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Airport fire sends shockwave across supply chains

Raw materials for peak-season garment shipments, medicine ingredients, and telecom equipment gutted

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA, MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and KEERO ADHNAN AHMED

A massive fire that burnt down the import section of the Dhaka airport cargo village has delivered a severe blow to Bangladesh's garment supply chain, threatening to derail peak shipments crucial for the upcoming Christmas sales season.

Exporters fear extensive delivery delays and work order cancellations as the fire gutted almost all imported samples and production accessories stored in the facility -- essential for current production cycles and future seasons.

Industry insiders estimate that the loss from the destruction of products at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) could exceed the initial estimate of \$1 billion.

The Dhaka airport fire was the third incident in a week that raised concerns among businesses, who are encountering a sharp increase in tariffs at the Chattogram port, increased interest rates on loans, high inflation and a slowdown in domestic demand, and a fresh 20 percent tariff on exports to the US, Bangladesh's single biggest market.

At this stage, the airport fire will dent the country's image and give competitors an upper hand.

Businesses said the losses should not be seen simply at the import value of the items that were gutted. The ripple effects of the fire would heavily fall on both export-oriented garment and pharmaceutical industries, as well as businesses focused on the domestic market.

The import cargo zone had everything from a tiny item like lace or other accessories, to spare parts and samples of products sent by buyers to place fresh orders.

Garment exporters' reliance on air freight to meet tight deadlines means the loss is compounded by existing logistical challenges.

Nurul Amin, former vice-president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA), warned that air shipment pressure

- » Losses could exceed \$1b, industry insiders say
- » Businesses face ripple effects beyond import value of goods
- » Temperature-sensitive raw materials for major drugmakers lost

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Police obstruct protesting teachers near the High Court premises during a pre-scheduled "hunger march" towards the Shikkha Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HOUSE RENT HIKE
Teachers reject govt's offer, continue protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of MPO-listed non-government schools, colleges and madrasas yesterday continued their protest for the eighth consecutive day, rejecting the government's decision to grant a five percent house rent allowance, or a minimum of Tk 2,000 per month.

They said the new allowance was "a mockery", and warned that they would intensify their movement if their demands were not met.

Earlier in the day, the finance ministry issued a circular approving the new house rent structure, which will take effect on November 1. It clarified that no arrears would be paid under the revised system.

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'We teach, but we can't feed our children'

RAFIUL ISLAM

of basic salary. The Monthly Pay Order (MPO) is the government's share in the payroll of non-government educational institutions. Under the scheme, the government gives 100 percent basic salaries to teachers of non-government institutions. The teachers also get a small amount a

month as allowances through the MPO. As per the rules, an educational institution first comes under the MPO scheme and then the government includes the teachers of the institution in the payroll.

His words reflect the frustration of thousands of MPO-listed teachers who have been demonstrating in the capital, saying their salaries are too low to meet the basic needs of their families.

Their other demands include increasing medical allowance to Tk 1,500 from Tk 500, and festival allowance to 75 percent from 50 percent

The agitating teachers said they had no other option but to take to the streets as their income has barely increased over the years, even though living costs have risen sharply.

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At the entry level, a teacher in an MPO-listed institution receives a

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Smoke rising from the charred warehouses in the cargo village area of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday noon, as the fire that broke out there around 2:30pm on Saturday continued to burn 27 hours later. Firefighters managed to fully extinguish the blaze around 5:00pm yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Cargo village fire exposes weak safety systems at HSIA

12-member probe committee formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fire at the cargo village of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport has raised serious concerns about the fire safety systems at one of the country's most crucial infrastructure hubs.

The fire, which broke out around 2:30pm on Saturday, raged for nearly 27 hours before it was fully extinguished at 4:55pm yesterday.

The blaze primarily affected the Customs House area in the cargo complex, exposing major lapses in the airport's fire protection systems.

Briefing reporters yesterday, Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director (Operations and Maintenance) of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the lack of a fire detection and protection system hindered efforts to contain the flames.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Gaza truce put to test, Israeli strikes kill 45

AGENCIES

Israel launched a series of deadly strikes in Gaza yesterday and said it was halting aid into the enclave in response to attacks on its forces that killed two soldiers, in the worst violence since the start of a US brokered ceasefire that halted two years of devastating onslaught less than two weeks ago.

