box, controversy will persist," a committee member told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity. "But if any mistakes occur during the process, the government could face severe criticism.

Land Adviser Ali Imam Majumder told The Daily Star that the media will be informed about the next course of action.

That's why we've done a pre-inspection -- to make sure everything is handled with utmost caution. The interest surrounding this gem extends far beyond Bangladesh."

A senior official at Sonali Bank confirmed that a delegation led by the home secretary had recently examined the vault's condition and its security measures. "The process to open the box is now underway and expected to take place next week," he said.

During the pre-inspection, officials discovered that the vault allows entry to no more than four individuals at a time -- a logistical challenge that will likely prolong the operation. "We cannot say exactly how long the process will take," the committee member added. "To avoid disruptions, food and refreshments will be arranged so that no one needs to step out until the inspection is complete."

Given the space constraint, only Bangladesh Television will be permitted to enter the vault to film the proceedings. Other media outlets will be briefed later.

"It won't be a live broadcast," clarified one member. "But the entire process will unfold before the cameras, ensuring complete transparency."

"No one will carry personal devices inside. Every individual entering or leaving the vault will undergo thorough screening. Special Branch passes are being arranged for everyone involved," said another committee member.

Land Adviser Ali Imam Majumder told The Daily Star that the media will be informed about the next course of action.

25 former, serving military officers

FROM PAGE 1

In one of the cases, Hasina, Tarique, five former DGFI chiefs, five former directors of its Counter Terrorism and Intelligence Bureau (CTIB), and another former DGFI official have been accused on five counts related to enforced disappearances and torture at the DGFI's Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC).

The former DGFI chiefs are Lt Gen (retd) Md Akbar Hossain, Lt Gen (retd) Md Saiful Alam, Lt Gen (retd) Ahmed Tabrez Shams Chowdhury, Maj Gen (retd) Md Saiful Abedin, and Maj Gen (retd) Hamidul Haque.

The former CTIB directors are Maj Gen Sheikh Md Sarwar Hossain, Maj Gen (retd) Mohammad Towhidul Islam, Maj Gen Kabir Ahmed, Brig Gen Md Mahbubur Rahman Siddique, and Brig Gen Ahmed Tanvir Mazahar Siddique. Former DGFI official Lt Col (retd) Mokhsurul Haque was also named.

Another case accuses Hasina, Tarique, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, former Rab chiefs Benazir Ahmed, M Khurshid Hossain and Harun or Rashid, along with 11 army officers who served in Rab. The charges include detaining political activists, journalists, bloggers, and others with dissenting views in secret prisons. They allegedly subjected detainees to torture and, in some cases, killed them inside the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell at the Rab-1 compound.

The current and former army officers accused in the case are Col (retd) Anwar Latif Khan, Brig Gen Md Jahangir Alam, Brig Gen Tofail

Mostafa Sarwar, Brig Gen Kamrul Hasan, Brig Gen Md Mahbub Alam, Col K M Azad, Col Abdullah Al Momen, Lt Col (retd) Muhammad Khairul Islam, Lt Col Md Moshiur Rahman Jewel, and Lt Col Saiful Islam Sumon, and Lt Col Sarwar Bin Kashem.

The third case accuses Lt Col Redwanul, Maj Rafat, DMP's former additional deputy commissioner of Khilgaon Division Md Rashedul Islam, and former Rampura Police Station officer-in-charge Md Mashirul Rahman on six counts for allegedly killing 28 people and committing crimes against humanity in Rampura during the July uprising.

A joint investigation by The Daily Star and Tech Global Institute revealed how Rampura became a hotspot of state-sanctioned killings on July 19, 2024.

According to the report published on August 7 this year, forensic analysis indicated Lt Col Redwanul fired a Type 56 assault rifle, potentially killing at least one victim -- 14-year-old Asifullah Islam.

In-depth forensic analyses confirmed a match by comparing footage from Banasree and Rampura, indicating that the same suspected shooter was present in both locations. The Daily Star independently verified his name and identity. Sources in intelligence agencies, the International Crimes Tribunal, and journalists who were present on the ground identified him as Lt Col Redwanul.

Speaking to reporters after the proceedings, Tajul said prosecutors

had already substantiated several allegations among thousands of complaints received, forming the basis of the formal charges now before the tribunal.

Describing the formal charges in stark detail to the tribunal and later to the journalists, Tajul listed methods of torture allegedly used in secret detention: prolonged beatings, electric chairs, electric shocks, genital electrocution, severing of limbs, and cutting open abdomens before dumping bodies in the Buriganga river.

"One day or another, every perpetrator must face trial.... Now that proceedings have begun, efforts will be made to conclude them lawfully in the shortest possible time," he added.

The chief prosecutor also told the tribunal that "Ayna Ghar", also referred to as "Art Gallery", was a code name used by Rab for its secret detention facilities. Detainees were assigned symbolic titles, with the most valuable referred to as "Mona Lisa". The Rab's "Ayna Ghar" or TFI Cell was euphemistically called the "Hospital" or "Clinic".

Speaking to the media after the court proceedings, several victims who endured years of unlawful detention said they sought justice, not revenge.

They described severe mental and physical abuse and urged fair trials so such abuses never recur. They also called for perpetrators, at home or abroad, to be brought to justice and for victims' families to receive compensation.

Identify the roles of those involved in three successive national polls.

Ex-Rab men

FROM PAGE 1

the bandit was brought by General Ziaul Ahsan's team. And later we learned that, under General Ziaul Ahsan's direct supervision, many people were taken there in the dead of night. The people who were about to be killed were called packets, or roosters or subjects."

Anonymised testimonies of former Rab officers were released in the government-produced documentary.

An officer said, "They would not tell us where the destination is. They would reach a spot and say 'slow down'. When they said slow down, that's when we realised the process would start."

He said they would then bring the victims out of the hull opening a hatch and tie sacks of cement to their knees.

After tying, they place the sack right near the feet. The second man hands over the pillow. Using that pillow [to dampen the gunshot sound], he [Ziaul Ahsan] takes the shot," said the former officer.

"Sir's preferred target is the head... he fires one round, or sometimes two. The need for the second round arises only when he [Ziaul Ahsan] feels someone's [shooter's] hand had trembled. Then he would say, 'second shot,'" the officer said.

Another former officer then showed a photo of a trawler. He said that the victims used to be kept in the hull to hide them from the boatmen.

Another former officer, an eyewitness, said, "Zia shot the victim. I don't remember if Zia himself threw the body overboard or if someone else with Zia did it. But the body was shot and thrown."

Another officer told the commission that the victims were killed with lethal injections. He said, "Sir [Ziaul Ahsan] himself used to push the injection."

Identify the roles of those involved in three successive national polls.

For the elections, the first line of responsibility lies with the Election Commission and senior officials of the EC Secretariat. Alongside them, the cabinet secretary, principal secretary, and secretaries of the public administration and home ministries carry direct responsibility.

Scores of officials from the admin cadre have already been punished without due procedure for their "controversial role" in the elections.

But what about officers from different government agencies who were also entrusted with election duties? The point is not that they too should be punished arbitrarily, but that there should be a uniform standard of accountability for all.

This reflects a lack of coordination between the Secretariat and the field

Parties sharply split

FROM PAGE 1

and another as a constituent assembly. The first session will have constituent power, and from the second session onward, it will function as a regular parliament," he said.

He added that the referendum should be held before the national election, possibly in the first week of November if decided soon.

NCP Joint Convener Javed Rasin echoed that position, saying, "Reforms should not be done in a way that could later be challenged or cancelled. We must focus on making them sustainable."

He warned that holding the referendum on the same day as the election would make it lose importance.

The July Charter Implementation Order should decide whether the charter will be implemented, and the next parliament must be given special constituent powers since the basic structure of the constitution is being changed," he said.

Another NCP Joint Convener, Sarwar Tusher, said if the parties could resolve their "notes of dissent" -- for example, if Jamaat dropped its demand for proportional representation in the lower house and BNP accepted it for the upper house -- it could serve as a good compromise.

OTHER VIEWS
Parties and alliances, including Ganatantra Mancha, the 12 Party Alliance, CPB, BSD, Bangladesh JASAD, and LDP supported holding the referendum on the same day as the national election.

The Ganatantra Mancha proposed holding it under a July Charter Implementation Order, with the next parliament's first session named the "Constitution Reform Assembly", where dissenting issues would be resolved through discussion.

CPB, BSD, and their allies proposed holding the referendum under the 1991 Referendum Act instead of issuing a new order, while BNP-aligned parties preferred using an ordinance and letting the regular parliament settle constitutional issues later.

Clarification

The Daily Star ran a report on Tuesday headlined "BNP confident it'll win, form govt alone," based on an interview of BNP's acting chairperson, Tarique Rahman, published by the UK-based Financial Times. In its initial report, the FT mentioned that Bangladesh was ranked the world's most corrupt country by Transparency International for five consecutive years during the BNP's last stint in power. However, the FT later corrected the reference to clarify that Bangladesh held that position for four consecutive years. We regret any inconveniences. We have already changed it in our online version accordingly.

Prof Yunus to visit Rome on Oct 12 to join WFP meeting

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus will leave for Rome, the capital of Italy, on October 12 to join a global meeting of the World Food Programme (WFP).



Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam disclosed the information at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

Apart from delivering a speech at the WFP event, he said, the Chief Adviser will meet high profile personalities on the sidelines of the meeting.

He also briefed the media about the details of a meeting of the National Steering Committee held at the Chief Adviser's Office in the city's Tejgaon area with Prof Yunus in the chair.

ROAD ACCIDENT IN OMAN

Eight Bangladeshi workers killed

BSS, Dhaka

Eight Bangladeshi expatriate workers were killed in a road accident in Oman yesterday.