Gaza's civil defence agency, which operates under Hamas authority, said at least 45 people had been killed across the territory.

On Sunday evening, the Israeli military said in a statement, "In response to the blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement earlier today [Sunday], the IDF [Israeli military] has begun a series of strikes against Hamas terror targets in the southern Gaza Strip."

Hamas denied the accusations, with one official accusing Israel of fabricating "pretexts" to resume the war.

- » Israel and Hamas blame each other for truce violation
- » Netanyahu orders 'strong action' against Hamas targets
- » Israel suspends the entry of aid into Gaza

In a separate statement, the Israeli military said two of its soldiers "fell during combat in the southern Gaza Strip".

A security official said Israel was also suspending the entry of aid into Gaza, blaming Hamas's "blatant violations" of the ceasefire.

Israel repeatedly cut off aid to the territory during the war, exacerbating dire humanitarian

PHOTO ON PAGE 12

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Bank Asia Wins Prestigious WSBI SDG Award 2025 in Washington, D.C.



The award acknowledges Bank Asia's outstanding contributions in the categories of Inclusive Banking and Social Impact, Economic Growth and Empowerment, Digital Transformation and Technological Innovation, Climate Finance, and Customer Education.

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*WSBI - The World Savings and Retail Banking Institute

Journo assaulted inside Khaleda's Gulshan office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Daily Amar Desh journalist Jahidul Islam was physically assaulted by BNP activists at the party chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

The staff reporter of the daily newspaper came under attack while filming inside the chairperson's office, where aspirants from the Sylhet division got into a scuffle around 4:30pm.

Following the incident, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir condemned the attack and issued a statement.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jahidul said, "I had been at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office since the morning, gathering news, talking to nomination seekers. Around 4:30pm, nomination seekers began quarrelling and scuffling with each other."

"When I tried to take footage of the incident with my phone, three to four people dragged me inside a room and beat me. They broke my phone. When I showed my press ID card, they seized it and threw me out," he added.

Jahidul claims to have identified one of the assailants as Mohammad Faisal, an office staffer, who he

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Teachers reject govt's offer

FROM PAGE 1

According to the circular, the rate was set considering the existing fiscal constraints. It also stated that the house rent allowance would be automatically adjusted in the future in line with any national pay scale revisions, and that payments must be made strictly in line with MPO rules and relevant government gazettes.

The announcement came while thousands of teachers and employees were continuing their sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka.

"Our initial victory is that the government responded. But we reject it [the response]. We'll continue our protest, work abstention and hunger strike until our demands for 20 percent house rent, Tk 1,500 medical allowance, and 75 percent festival allowance are met," Delwar Hossain Azizi, member secretary of the MPO Nationalisation Expectant Alliance -- the platform leading the protest, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Education Adviser CR Abrar expressed hope that the protesting teachers would accept the new house rent and return to classrooms. "We believe that the teaching community deserves much more. However, due to the current limitations, the decision that has been made comes with an allocation from the finance ministry."

Rejecting the decision, the teachers in the afternoon brought out their pre-scheduled "hunger march", which started from the Central Shaheed Minar and was blocked by police near Shikha Bhaban.

Many teachers were seen carrying bowls in their hands. They chanted slogans like "accept our logical demands" and "we want 20 percent house rent" before returning to the Shaheed Minar again around 4:30pm.

After the government circular was issued, a delegation of teachers, led by Azizi, went to meet BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, Azizi said that Fakhrul assured them of prioritising the nationalisation of MPO-listed educational institutions if his party returned to power, reports UNB. He added that the BNP leader not only gave them hope but also showed genuine interest in the issue.

Azizi further said the delegation even proposed that they would address other demands later if the government at least raised the house rent allowance by 20 percent now.

At the entry level, MPO-listed teachers now receive a monthly salary of Tk 12,500, along with Tk 1,000 as house rent, Tk 500 as medical allowance, and 50 percent of their basic pay as festival allowance.