"Nine Bangladeshis, including the driver, were heading towards Dukum Sidra, about 650 kilometres from Muscat, in a microbus when the accident occurred," Asadul Haque, First Secretary (Labour) at the Bangladesh Embassy in Muscat, told BSS over the phone this evening.

He said the vehicle collided with a large fishing container truck on the road around 3:00pm (Oman time), leaving eight Bangladeshi workers dead and the driver critically injured. The injured driver was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment, Haque added.

He said they were travelling to the seaside for fishing.

The identities of the deceased are yet to be confirmed, but it is believed that most of them were from Sandwip upazila in Chattogram district, Haque said.

An official from the Bangladesh Embassy in Muscat has already reached the accident site to provide necessary assistance. The bodies of the deceased have been kept at different hospitals in the area.

The embassy will take necessary measures to send the bodies back to Bangladesh following due procedures, the labour official said.

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No safe waters for mother hilsa

Despite drone patrols, mobile courts, illegal fishing goes on amid 22-day ban

SUSHANTA GHOSH, SOHRAB HOSSAIN, TANJIL HASAN and ALAM PALASH

Even amid intensified monitoring to protect mother hilsa during the ongoing 22-day fishing ban, illegal fishing continues unabated across five sanctuaries.

Night-time fishing continues in hilsa hotspots such as the Meghna, Kalabari, Tetulia, and Bishkhali rivers, particularly in Barishal's Hijla and Mehendiganj, as well as in Bhola.

Seasonal fishermen are also setting nets in smaller canals, violating the ban. When law enforcers approach, they often hide or escape into narrow waterways.

In early October, patrol teams in Bakerganj and Hijla faced resistance from fishermen during drives. Seven people were arrested and local weapons were seized, said Barishal District Fisheries Officer Ripon Kanti Ghosh.

Hijla Upazila Fisheries Officer Mohammad Alam said, "Some of these fishermen were also engaged in robbery on the rivers."

Locals in Barishal city's Kaunia area said some fishermen have been delivering fresh hilsa door-to-door at night, offering them at half price.

Meanwhile, allegations have surfaced against some fisheries staffers for aiding

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Trawlers lie idle at Rashmoni launch ghat in Chattogram.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

EU to send observers for upcoming polls: Khosru

UNB, Dhaka

The European Union has decided to send election observers to Bangladesh for the upcoming national election, said BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

"The EU's decision came following requests from the government and the Election Commission. They are eagerly waiting to see a fair, transparent and acceptable election in Bangladesh," he said.

He made the remarks while talking to reporters after a meeting between BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller

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Teachers forced to resign since uprising to get salaries

Says education ministry

STAR REPORT

The Ministry of Education has issued a directive on the payment of salaries and allowances for principals, headteachers, and other teachers of non-government educational institutions who were forced to resign since the July uprising.

The directive was issued yesterday in a letter signed by Syed AZ Morshed Ali, deputy secretary (additional charge) of the ministry's Secondary and Higher Education Division, reports BSS.

According to the letter, although investigations on teachers and staffers

If any official or authority obstructs or refuses to cooperate in the payment process, necessary action will be taken against them in accordance with the rules.

who were forced to resign since July uprising are underway, salaries and allowances of many have been stopped – leaving them in dire conditions, as per their applications.

The letter instructs that until allegations brought against them are resolved, salaries and allowances of the teachers concerned must continue.

Authorities have also been instructed to ensure the payment of their salaries and allowances by including their names in the electronic fund transfer (EFT) system.

It also warned that if any official or authority obstructs or refuses to

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Crimes, flash processions will decline as polls near
Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said the upcoming national election would be peaceful and festive if everyone plays their part.

"People are the biggest stakeholders, and they are already aware and engaged. Once people become election-minded, nothing can stop the process," said the adviser.

Speaking to reporters at the DMP Headquarters, Jahangir said crimes and flash processions had already started to decline and would reduce further as the country enters election mode.

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CREATIVE CAMPAIGNS breathe life into Cucusu polls



SM MAHFUZ AHMED

With the reopening of campus after the Durga Puja vacation, candidates in the Chittagong University Central Students' Union (Cucusu) election have launched their campaigns in full swing.

From uniquely designed leaflets and handbills to QR-coded manifestos and symbol-shaped flyers, candidates are showcasing remarkable creativity to capture the attention of voters.

A total of 908 contenders are running for various positions in the Cucusu and hall union elections, scheduled for October 15.

Campaign materials have taken striking forms. Some leaflets are shaped like passports, globes, and national symbols, while others reflect ballot numbers or campaign pledges through symbolic designs.

Designs have ranged from hammers, fans, and teacups to more unconventional ones like rifles, dollar bills, and the university's own logo.

The creative wave has been welcomed by voters, who say such innovations have brought new energy to campus politics after a gap of 35 years since the last Cucusu election.

Executive member candidate Mir Sumaiya Ahmed has printed her flyers in four languages – Chakma, Marma, Chattgaiya, and Bangla – symbolising inclusivity.

Shahriyan Ahmed Onim, contesting for career development and

international affairs secretary, crafted a globe-shaped leaflet.

From the Jatiyatabadi Chhatri Dal panel, executive member candidate Md Mahbubul Hasan printed cards shaped like an AK-47 rifle, as his ballot number is 47.

Shahid Farhad Hossain Hall AGS candidate Kazi Tafhimul Haque distributed dollar-shaped leaflets, while law and human rights secretary contender Abdullah Al Sakif Rahman opted for hammer-shaped ones.

Monir Hossain, GS candidate of Shahid Abdur Rob Hall, used the map of Palestine to symbolise solidarity.

Meanwhile, Shahidul Islam Sami, a candidate from "Binirman Shikkharthi Oikya", designed bus-shaped flyers representing his pledge to introduce a circular bus service connecting the campus and the city.

"I wanted to create something different, something students would want to keep as a memento," said Sami. "The bus design symbolises the circular bus service I plan to introduce if elected."

On the other hand, Saeed Mohammad Mushfiq Hasan, AGS candidate from "Sarbabbouma Shikkharthi Oikya", printed fan-shaped leaflets.

Another candidate, Onim, said, "I incorporated symbols of global struggles, including that of Palestine, to raise students' awareness of international socio-political issues."



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night visited the grave of her late husband and party founder Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital and offered prayers.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladesh must heed AI warning

Govt should promote workforce training to advance AI skills

Artificial intelligence (AI) is set to fundamentally reshape Bangladesh's economy but the country's lack of preparedness leaves its vast, young workforce vulnerable to risks. Bangladesh currently sits at the lower end of AI readiness in South Asia, primarily because its economic engine, comprising the garment sector and agriculture, has so far been least affected by automation. Yet, the experience of regional peers, particularly India—which now commands a nearly 30 percent wage premium for AI skills—demonstrates the rapid pace of this technology. As AI diffuses through global value chains, the temporary low exposure in Bangladesh today "could quickly become a disadvantage tomorrow," according to a report published by the World Bank.

The immediate threat is concentrated not in the factory floor, but in the white-collar engine of modern economy. Moderately educated young workers in roles like customer service and data entry are the most vulnerable to displacement. Indeed, generative AI has already been shown to reduce monthly job listings by around 20 percent for the most exposed white-collar occupations across South Asia. This directly challenges Bangladesh's aspirations to move up the value chain. At the same time, job postings requiring AI skills in 2025 also demonstrate a regional divide: at just 1.4 percent, Bangladesh lagged considerably behind Sri Lanka (7.3 percent), India (5.8 percent) and Nepal (3.3 percent), according to the World Bank.

Moreover, gaps in digital infrastructure and human capital define the chasm between opportunity and outcome in Bangladesh. Only about 62 percent of its population has internet access, and the rural-urban gap—a staggering 32 percentage points—is the largest among all emerging market regions. This disparity directly deprives rural areas of the connectivity and reliable electricity vital for AI-driven growth.

The choice before Bangladesh is clear: seize a strategic "window of opportunity," or risk being left behind in the global technological race. Its relatively young labour force could be an advantage, potentially making AI adoption easier than in ageing economies, provided that workers gain access to the right skills. The government, therefore, must immediately prioritise affordable internet access and consistent electricity supply as a core economic necessity, closing the rural-urban divide. This fundamental infrastructure is essential for scaling AI adoption. Simultaneously, an urgent recalibration of human skills is required across the labour force. The government must expand educational and national programmes to instil foundational digital literacy for the wider populace while cultivating advanced AI skills for professionals. The government should itself lead by adopting AI to streamline bureaucratic processes, reduce corruption, and deliver services efficiently.

AI offers Bangladesh a chance to leapfrog into higher productivity. But it is not possible without supportive reforms and initiatives by both government and private actors.

Address the plight of hilsa fishermen

Delayed, insufficient support during fishing ban causing hardship

We are concerned about the fishermen struggling to cope with an ongoing 22-day ban on hilsa fishing enforced on October 4. While the ban is necessary to protect brood hilsa during the peak breeding season, the lack of work and insufficient support from the government mean that these individuals are going through a tough time with little means of subsistence. While talking to this daily, one fisherman complained that he had already been facing difficulties due to poor hauls before the ban, and that the promised aid had yet to arrive. Another lamented that the government's rice support for the ban period—about 25 kilogrammes—was not enough to sustain a family without cash assistance.

Many fishermen across the coastal belt are similarly enduring hardship because of delayed and inadequate support. Bangladesh has about 17 lakh registered fishermen working across rivers, haors, baors, canals, and other water bodies; of them, about 7.42 lakh are involved in hilsa fishing, although due to budget constraints, only 6.2 lakh are expected to get rice support. The problem, however, is not limited to exclusion risks for a portion of registered fishermen as well as those unregistered. Insufficient allocations and delayed delivery are also major concerns. In many areas, the rice has yet to come. While officials have blamed it on the Durga Puja holidays, such explanations hardly matter to the families going hungry.

Every year, during the seasonal fishing bans, we hear the same stories of delayed or inadequate relief. Although this year's allocation of 15,503 tonnes of rice marks a slight increase from last year, it is still not sufficient or inclusive enough. A proposal to increase the rice allocation from 25 kg to 30 kg was reportedly turned down because of budgetary constraints. Another persistent problem has been the lack of cash support, for rice alone cannot fully cover their needs for other essentials and necessary services, particularly at a time when prices in general remain high. Experts have therefore highlighted the importance of providing a mix of rice and cash support so that fishing families can manage their expenses. In fact, many studies suggest that cash transfers are more effective than in-kind support as cash provides flexibility.

Given these realities, the government must ensure timely, adequate, and well-targeted support going forward. Beyond immediate aid, long-term measures—such as ensuring alternative livelihoods and a greater share of profits from hilsa business for the fishermen—are essential to safeguard their well-being, and prevent this seasonal conservation effort from turning into a seasonal nightmare.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

First Afghan presidential elections

On this day in 2004, for the first time in Afghanistan's history, voters went to the polls to choose a president, selecting Hamid Karzai, who had served as the interim president after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.

EDITORIAL

The politics of narrative: How stories shape reality in Bangladesh



Dr. Habib Zafarullah
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HABIB ZAFARULLAH

Politics everywhere runs on stories, but in Bangladesh, the "politics of narrative" has been especially powerful. Competing tales of identity, progress, and legitimacy form the invisible architecture of political life, shaping not only how events are remembered but also how they are lived.

Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm captures this dynamic well: humans are storytellers who make sense of the world through coherent narratives rather than abstract arguments. Narratives are symbolic actions—words and deeds with sequence and meaning—that persuade, unite, or divide. Benedict Anderson likewise argued that nations are "imagined communities," built from shared stories that bind strangers into a common identity. Wars, revolutions, and political struggles become meaningful only when translated into narratives that enter collective memory.

The defining story for Bangladesh is, of course, the 1971 Liberation War. Like a literary classic that spawns endless reinterpretations, this momentous episode provides a key foundation for political narratives. Every party and leader must position themselves in relation to it, either as its "legitimate heirs" or as "challengers" to its meaning.

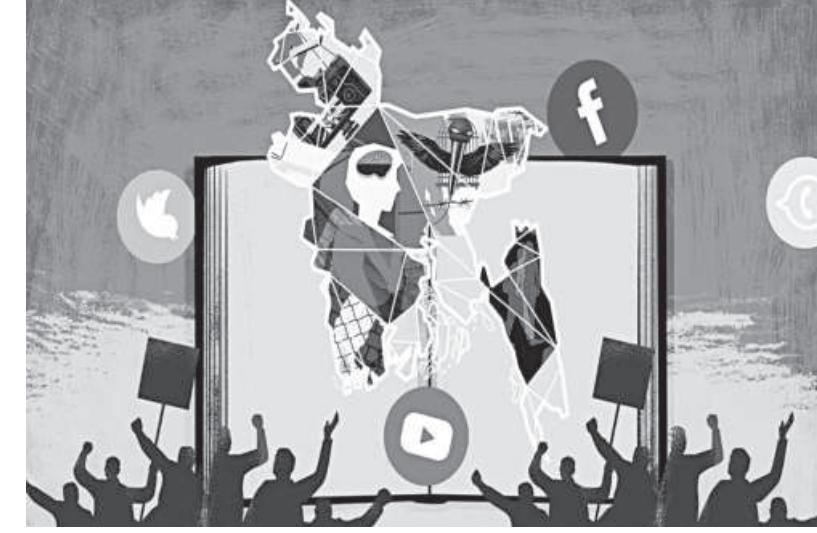
The Awami League, under Sheikh Hasina, cast itself as the guardian of the "true" liberation narrative. This framing turned rivals into something more sinister than competitors: Pakistani "collaborators" betraying the national cause. Legitimacy, too, was genealogical—Awami League presented itself as the nation's founding force, with its politics rooted in a legacy of the resistance movement passed down through generations.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party and other opposition groups have tried to revise this story. They emphasise contributions beyond party politics and highlight neglected voices in the independence struggle. In doing so, they frame themselves as revisionist historians, expanding the narrative beyond the Awami League's

version and insisting that the nation's birth was a collective achievement.

Once, state media and newspapers largely controlled these stories. Today, social media has turned every citizen into a potential storyteller. Twitter (now X), Facebook, and YouTube have become democratic spaces with competing voices jostling for attention.

This digital turn has fragmented the national narrative. A handful of outlets



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

once shaped public opinion; now millions of micro-narratives coexist in cacophony. On the one hand, this allows ordinary citizens to challenge official accounts. On the other hand, it opens the floodgates to conspiracy theories and misinformation.

Recent protests illustrate this shift. The 2018 student road safety movement, sparked by fatal traffic accidents, quickly became a broader story about governance failure and generational frustration. Protesters framed their activism as a cry for accountability in a system that disregards young lives. Social media amplified their message, turning a local tragedy into a national reckoning. Similarly, the 2024 anti-discrimination demonstrations revealed deep anger against authoritarian practices, with digital

narrative revealed limits. Storytelling alone could not substitute for concrete solutions, and when global sympathy failed to translate into sufficient support, Bangladesh was left caught between its humanitarian commitments and its internal political constraints.

Economic growth has provided another fertile ground for narrative politics. Successive governments

have told a triumphant story of transformation—from the infamous "basket case" to an overstated "development miracle."

Statistical achievements such as poverty reduction, infrastructure expansion,

and GDP growth became cinematic highlights in a carefully edited national film.

This was a case of "selective visibility." Success stories were

estimated at Tk 30,560 crore in the same year.

In the absence of updated data and given the limited public data available, proxy indicators can be used to show whether the situation is improving or worsening. Taxes to the exchequer have risen over the past decade, and tobacco companies' revenues and profits have climbed steadily. Taken

Taxes to the exchequer have risen over the past decade, and tobacco companies' revenues and profits have climbed steadily. Taken together with the persistence of affordability and continued down-trading into lower tiers, this indicates that the current tax design is not working as intended.

together with the persistence of affordability and continued down-trading into lower tiers, this indicates that the current tax design is not working as intended. If taxation were effective, retail prices would increase and consumption would decline, so overall revenue would likely decline. Instead, revenues are soaring.

Evidence consistently shows that the economic costs of tobacco use far exceed the revenue governments collect from tobacco taxes. In 2017–18, Bangladesh collected Tk 22,810 crore in tobacco tax (SD + VAT). Yet the economic cost of tobacco use from lost productivity and direct healthcare costs of smoking-related illnesses was

magnified, while structural issues—corruption, inequality, environmental degradation—remained in the shadows. Opposition groups present alternative narratives: that growth disproportionately benefits the powerful and wealthy, that the poor face rising costs and stagnant opportunities, and that economic miracles often mask fragile foundations. The same numbers, framed differently, convey clashing stories of national progress.

Bangladesh's experience reveals a paradox at the heart of narrative politics. The more tightly governments try to regulate national stories, the more they expose their fragility. Laws restricting press freedom, regulations on social media, and penalties for "false" information signal not narrative strength but weakness. Official stories require constant policing because they rest on contested ground.

Political narratives are thus both weapons and vulnerabilities. A compelling story gives leaders legitimacy, but it also creates standards they may fail to meet. The Awami League's liberation-centred narrative, for example, elevates expectations of living up to the ideals of 1971. When the party appeared authoritarian or self-serving, critics accused it of betraying the very principles it claimed to embody.

What emerges from Bangladesh's case is that narratives shape and influence political reality. Politicians do not simply describe the world; they help create it through stories that give meaning to events. Elections, therefore, are not just contests of policies or personalities but battles between rival visions of national identity. Victory often goes not to the candidate with the best plan but to the one who tells the most resonant story of where Bangladesh has been and where it should go.

As the country evolves, new narrators will rise. The younger generation, globally connected and digitally fluent, is already crafting fresh stories that depart from older party-centric frames. Their narratives are less about the bloodlines of 1971 and more about governance, opportunity, and dignity in the present. In this ongoing project of framing nationhood, Bangladeshis remain both authors and readers of the stories that define what it means to belong.

After all, a nation, in a profound sense, is a story in motion—retold, contested, and rewritten with each generation.

Are tobacco taxes really working in Bangladesh?



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MOHAMMAD IHTESHAM HASSAN

Bangladesh is among the highest tobacco-consuming countries in the world. The National NCD Risk Factors Survey 2022 by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) reported that around 39.4 percent of adults aged 18–69 used tobacco in some form, with usage at around 54.7 percent among men and 25.4 percent among women. In comparison, global smoking prevalence in 2023 was 22.3 percent, of which men were 28.1 percent and females were 4.7 percent, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

One of the strongest instruments for curbing tobacco use is taxation, which works in two ways. Increasing taxes reduces the prevalence of smoking and deters new smokers from ever taking up the habit. The logic is straightforward: higher taxes push prices up, discouraging new and price-sensitive smokers, and at least nudging others to cut down.

However, Bangladesh has a complex tax policy for tobacco products. The government relies on a tiered ad valorem supplementary duty (SD) on the retail price, 15 percent VAT, and a one percent Health Development Surcharge (HDS). There are four tiers, and therein lies the problem. When taxes rise across all segments, smokers can easily switch from premium to low-tier brands, keeping consumption stable. This system benefits tobacco

companies as well, since customers do not leave the market. British American Tobacco Bangladesh's (BATB) 2024 annual report shows that low-segment brands account for the largest share of its sales volume.