In September, the finance ministry approved a Tk 500 rise in the house rent allowance, which the teachers rejected, calling it "insufficient".

On October 12, teachers across the country joined a protest in front of the Jatiya Press Club. Police used water cannons, sound grenades, and batons to disperse them.

They then moved to Shaheed Minar, where they protested the police action and announced a countrywide work abstention from the following day.

Currently, there are over 26,000 MPO-listed non-government institutions in the country, with around 3.8 lakh teachers and 1.7 lakh staff members.



Firefighters continued working yesterday at the site of a blaze that destroyed the import section of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's cargo village in the capital on Saturday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Airport fire sends shockwave

FROM PAGE 1

would become "higher this year" due to the backlog created by the fire. The strike at Chatogram port has already been forcing a "significant quantity" of goods to be diverted to HSIA.

While the airport typically handles up to 1,000 tonnes of dry cargo daily, volumes spike dramatically during the October December rush. Now HSIA's capacity is bracing for yet another surge in air cargo to rapidly replace the destroyed samples and accessories.

Industry leaders are scrambling for solutions. Faisal Samad, a director of the

BGMEA has instructed members to clear all imported materials from the airport within 36 hours, while the government has directed the cargo village to operate round the clock, including on weekends, to accelerate processing.

BROADER IMPACT
The lost goods included not just garment materials but also other sensitive cargo, such as pharmaceuticals and telecom equipment.

Muhammad Halimuzzaman, deputy managing director and chief executive of Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Limited, warned that Bangladesh's

manufacturers to resume supply," Halimuzzaman said. "Now, we need government support to prevent disruption."

On the possibility of using alternative terminals, he said, "That decision rests with the authorities. Our priority is restoring the supply chain as quickly as possible."

Mizanur Rahman, customs coordinator for Salvation Logistics, said all 40 consignments his firm had inside the facility were either burnt or damaged. "All were telecom items that we distribute to various operators. Our losses may exceed Tk 10 lakh," he told The Daily Star.

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Belal Hossain of Jane Trading Ltd, a clearing and forwarding (C&F) agent specialising in garments and foreign investment imports, estimated that his clients' goods, worth Tk 200 crore, were lost in the fire.

At the site, forwarding agent Nizam Bhuiyan described the destruction as "immeasurable".

"Crates and crates worth of products have been damaged. I can't even estimate how big it is without getting inside," he said.

Mohammad Rafiq, in charge of Matata Trading Company Limited, said they had prepared to pay nearly Tk 30 crore in taxes to customs, but the entire consignments worth around Tk 250 to 300 crore was destroyed.

Most of the items were high-value mobile components such as ICs, displays, and other accessories from brands such as Oppo, Xiaomi, Vivo, Samsung, OnePlus, and Realme, Rafiq told The Daily Star yesterday.

DELAY IN FIREFIGHTING
The Dhaka Customs Agents Association accused the Civil Aviation Authority and the fire service of a delayed response, saying the lack of coordination caused "irreparable damage".

"Unfortunately, the Civil Aviation Authority and the fire service failed to arrive at the spot instantly to douse the blaze. This irreparable damage was caused due to the delay and a lack of coordination," the association said in a statement.

In response to media queries over the alleged delay, Adviser Bashir Uddin said a full probe was underway, covering all possible aspects of the fire. "Within 30 seconds of the fire being reported, our firefighting team was deployed," he said, adding that 37 units participated in extinguishing the blaze, with additional water supplied by WASA.

Importers, clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents, and passersby stand in silence outside the Dhaka airport cargo complex yesterday, stunned at the destruction left behind by Saturday's fire.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said authorities have temporarily allocated warehouse space at the airport's Third Terminal to help manage the cargo overflow and expedite recovery.

While the export section remained untouched, Samad cautioned that the destruction of vital production samples could still lead to cancellation or non-renewal of work orders by international partners, warning of "multiple impacts" across the sector.

Imamul Haq Khan, senior vice president of BGMEA, said the association is asking members to register losses as it has secured assurances of government support from Commerce Adviser SK Bashir Uddin.