Compounding this is the issue of consumers being able to buy single-stick cigarettes. Midway through FY2024–25, the government hiked VAT and SD on over 100 goods and services, including cigarettes. However, the prices of some of the popular brands selling loose are still quite affordable—between Tk 20 to Tk 10—for low-income populations and even the youth, particularly schoolchildren, who are potential new smokers.

Bangladesh is committed to becoming a smoke-free nation by 2040, which is now only 15 years away. Yet, there is no updated national-level data to show whether tobacco use is declining or rising. The last STEPS survey, based on World Health Organization's approach to noncommunicable disease (NCD) risk factors surveillance, was in 2018; the last Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) was in 2017. Although the DGHS conducted a NCD Risk Factor survey in 2022, the official report has not yet been released publicly.

Without updated evidence, how can policymakers steer the country toward its stated goal and design interventions

together with the persistence of affordability and continued down-trading into lower tiers, this indicates that the current tax design is not working as intended. If taxation were effective, retail prices would increase and consumption would decline, so overall revenue would likely decline. Instead, revenues are soaring.

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estimated at Tk 30,560 crore in the same year.

As public health is not in focus and with no effective national health financing strategy in place, people are left in a doubly vulnerable situation. The low-income population, in particular, often lacks full awareness of the health consequences of smoking. With out-of-pocket health expenses at around 73 percent in 2021 and showing a rising trend over the past two decades, many families slip into poverty when faced with treatment costs stemming from tobacco-related illnesses. They are forced to sell assets, take on heavy loans, and shoulder crushing financial burdens to pay for the treatment of diseases caused by smoking. In 2018 alone, nearly 126,000 people in Bangladesh died from tobacco-related diseases.

Now, tobacco companies may continue to parade their status as among the country's "highest taxpayers." The government, too, may feel pressured to tread lightly, fearing a loss of revenue if tougher policies are imposed. But the government must realise that this trade-off cannot be justified. The citizens of this country should not bear the burden of a system that values revenue over lives. The constitution obliges the state to protect the health of its people.

Cigarette sales and taxation are only instruments for revenue collection. If revenue generation is truly the concern, the government must explore other avenues. It should work with economists, health experts, researchers, and all other relevant stakeholders to identify sustainable, equitable alternatives. Bangladesh has pledged to its people and to the world that it will be smoke-free by 2040. That pledge cannot remain hollow words.

Why are urban women disappearing from the manufacturing sector?



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MAHTAB UDDIN

Despite rising exports and growth in the overall labour force, female employment in urban industries is collapsing. However, women in Bangladesh's manufacturing sector are not voluntarily leaving the workforce; they are losing their foothold in the industry.

Although total female employment in Bangladesh increased from 1.82 crore in 2013 to 2.37 crore in 2024, as per the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024, this growth has occurred almost entirely in rural Bangladesh. In urban areas, female employment has actually declined from 45 lakh to 39 lakh, while the urban female labour force participation rate has dropped sharply from 33 percent in 2013 to just 23 percent in 2024.

The data reveal that women are not leaving the workforce en masse; they are being pushed out of one sector in particular: manufacturing. Female employment in agriculture has nearly doubled, increasing from approximately 90 lakh in 2013 to 1.7 crore in 2024. However, in manufacturing, female employment has halved, decreasing from approximately 38 lakh to just 19.5 lakh during the same period.

The sharp decline in female employment in urban manufacturing is driven mainly by the ready-made garment (RMG) and textile industries. In 2012, Bangladesh exported \$22 billion worth of RMG products. By 2024, that figure had reached \$38.48 billion. Yet total RMG employment during this period did not increase at the same rate. Notably, the share

competition and discouraging diversification. The sector enjoys several state-backed incentives such as duty drawbacks, bonded warehouse facilities, and direct cash benefits. They also face fewer regulatory and financial challenges than other industries, as evident from the World Bank Enterprise Survey (2022), which shows that RMG firms

investors venture beyond RMG, leaving the economy structurally dependent on a single sector and women with few alternatives once they lose their jobs in this particular industry.

A contrasting example is seen in East Asian countries such as Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and South Korea. As these countries

nowhere else to turn.

Finally, structural barriers such as safety and security concerns, as well as the provision of childcare support, further constrain women's participation. The rising cost of living makes childcare increasingly expensive, and there are too few day-care centres and nurseries. As a result, many women are forced back

responsibility to drop off and pick up their child from school.

The path to reversing these trends is difficult but not impossible. Bangladesh must place all manufacturing sectors on an equal footing, ensuring fair competition and reducing policy distortions that favour RMG alone. In other words, we need a robust diversification in the manufacturing industry. The government should also launch a large-scale reskilling initiative, for example, training 100,000 women each year, focused on cutting-edge machine operation, automation, driving, catering, and other skills aligned with future labour market demands. Training for care work, nursing, and language skills could open up millions of overseas employment opportunities for women.

It is equally important to build a social infrastructure that supports working women. Accessible childcare, extended school hours, and after-school programmes would significantly increase women's ability to participate in formal employment. Extending school hours to 9am-3pm, with time allocated for play or extracurricular activities, would alleviate this burden. After-school care services could also help, allowing children to remain in a safe environment until their parents finish work. Expanding such support systems is essential for enabling women to participate in the urban manufacturing sector.

Women must not be confined to their homes. Instead, they must have the freedom to choose their future from various alternatives and the capacity to seize the opportunities that arise. This is what Amartya Sen described as "development as freedom." Ensuring this "freedom" is not optional; it is mandatory. As a nation, we must achieve it; otherwise, our society will go downhill.



'Women are often the first to lose their jobs to automation in the garment industry because they are concentrated in low-wage, entry-level roles.'

FILE PHOTO: STAR

report some of the lowest obstacles in areas such as access to finance and tax administration.

In such a policy environment, why would businesses invest in non-RMG sectors when it is easier and more profitable to stay within the RMG sector? This monolithic focus dampens diversification and limits the emergence of new industries. Only the most determined or visionary

moved across the value chain from RMG, they simultaneously nurtured new manufacturing and service sectors. Electronics, automobile production, logistics, and hospitality grew alongside RMG, widening employment opportunities for women. Bangladesh has yet to follow this path. Its failure to diversify means that when women lose manufacturing jobs, they often have

into unpaid household labour or informal work. Education policies also contribute to the problem. The typical primary school day in Bangladesh lasts just four hours: from 8am to 11am or noon, compared to about seven to eight hours in most developed countries. Short school hours make it difficult for women with children to pursue full-time work, as they often have the

Gaza's endless waiting and the cruel cycle of hope and despair

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SHABBIR AHMED

In Gaza, hope has become both a necessity and a burden. After years of broken promises, failed ceasefires, and devastating wars, Palestinians are once again clinging to the faint possibility that a powerful external actor, this time US President Donald Trump, might succeed where others have failed and bring an end to a conflict that has defined and destroyed generations.

The desperation was palpable in recent interviews with Gazans. "We want President Trump to keep pushing for an end to the war," said 32-year-old Saoud Qarneya, a resident of Gaza City, whose house was flattened in Israeli bombings. "Everything has been damaged, everything is destroyed." For Saoud, and millions like her, the plea is less about admiration for Trump and more about exhaustion with endless war and diplomatic stagnation. Two years into Israel's latest offensive, which began in October 2023, at least 67,000 Palestinians have been killed, while more than two million remain trapped in what has long been described as one of the world's most densely populated open-air prisons. Gaza has become a landscape of ruins with homes reduced to rubble, schools and hospitals bombed, and entire neighbourhoods turned into graveyards.

However, after multiple failed ceasefires and false dawns, many now cling to the idea that perhaps, this time, a political shake-up in Washington might alter the calculus. Some view Trump as unpredictable and therefore capable of driving change. Others are simply too tired for the faintest prospect of relief. "Every day of delay costs lives in Gaza," said Tamer al-Burai, a businessman displaced with his family in central Gaza. "Maybe Trump will bring us real peace this time."

But history offers little reason for optimism. The pattern over the years has been tragically consistent: high-profile negotiations, temporary truces, and renewed bombardment. This cycle of ceasefire and escalation has become so familiar that many no longer dare to believe peace

is possible. This war has been unbelievably brutal. Besides the widespread devastation, restrictions on humanitarian aid have pushed Gaza into famine. The United Nations has repeatedly warned of catastrophic humanitarian conditions, yet global diplomatic responses remain muted and fragmented.

For Palestinians in Gaza, waiting has become a central part of existence. They wait for electricity, water, aid trucks, and for the skies to quiet down. They wait for ceasefires that may or may not materialise, for negotiations that may collapse at any moment, for leaders to stop using their lives as bargaining chips. This waiting is both a survival strategy and, in a quiet way, an act of resistance: an insistence on living despite everything.

compounds with each new round of violence. Many Gazans have lived through three, four, or even five wars in their lifetime. They rebuild homes, schools, and communities, only to watch them collapse again.

The international community has been both a witness and, in many ways, a participant in this cycle. Diplomatic statements expressing "concern" are rarely followed by decisive action. Ceasefire negotiations are often rushed, fragile, and lack enforceable mechanisms. Violations go unpunished. Calls for accountability are sidelined by geopolitical interests. As a result, Gazans have learned to expect very little from the world.

The current round of waiting centres on whether Trump's 20-point proposal aimed at ending the war in Gaza might change anything.

But Gaza's plight should not hinge on the whims of any single political figure. The problem is not the lack of negotiations; it is the lack of accountability and political will to enforce international law. Israel's military actions, including targeting civilian infrastructure and restricting aid, have been widely condemned by human rights organisations. Yet, without consequences, these condemnations ring hollow.

Breaking this cruel cycle requires more than a mediator. It requires a fundamental shift in how the international community engages with the conflict: prioritising civilian protection, ensuring accountability for violations of international humanitarian law, and addressing the root political causes rather than managing symptoms. It means empowering Palestinian voices in any negotiation, not sidelining them. It means treating Gaza not as a geopolitical chessboard but as a home to millions of human beings who deserve security, dignity, and a future.

For now, Gazans wait again. They wait for the bombs to stop, for borders to open, for a ceasefire that holds, for a future that has always been just out of reach. This endless waiting is not just a tragedy; it is an indictment of a world that has grown accustomed to watching suffering from a distance.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
Bangladesh Forest Department

Office of the Divisional Forest Officer
Tangail Forest Division, Tangail
www.forest.tangail.gov.bd

Memo No. 22.01.0000.000.654.29.001.25.4770

Date: 08.10.2025

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify to all concern that the following e-Tenders (OTM) have been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works & goods:

SL.	e-Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of goods/works	Date & time of publication on e-GP	Last date & time for selling/downloading tender document	Tender closing date & time
01.	1160495	TFD/Sal Forest/2025 -26/W-03	Establishment of Deer Breeding center and Wild Boar Breeding Center at Lahoria Bit, Jatio Uddan Sador, under Tangail Forest Division.	12 October 2025 at 13:30pm	27-October 2025 up to 12:00pm	27-October-2025 15.00pm
02.	1160775	TFD/Sal Forest/2025 -26/W-04	Fire lines created to prevent forest fires at Jatio Uddan Sador, Dokhola, Modhupur and Aronkhola Range under Tangail Forest Division.	12 October 2025 at 13:30pm	27-October 2025 up to 12:00pm	27-October-2025 15.00pm
03.	1160777	TFD/Sal Forest/2025 -26/W-05	Expending and renovating Gargaria Lake at Jatio Uddan Sador, under Tangail Forest Division.	12 October 2025 at 13:40pm	27-October 2025 up to 12:00pm	27-October-2025 15.00pm
04.	1160778	TFD/Sal Forest/2025 -26/W-06	Re-excavation/renovation of 10 ponds under Modhupur National Park, under Tangail Forest Division.	12 October 2025 at 13:40pm	27-October 2025 up to 12:00pm	27-October-2025 15.00pm
05.	1160779	TFD/Sal Forest/2025 -26/W-07	Installing ropeways at the designated locations at Modhupur, under Tangail Forest Division.	12 October 2025 at 13:50pm	27-October 2025 up to 12:00pm	27-October-2025 15.00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (+8809609112233, +880176225528, +880176265529).

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ARTISTES AGAINST GENOCIDE

Drik stands by Gaza on the two-year anniversary of its occupation

FAIZA RAMIM

These artistes have long opposed every form of oppression, at home and abroad. Drik's solidarity with Palestine, however, started long before October 7. Even as you enter the building, a Palestinian flag and poster greets you for as long as I can remember showcasing Drik's longstanding refusal to back down in the face of injustice.

The programme featured an ensemble of artistes showcasing their art in different mediums. We saw beautiful, symbolic art take form in front of our eyes in real time by painters Jannatul Islam Bipa and Suman Haldar.

Participants of the event included musicians Farzana Wahid Shayan, Fakir Arup



PHOTOS: RATUL CHOWDHURY

Rahee and Suchi Marma and Muiz Mahfuz, among others.

Every voice ached for Palestinians, every heart hoped for freedom, and every chorus

demanded an end to apartheid. Nokkhotra, a ten-year-old, built a LEGO flotilla, a symbol of a generation determined to resist injustice and a reminder that even if one ship is detained, another will follow, and then another.

The evening concluded with a rendition of Rounok Mollick's Bangla adaptation of *Bella Ciao*, dedicated to Palestine: *Mounota Bhango, Guriye Felo, Gazar Shishuder Kotha bole jao, Nodi Theke Shomudrote Filistiner Shadhinota Chao*.

As the world looks on in rage and horror, and media narratives are twisted or censored, artistes continue to write and keep the spirit alive. When others turn away, they keep looking. They refuse to soften their words or allow history to be rewritten.

On the two-year anniversary of Israel occupying Gaza, Drik organised a gathering of artistes across multiple disciplines to raise their voices, and their hands in prayer against the injustice in Palestine.



Coke Studio Bangla's 'Long Distance Love' tops Spotify India chart

Coke Studio Bangla's *Long Distance Love* has made history by securing the No. 1 position on Spotify's Top Viral Songs India chart for the second consecutive week—the first Bangladeshi track ever to do so.

Sung by Ankan Kumar and Afrin and produced by Shuvendu Das Shuvo,

the song from Coke Studio Bangla Season 3 has captivated listeners with its soulful melody, cinematic visuals, and emotional depth. Industry analysts say the achievement marks a breakthrough for Bangla-language music in South Asia, underscoring the power of digital

platforms to transcend borders. Since its 2022 debut, Coke Studio Bangla has expanded its regional influence by blending traditional Bangladeshi sounds with modern production, redefining the contemporary South Asian music landscape.

NEWS

Delhi's remark on election 'unwarranted'

FROM PAGE 12

residence was not a crime".

"Ambassadors can go to anyone's home. Diplomats can, in general, go to anyone's home. However, the discussion and expected outcomes of that meeting are naturally drawing attention."

If he were a criminal, he would have been held in custody, which was not the case.

The adviser discussed growing visa difficulties for Bangladeshi students and workers in some countries, noting that the government is actively engaging with foreign authorities to ease restrictions.

"There is a huge demand for study visas."

For example, about 80,000 Bangladeshi students applied to German universities, but they can process only around 2,000 cases per year.

Bangladesh has requested Germany to increase its student

intake to at least 9,000 per year, which is similar to the quota offered to Pakistan.

The government is exploring alternative visa arrangements through other regional missions to address backlogs and service shortages.

However, he acknowledged that the issues of fake documents and irregular migration have hurt Bangladesh's reputation.

"Even genuine people are facing difficulties because of these practices. We must fix the problems at home first."

Regarding possible military cooperation with Türkiye, Touhid said that Türkiye has considerable military technology.

"We already have military cooperation with many countries and we will continue to expand it. This is a normal development between two friendly nations."

The ships carried aid worth more than \$110,000 in medicines, respiratory equipment and nutritional supplies intended for Gaza's starving hospitals, it added on its Instagram account.

Meanwhile, the Israeli foreign ministry yesterday confirmed it had intercepted boats attempting to reach Gaza.

"Another futile attempt to breach the legal naval blockade and enter a combat zone ended in nothing. The vessels and the passengers are transferred to an Israeli port," it said on social media.

"All the passengers are safe and in good health. The passengers are expected to be deported promptly," it added.

Israel has imposed a blockade on Gaza, home to nearly 2.3 million people, for almost 18 years and tightened it further in March this year by closing border crossings and blocking food and medicine deliveries, triggering a famine.

Since October 2023, Israeli bombardments have killed more than 67,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and devastated the enclave.

Negotiations to end the conflict are underway in Egypt through a 20-point plan unveiled by US

President Donald Trump.

BANGLADESH REACTS

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday demanded the immediate release of Shahidul and others detained by the Israeli forces.

"Shahidul stands as a shining embodiment of the unyielding spirit of Bangladesh. May Allah protect and keep Shahidul and the rest of the team safe."

The press secretary also said, "The extraordinary courage and resilience that sustained Shahidul during his imprisonment under the Hasina government will once again carry him through this latest ordeal.

"Yet even as we focus on Shahidul's safety, we must not lose sight of the broader context: the ongoing devastation and genocide in Gaza."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alangir urged the interim government to take immediate steps to ensure Shahidul's safe return.

With the same demand, Ganosamhati Andolon leaders brought out a procession in the capital's Eskaton area. Speaking from the procession, Ganosamhati leader Taslima Akhter said, "We're concerned about their [Shahidul and his team] safety. The interim government must play the highest role in ensuring their release."

Founded in 1948, WAN-IFRA is headquartered in Germany's Frankfurt and France's Paris.

Since 2018, through its "World

Police arrest four

FROM PAGE 12

Alam told journalists that his brother was involved in several businesses, including in Hamim Agro and an herbal medicine company in Raozan.

He said, "Before the murder, he went from his Baganbari residence. Later he headed to the city in his car, which was intercepted in the middle of the road and he was shot dead in broad daylight. "We don't know of any personal disputes with anyone. We demand justice. There have been many killings in Raozan after August 5. This must stop," he added.

Kazi Tarek Aziz, additional superintendent of police (Hathazari Circle), told The Daily Star, "Several gunmen came on motorbikes, wearing helmets and masks, and fled after firing at the SUV. We have obtained CCTV footage and are working to identify the assailants. Four suspects have been detained for questioning."

Prothom Alo

FROM PAGE 12

After receiving the awards, Matiur Rahman said through the year long publication of district based regional supplements, Prothom Alo set a new benchmark in local journalism, strategic planning, and creative presentation.

He added that during the July uprising, Prothom Alo's courageous journalism and its subsequent multifaceted initiatives related to that movement were exceptional. These global honours are recognition of that work -- an international achievement for Bangladesh.

Matiur Rahman said the credit goes to all colleagues, well-wishers, and above all, readers of Prothom Alo.

The winners of this global competition are selected from among WAN-IFRA's worldwide members newspapers, magazines, publishers, advertisers, and agencies.

Previous winners include El Tiempo (Colombia), The Times of India, Dainik Bhaskar, and Anandabazar Patrika (India), Presse-Druck und Verlags GmbH, Südkurier Gmbh, and VRM (Germany), Diari ARA (Spain), JP/Politiken Hus (Denmark), Verdens Gang (Norway), VK Media (Sweden), and Thairath Media (Thailand), among others.

Founded in 1948, WAN-IFRA is headquartered in Germany's Frankfurt and France's Paris.

Since 2018, through its "World

Road adviser gets a taste

FROM PAGE 12

To inspect the area, the adviser reached Bhairab by train and began his journey toward Brahmanbaria by road, but was soon caught in a long tailback near Ashuganj's Bahadurpur area.

Brahmanbaria's Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Didarul Alam, Superintendent of Police Ehteshamul Haque, and senior ministry officials accompanied the adviser during the visit.

Khairul Alam, officer in charge of Ashuganj Police Station, said, "The adviser started for Sarail but got stuck near the Maitree Stambha area. He left Ashuganj around 10:15am but by 12:30pm had not reached the Sarail-Bishwa Road intersection. In over two hours, his car moved only about 50 metres."

The OC added that the adviser then abandoned the car and continued toward the Sarail-Bishwa Road intersection on a motorcycle.

Speaking to reporters after his inspection, Fouzul blamed the persistent gridlock on negligence by the traffic division and said he had already spoken with the home affairs adviser to address the issue. "Plans are also underway to construct a flyover at the Sarail Bishwa Road intersection to ease congestion.... We'll resolve this problem as quickly as possible."

He also said he instructed 12 senior officials of the Roads and Highways Department to temporarily relocate from Dhaka to the Sarail Bishwa Road

office to oversee the work on the highway. "Any officer found absent from duty would face suspension."

According to sources, work to upgrade the 51km Ashuganj river port-Akhaura land port stretch into a four-lane highway has been progressing painfully slowly. Meanwhile, the 12km section from Ashuganj intersection to Sarail-Bishwa Road intersection has become riddled with potholes, turning travel into suffering.

Locals said gridlock has persisted for three consecutive days along this stretch, forcing many commuters to spend nights inside their vehicles.

Sanjay Poddar, a passenger of Shyamoli Paribahan, said, "I boarded a bus from Fakirpul in Dhaka around 1:30am for Sunamganj. It's now 1:00pm, and we still haven't crossed the Sarail-Bishwa Road area. We spent the entire night inside the bus.... This highway has been in this condition for months, yet nobody seems to care. We suffer like this almost every day."

Temporary repair work is underway, but with one side of the road closed, congestion has worsened. It now takes four to six hours to cross the 12km stretch.

Brahmanbaria's Khatihata Highway Police Station OC Jahangir Alam said, "Poor road conditions are mainly responsible for the persistent traffic jam. Highway police are trying to keep vehicles moving."

I'm staying in Bangladesh, no exit plans

FROM PAGE 12

the government has a good working relationship with the newly formed political party [NCP] like other parties."

The adviser added that Nahid has to clarify that whether he said it out of frustration or due to some grievance on any particular issue. Once he clarifies it, then comes the question of a government response.

"Many political leaders are making comments about various government issues -- it's their right, and that's how democracy works. If we start responding to every statement, when will we have time to run our ministries?" Rizwana said in reply to another query.

"When an issue is formally brought to the government's attention, we will talk about it, work on it, and inform everyone. But it's not possible for the government to respond to informal remarks."

Asked whether some advisers are preparing to go abroad as part of "safe exit," Rizwana said, "He [Nahid] has to substantiate his statement. His comment is not for me to substantiate or refute. If the statement had been specific, perhaps the government would have responded."

"It might be their perception...."

The adviser dismissed the possibility of forming an election-time government, saying that the current interim government will hold the polls.

Theatre Factory honours Jibanananda Das with a five-day festival

Theatre Factory will celebrate the life and works of poet Jibanananda Das with a five-day festival, *Jibanananda Das Smarountshob o Theatre Factory er Asthram Prothishabarshiki*, from October 18 to 22.

The festival opens at Mohila Samity with *Komola Rong er Bodh*, written and directed by Alok Basu, presenting a poetic portrait of the modernist poet through memory, philosophy, and emotion.

Three initial shows will be followed by a reflection event, *Our Jibanananda*, and nightly discussions with distinguished guests. The troupe's anniversary on October 20 will

include a gathering of Theatre Factory members and artists.

The festival concludes with two performances at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy's Experimental Theatre Hall. Founded in 2017, Theatre Factory has staged five productions over eight years, aiming for enduring, meaningful theatre.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

Reels of Resistance: Voices from the Hill Tracts



The Dhaka University Film Society (DUF) is set to host *Reels of Resistance: Voices from the Hill Tracts*, an open film screening showcasing *More Thengari (My Bicycle)* by Aung Rakhine and *Kyory Pekra Uyuw (Dear Mother)* by SK Shuvo Sadique, highlighting the struggles and resilience of Bangladesh's Indigenous communities.

Date: Sunday October 12, 2025

Time: 7 pm onwards

Venue: TSC, Dhaka University

ESSAY

Cages of flesh and bone: Deconstructing social hierarchies with **'THE ZAMINDAR'S GHOST' AND 'SHAKCHUNNI'**

Ultimately, the supernatural in both novels serves as a desperate language, a means for characters and communities to articulate a trauma too vast and too brutal to be named. The political is not a subplot; it is the very air these characters breathe, thick with the poison of oppression.

NAZMUN AFRAD SHEETOL

In the mist-covered hills of Ooty and the famine-ravaged villages of Bengal, they speak of ghosts. They whisper of a Zamindar's phantom haunting a grand manor and a shape-shifting shakchunni preying on a crumbling estate. But to listen only to these whispers is to be deceived. For the true horror in Khyaal Patel's *The Zamindar's Ghost* (HarperCollins India, 2023) and Arnab Ray's *Shakchunni* (Hachette India, 2024), it does not lurk in the shadows of the supernatural; instead, it thrives in the broad daylight of social hierarchies. These are not mere ghost stories. They are chilling portraits of the real, breathing monsters we create—the gilded cages of class, the suffocating weight of patriarchy, and the brutal machinery of colonial power. The phantoms are a smokescreen, a folkloric language for a far more terrifying truth: that the most malevolent hauntings are the legacies of injustice etched into the very foundations of society.

In Ooty, the legend of the Zamindar's ghost is a convenient fiction, a collective lie the town tells itself. It is easier to blame a restless spirit for the death of the Zamindar's loyal servant, Rai Bahadur. He is a tragic ghost, a man who sacrificed his family on the altar of loyalty to the Rana family. His life is a lesson in the cost of servitude within a rigid hierarchy, a lesson his son, Tej, the head constable, has learned through a lifetime of neglect. Tej's hollowed-out existence is a living tomb to the human price of maintaining an unjust order. This order, however, is not self-sustaining. It is a tool, crafted by the British Raj. The Zamindars, such as Digvijay Rana and his son Arjun, are not just powerful landlords; they are local elites empowered by the Crown to exploit their own people and maintain control over them. The system's most profound cruelty is forcing the oppressed to participate in their own subjugation. Arjun Rana's torment over leading British troops against his own people is the ultimate colonial trauma—a haunting that no exorcism



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

can dismiss, a ghost that walks in the uniform of the oppressor.

A similar decay oozes in the heart of Shyamapur, the setting of Arnab Ray's *Shakchunni*. Here, the feudal hierarchy is not just a social ladder but a death trap. As the Great Bengal Famine—a man-made catastrophe driven by colonial policy and local greed fueled by materialism—the zamindars of the Banerjee family hoarded grain in their granaries. Their lavishness is a stark, grotesque contrast to the villagers, who scavenge in drains for survival. This oppression is not merely external; it replicates itself within the manor walls. The patriarch rules through a pathetic tyranny, while his sons, Narayanpratap and Rudrapratap, are pitted against each other by their parents, a chilling demonstration of how a system maintains its power by setting the oppressed against one another. The novel poses a distressing question: Who is the true monster? The folkloric

'Shakchunni' spirit that demands occasional offerings, according to the famished villagers or the aristocrats who systematically consume the lives, dignity, and future of an entire population? The supernatural entity is merely a symptom; the disease is the hierarchy itself.

Within these oppressive structures, the lives of women become a brutal battleground where the agency of women is a forbidden fruit and identity is a ghostly, borrowed thing. In Ooty, the patriarchal order is metaphorically enforced by the ever-present rumour of the Zamindar's ghost. Archana Rana is its tragic prisoner. Married into the Rana family in an alliance that swallowed her father's fortune, she is trapped in a gilded cage. In stark defiance stands Sharvani Mehra. She navigates the same patriarchal world not as a victim, but as a rebel, weaponising male desire to carve out a sliver of freedom and influence. Yet,

her defiance comes at a cost—a life of societal judgment and isolation, a price exacted by the very hierarchy she subverts.

Shakchunni takes this theme of female identity and makes it the core of its horror. The very myth of the shakchunni—a female spirit who possesses a bride to steal her life and her home—is a perfect metaphor for a system that erases a woman's identity, making her a mere vessel for male legacy. The young bride, Saudamini, is not a person but a transaction, married to a heartbroken man and valued only for her potential to produce an heir. Her mother-in-law, Bouthakurun, is perhaps the most terrifying character of all—a woman who the patriarchy has so thoroughly consumed that she becomes its most vicious enforcer, ensuring the next generation of women endures the same subjugation. The absolute horror here is not a ghost, but the grotesque, predatory lust of

Rai Bahadur for his own daughter-in-law.

Ultimately, the supernatural in both novels serves as a desperate language, a means for characters and communities to articulate a trauma too vast and too brutal to be named. The political is not a subplot; it is the very air these characters breathe, thick with the poison of oppression. In *The Zamindar's Ghost*, Tej's absurd obsession with a "Revolutionaries' spy" is a classic case of misdirection, closing his eyes to the corruption brewing within the system he is sworn to protect. Digvijay Rana's ghost can be viewed as the lingering spirit of colonialism itself, a violent, decaying presence that continues to demand sacrifice. In *Shakchunni*, the haunting is directly fueled by the Great Bengal Famine. The crumbling estates, the rising communist ideals among the desperate, and the heavy hand of the British Raj create a pressure cooker of societal collapse. The 'shakchunni' is the folkloric embodiment of this collapse, a scream of anguish given form, a story told to make sense of a world devouring itself.

To read *The Zamindar's Ghost* and *Shakchunni* as simple ghost stories is to miss their profound, beating, and broken hearts. They are historical critiques dressed in the chilling costume of folklore. They force us to look past the ghosts in the window and into the darkness of our own histories, to recognise the terrifying reflection staring back. The accurate spirits are not the undead, but the inescapable, man-made structures of social hierarchy—the chains of class, the prisons of gender, and the legacy of colonial power. These are the monsters that outlive their creators, haunting the halls of manors and the hearts of villages long after the bodies have been buried and the ghosts, supposedly, laid to rest.

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BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Blood, desire, and the fight against patriarchy

Review of Kat Dunn's 'Hungerstone' (Manilla Press, 2025)

JONAH KENT RICHARDS

As we approach Halloween this October, I thought a story about the supernatural would be the most appropriate book review choice. *Hungerstone* by queer British fantasy novelist Kat Dunn is a sapphic vampire novel set in 19th century Britain. Inspired by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 vampire novella "Carmilla", Dunn's novel is a story about blood and hunger. While these are typical themes in a vampire novel, Dunn goes beyond their genre association to explore their roles in women's health and the socioeconomic oppression and exploitation of women and working class people. In a genre where women are far too often objectified, Dunn transforms the fall to vampirism into a form of self-actualisation and emancipation.

The novel's narrator, Lady Lenore Crowther, is the 30-year-old wife of cutlery industrialist Henry Crowther and the ultimate self-made woman. At 12 years old, she survived a tragic carriage accident that killed her parents and left her under the cloistered tutelage of her sole relative, Aunt Daphne. She uses her ancient family name to arrange a marriage into the wealthy up-and-coming industrialist Crowther family. Henry and Lenore move from London to the Nethershaw estate in Derbyshire where Lenore now finds herself to be the mistress of a great house. It is the culmination of a lifetime of hard work and sacrifice, a position for which many women in her class would kill for. Despite Lenore's undeniable

The relationship between Lenore and Carmilla culminates in a passionate love scene between the two women. While some readers might dismiss it as a gratuitous attempt by the author to titillate her readers, I would argue the scene feels like the natural peak to the characters' relationship arc. As a gratuitous attempt by the author to titillate her readers, I would argue the scene feels like the natural peak to the characters' relationship arc.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

Carmilla is an Aphrodite-like figure whose presence reignites a long-repressed desire in Lenore. Lenore frequently catches herself staring longingly at Carmilla's body. Beyond sparking her libido, Carmilla provides Lenore with a companionship that she had been sorely lacking. Carmilla's presence allows Lenore to confide those secrets that she dares not share with Henry or even her best friend Cora, and Lenore finally gets to question the way Henry treats her. "What do you want?" is the question that Carmilla repeatedly asks Lenore. The relationship between Lenore and

Carmilla culminates in a passionate love scene between the two women. While some readers might dismiss it as a gratuitous attempt by the author to titillate her readers, I would argue the scene feels like the natural peak to the characters' relationship arc. While the scene is passionate, it is tastefully portrayed in a way that speaks to an organic love between the two women.

Typically, in vampire novels, women are enslaved by vampires into objects of food and desire. Yet Dunn turns Carmilla's vampiric seduction of Lenore from an act of enslavement into an act of emancipation.

She wants. She sees when other people attempt to exploit her, and she is willing to fight back. The Lenore at the end of the novel is self-actualised in a way her previous self couldn't even dream of being.

However, Dunn's scope extends beyond the romance between Lenore and Carmilla; Henry's cutlery making factory has been failing to compensate their workers and their families who were injured or killed on the job. Lenore is horrified to learn that the privileged lifestyle she has come to enjoy as Henry's wife has been financed on the blood of working class people in her husband's factory. She appears to see the workers stuck in the same patriarchal capitalist system that has trapped her in a loveless marriage.

If I had to critique any element of the novel, I would have liked to have learned more about Carmilla. Where did she come from? How did she become a vampire? What initially drew her to Lenore? I understand that much of Carmilla's appeal stems from her mysterious nature, but it would have been fascinating to learn more about the human woman behind the vampire.

In the end, I strongly recommend Dunn's *Hungerstone*. The story represents a fascinating queer reappropriation of the vampire genre into one of sapphic emancipation and self-actualisation in the face of patriarchal exploitation.

Jonah Kent Richards is a Shakespeare screen adaptation scholar, an English teacher, and contributor for Star Books and Literature.



So much hinges on Bangladesh's star midfielder Hamza Choudhury as the men in red and green gear up to face higher-ranked Hong Kong, China at home today. On the eve of the AFC Asian Cup Qualifier fixture at the National Stadium, Hamza led from the front in training -- rallying teammates, lifting spirits, and even sharing a few light-hearted moments amid the intensity.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh aim for vital win against Hong Kong

SPORTS REPORTER

Fahamedul Islam.
Cabrera faced criticism for his starting eleven and tactical approach against Singapore, but the 40-year old Spaniard is aiming to rectify that with a revised game plan tonight.

Hong Kong are known to be compact in defence, quick on the counter, and relentless in physical duels. They have been strengthened by several naturalised players from countries including Brazil, Spain, Cameroon, Nigeria, France, Japan, and Scotland, pose a different challenge.

"There was a lot of expectation, and yes, it was disappointing not to get any points against Singapore," Cabrera said at the pre-match press conference. "We had good moments in that match. The key now is to learn from our mistakes and not repeat them if we want to beat Hong Kong."

While acknowledging the challenge posed by Hong Kong's naturalised players, Cabrera insisted that his focus remains on his own team.

"I've said before the teams in Group C are of a similar level, though with different styles of play. Hong Kong are quite similar to Singapore. The naturalised players don't change much -- we need to focus on how we play."

Cabrera has managed three wins,

two draws, and five defeats in his last 10 matches with Bangladesh, and faces further challenges in team selection. Veteran centre back Topu Barman is unlikely to feature due to injury, forward Al Amin is nursing a calf strain and may be replaced by Arman Faisal Akash, while Shamit has only had one training session with the team.

Despite the setbacks, Cabrera remains optimistic.

"The additions of Hamza, Shamit, Fahamedul, and Zayan (Ahmed) have increased the squad's depth. A positive result is crucial -- it's do or die. We'll be fighting with everything tomorrow."

(Hamza would've been) Probably on the bench. We're aware of his ability. Most of his football (he has played) in England at right-back as a defender. We know he can play in midfield. He can play as a defensive midfielder. But it's about a team. One player doesn't make a team.

Hong Kong coach Ashley Westwood when asked which position Hamza Choudhury would have played if he was playing for Hong Kong and if he has any specific plans for the midfiel

- ➊ The two sides have met four times previously, with Hong Kong, China unbeaten in all encounters, winning twice and drawing twice.
- ➋ Hong Kong's first victory came in 1975, when they thrashed Bangladesh 9-1 in the Merdeka Tournament. The next meeting came 28 years later, in 2003, ending in a 2-2 draw in an AFC Asian Cup Preliminary fixture in Hong Kong.
- ➌ The teams then faced off twice in 2006 in home and away fixtures in Asian Cup Qualifiers.
- ➍ Bangladesh have failed to score in their last two meetings with Hong Kong -- losing 1-0 and then playing out a goalless draw.
- ➎ Bangladesh have lost just once in seven matches this year -- a 2-1 loss to Singapore in June 2025 -- but have drawn four times.
- ➏ According to the latest FIFA World Rankings, Hong Kong sit 146th, while Bangladesh are ranked 184th.
- ➐ After four consecutive defeats, Hong Kong returned to winning ways with an 8-0 rout of Fiji in their last outing at the 2025 King's Cup.

Clubs divided along election lines in boycott move

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) board of directors' election on October 6 has divided the 76 clubs in Dhaka Metropolis into two distinct camps, as while some 40 of them have called for a domestic boycott, the others have adopted compliant silence.

On Wednesday, several disgruntled club officials held a press conference at a city hotel to speak about their grievances regarding the just-concluded election. At the event, they announced a boycott of all club, division and district level cricket across the country over the irregularities in the polls.

This reaction from the clubs was not unexpected given that their control over the country's richest sporting body has been greatly diminished after the polls. Even prestigious clubs like Abahani Ltd and Mohammedan Sporting Club, who have remained influential in the BCB's power structure for as long as memory serves, don't have any representation in the newly elected 25 member board of directors.

Last year, all 76 clubs had unitedly boycotted against BCB constitution reforms and successfully nipped it in the bud. Even 48 hours before the election, 48 protesting clubs had come out threatening a boycott.

"I can guarantee that had I contested in the elections, no matter who the opposition is or what my support base is... I would have passed easily,"

Tamim Iqbal, former Bangladesh captain, councillor of Old DOHS Sports Club



But after the polls, the number of protesting clubs have shrunk. There is some ambiguity over exactly how many clubs are part of the protests right now, with the number fluctuating around 38-40.

Even within the protesting organisers, there had been differences. Some organisers had put forth a three-point request to the Sports Advisor Asif Mahmud regarding the polls on October 2, when Tamim Iqbal, the face of the protests, was out of the country.

"Let me clarify. We want the best for cricket, and we don't want to harm cricket. That is why we all collectively

submitted an application that the election be postponed and that a re-scheduled date for a proper election be announced... There is nothing wrong with this," Rafiqul Islam Babu, one of the organisers who gave the proposal, said on the matter.

Rafiqul also hoped that the divide among clubs would soon end.

"Sides were taken surrounding the circumstances in the elections... But it's temporary and for the good of country you will see reconciliation," Rafiqul said.

During the press conference, questions were asked over why councillors, who could have sent their votes through postal voting, were instead asked to do it through e-voting. It was also claimed that when new ballots were printed after a candidate was added, some voters had requested for e-votes but later found that their votes had already been cast.

"We are not accepting the election itself. We are boycotting the election," Masuduzzaman, Mohammedan's councillor and cricket committee chairman, said during the event.

In the evening, the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) reaffirmed that it was wholly committed to hold the leagues. It remains to be seen how the boycott pans out eventually, but in terms of reconciliations, the clubs have never appeared more divided.

Proving a point when it matters most

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh have been the surprise packages of the ongoing ICC Women's World Cup, showing consistency despite limited preparation and minimal international exposure beforehand.

The Tigresses began their campaign with a memorable victory over Pakistan in Colombo before putting up a spirited fight against four-time champions England in Guwahati, drawing widespread praise for their skillful and spirited display.

Before departing for the World Cup, expectations surrounding Nigar Sultana Joty's side were relatively modest. Bangladesh had not played any international match since the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers in Pakistan in April, with their preparation largely restricted to fitness drills, skill camps, and a few practice matches against a men's Under-15 side.

Concerns also surrounded Bangladesh's fragile batting lineup, with much of the responsibility appearing to rest on skipper Joty. However, the team's performances since their warm-up fixtures have defied those assumptions, as several new and emerging players have stepped up to share the responsibility.

In their campaign opener, debutant Rubya Haider Jhelik struck an unbeaten fifty to steer Bangladesh to a seven-wicket win over Pakistan after Marufa Akter's incisive spell had restricted them to 129.



Looking ahead, Faruque urged the team to stay grounded as tougher challenges await, starting with New Zealand in Guwahati on Friday. "They'll be under pressure after losing two games," he said, adding that if Bangladesh "execute their plans well," another upset could be on the cards. He also confirmed that Marufa has recovered from the cramps that restricted her bowling in the previous match.

Visa delays hampering Tigers in UAE

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite being called up for Bangladesh's three-match ODI series against Afghanistan, which got underway on Wednesday in Abu Dhabi, opener Mohammad Naim is yet to join the team in the UAE as he has not received his visa.

Due to the delay, Parvez Hossain Emon -- a member of the T20 squad and part of the Asia Cup squad that stayed back in the UAE for this series -- has been kept with the team as a backup option.

Earlier this month, the same issue did not allow opener Soumya Sarkar to join the national team for the three match T20I series against the same opponents.

Soumya waited several days for the visa, but eventually returned to play in the National Cricket League T20.

Typically, before an overseas tournament, visas are arranged for at least 8-10 players outside the main squad.

According to Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, head of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) cricket operations department, the board had started the visa process in time, but even after repeated communications, has been unable to solve the issue.

"His [Naim] visa has still not been issued. We applied for the visas even before the team was finalised -- based on the list of probable players. But for some, there have been delays."

"We tried to follow up internally, and even our president discussed the matter during his Dubai visit. However, it ultimately depends on the concerned authorities in the UAE," Fahim told The Daily Star.

The UAE has kept regular tourist visas for Bangladeshi citizens suspended for over a year. Special invitation-based visas remain available, and players and media personnel were granted such visas during the Asia Cup through special arrangements. But during the ongoing bilateral series against Afghanistan, the same process has encountered renewed complications.

We were all egotistical losers. So why didn't we connect when we were 20, 21, 22, 23? Was it ego? Was it rivalry? It was down to the culture within England. We weren't friendly or connected. We weren't a team. We never at any stage became a real good, strong team.

Former England and Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard





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Prof Tofail Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Tofail Ahmed, one of the most prominent advocates for strengthening Bangladesh's local government system and promoting decentralisation, died of heart complications at a city hospital last night.

He was 71.

His career spanned academia, policy reform, and development consultancy, with a strong focus on strengthening democratic and local government institutions.

His son-in-law, Sarowar Jahan, told The Daily Star that Prof Tofail,

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I'm staying in Bangladesh, no exit plans
Says Rizwana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday said she is not looking for any "exit" and intends to stay in Bangladesh.

"I have always been in the country. I have faced many storms before and will continue to live the rest of my life in Bangladesh," Rizwana told reporters at the Secretariat while responding to a query about whether any advisers are looking for "safe exits".

Her comments came days after National Citizen Party Convenor Nahid Islam claimed that many advisers in the interim government have established ties with political parties and are now thinking about their "safe exits".

He also alleged that the advisers have "secured their own futures" and "betrayed the spirit of the mass uprising".

Asked about the reason behind Nahid's such comments, Rizwana said, "How can I respond to what Nahid Islam has said when he himself did not disclose any names or details of the matter?"

From what I can see,



SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

DHAKA-SYLHET HIGHWAY Road adviser gets a taste of the ordeal travellers face



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Road Transport and Bridges Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan was stuck for hours in a 15km-long traffic jam in Brahmanbaria while visiting the Dhaka-Sylhet highway yesterday.

The stretch from Ashuganj's Sohagpur to Shahbazpur in Sarail upazila has been facing severe gridlock since late Tuesday night, causing immense suffering for commuters and long-distance travellers.

Five years since its launch, the Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Project has achieved a mere 15 percent of its objectives, leaving the 210-kilometre stretch in disrepair and turning millions' journeys into ordeals.



Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman receives awards at the annual international conference of WAN-IFRA held in Munich, Germany, yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Hamas hands over hostage swap list

US envoys, regional leaders set to join negotiations as host Egypt voices 'optimism'

REUTERS, Cairo

Talks to end the war in Gaza were taken up a notch yesterday with the arrival of senior figures from Israel, the US and regional countries, after Hamas handed over its lists of hostages and Palestinian prisoners to be freed in a swap.

With US President Donald Trump's 20 point plan now appearing closer than any previous effort to bringing an end to the fighting, delegations were upgrading their presence at the talks, launched on Monday in an Egyptian Red Sea beach resort.

Trump sent his son-in-law Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent his close confidant, Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer. They were expected to join the talks later yesterday, along with the prime minister of longstanding mediator Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was meanwhile expected to attend parallel talks in Paris with ministers from European and Arab states, to discuss how to implement Trump's plan.

The plan has broad international support, but crucial details have yet to be spelled out, including the timing, a post-war administration for the Gaza Strip, the fate of Hamas and the prospects for an independent Palestinian state.

Hamas, the militant group that precipitated the war by attacking Israeli

GAZA PEACE TALKS

- Talks so far focus on three issues: halting conflict, withdrawal of Israeli forces and prisoner swap
- Hamas seeks release of highest profile prisoners held in Israel
- Rubio holds talks with Arabs, European nations in Paris

territory two years ago, said it had handed over its lists of hostages and Palestinian prisoners to be exchanged in a swap, and was optimistic about the talks so far.

The list of Palestinians Hamas wants freed is expected to include some of the most prominent prisoners ever jailed by Israel, whose release had been off limits in previous ceasefires.

According to a Palestinian source close to the talks, the list includes Marwan al-Barghouti, a leader of the Fatah movement, and Ahmed Saadat, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Both are serving multiple life sentences for attacks that killed Israelis.

Delhi's remark on election 'unwarranted'
Says Touhid

STAR REPORT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday described the recent comment made by Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri regarding the upcoming national election of Bangladesh as "completely unwarranted".

"I see that statement as not their matter -- it is entirely an internal issue for Bangladesh, and such comments are completely unwarranted," he told reporters while briefing journalists at the foreign ministry, reports BSS.

During an interaction with a delegation of the Diplomatic Correspondents' Association Bangladesh (DCAB) in New Delhi on Monday, Misri said India firmly supports "free, fair, inclusive, and participatory elections" in Bangladesh at the earliest possible time and will continue to engage with whoever comes to power in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh-India relations have become strained since the fall of the Awami League government last year and India's sheltering of the deposed

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Trio wins chemistry Nobel for planet-saving research

AFP, Stockholm

Three scientists won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry yesterday for their work developing metal-organic frameworks (MOFs), whose multiple uses include capturing carbon dioxide and harvesting water from desert air.

Japan's Susumu Kitagawa, UK-born Richard Robson and American Jordanian Omar Yaghi were honoured for their groundbreaking discoveries dating from the late 1980s to the early 2000s.

The jury noted that thanks to the trio's discoveries, chemists had been able to build tens of thousands of different MOFs.



Susumu Kitagawa



Omar Yaghi



Richard Robson

"Some of these may contribute to solving some of humankind's greatest challenges," it added.

It listed applications such as "separating PFAS from water, breaking down traces of pharmaceuticals in the environment, capturing carbon dioxide or harvesting water from desert air".

To explain the scale of their achievement, Hans Ellegren, secretary general of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, told reporters: "Imagine that the tools of chemistry could be used to create entirely new materials with unheard-of properties."

In 1989, Robson, 88, tested utilising the properties of atoms in a new way using copper ions.

"When they were combined, they bonded to form a well-ordered,

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IT'S NOT A SWIMMING POOL... Children playing and swimming in the skating rink at Lalmatia Trikon Park yesterday. Due to lack of maintenance and poor drainage, rainwater has turned it into a pool.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HAKIM MURDER Police arrest four, probe sand trading, political links

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN

Police have yet to identify the armed assailants who shot businessman Md Abdul Hakim to death in Madunaghat in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila on Tuesday.

However, investigators say they are probing possible links to sand trading disputes and political rivalry.

The victim's family claimed that Hakim was a follower of Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, former vice-chairman of the BNP central committee and younger brother of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, even though he did not hold any official post in the party.

Soon after a footage of the shooting went viral on Facebook, the BNP central office issued a press release saying that Abdul Hakim was not affiliated with the BNP, triggering mixed reactions from local party leaders and supporters.

At Chattogram Medical College Hospital, Hakim's brother Parvez

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