He demanded a swift government investigation into the incident and called for enhanced security within the airport's sensitive areas to reassure foreign buyers.

To ease immediate congestion, the

pharmaceutical sector will face disruption following the recent airport fire.

Halimuzzaman, who also serves as treasurer of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, told The Daily Star that most major drugmakers had consignments of raw materials stored at the airport.

"These are temperature-sensitive, time-bound materials. Even a single batch loss can halt production," he said, adding that many firms operate with just-in-time inventory systems, heightening the risk of imminent shortages of essential medicines.

He urged swift government intervention, including fast-tracking approvals from the Directorate General of Drug Administration, the commerce ministry and the Department of Narcotics Control to expedite import processing.

"We're already in contact with API [Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient]

Draft special order likely by week's end

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experts and discussed a draft of the special order.

After the discussion, it was decided that the experts would submit the full text of the draft special order to the commission by the end of this week.

The draft will call for a referendum and recommend granting the next parliament dual powers, allowing it to function both as the legislature and as a constitutional reform assembly.

The proposed duration of this assembly would be six to nine months. "Some of us favour a six-month term, while others prefer nine months. Thus, the recommendation will likely propose a minimum of six months and a maximum of nine months," said one expert.

The commission also discussed with experts the possible legal basis for the special order.

Initially, experts suggested that the order could be issued by the government under Section 22 of the July Declaration, but political parties criticised that approach during the dialogue process.

When asked, one expert said, "The preamble of the order will explain how the interim government has the authority to issue it. The justification will come from the July uprising itself, which conferred this authority on the current government. Therefore, we are considering recommending that the government issue the order based on the people's mandate through the uprising, rather than citing Section 22 of the July Declaration."

During the dialogues, more than half of the participating parties, including the BNP, wanted the referendum to be held

The meeting also discussed whether the special order should be issued by the president or the chief adviser.

According to meeting sources, participants said that while ordinances and gazettes are usually issued by the president, the special order would be issued under exceptional authority, not as an ordinance or gazette. Hence, no final decision has yet been made regarding who will issue it.

When asked about the contents of the proposed special order, one expert indicated it would likely include a preamble, the key provisions of the July charter, and the specific questions to be posed in the referendum.

Prof Ali Riaz, vice president of the National Consensus Commission, told The Daily Star: "Discussions are underway. We want to submit a complete proposal that will include everything clearly and comprehensively."

He added that with the experts' opinions incorporated, the commission aims to submit its final recommendations to the government this week for the implementation of the July charter.

After weeks of uncertainty, 24 political parties and alliances, including the BNP and Jamaat, signed the July National Charter on October 17.

However, the parties remain divided over whether the referendum should be held on the same day as the next national election or before it.

During the dialogues, more than half of the participating parties, including the BNP, wanted the referendum to be held

on election day, while Jamaat, NCP, and other Islamist parties preferred it be held before the election.

Experts have suggested that the government decide the timing of the referendum.

Parties also disagree over how many questions should be included in the referendum. Experts initially proposed two: one on consensus issues and another on dissenting issues.

However, it is now being considered that there may be only one question, asking whether the people support the special order. Alternatively, it could ask whether the people support the constitutional reform proposals.

Meanwhile, Gono Forum yesterday signed the July charter, as the consensus commission decided to retain the Proclamation of Independence in the constitution.

On behalf of the Gono Forum, its acting president Subrata Chowdhury and General Secretary Mizanur Rahman signed the charter at the LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at 12:30pm.

With this, a total of 25 parties have signed the charter.

However, the National Citizen Party, formed by student leaders who led the July uprising, has yet to sign the charter, citing a lack of legal foundation and assurance for its implementation.

The party demanded that Chief Adviser Prof Mohammad Yunus issue the implementation order of the July Charter as an expression of the people's sovereign will.

Cargo village fire

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He added that the incident might have been prevented if such systems had been installed.

Following the incident, questions arose over why it took so long to contain the fire in such a sensitive area and how it spread so rapidly through the entire import complex.

Authorities have yet to determine the exact cause of the fire or the extent of the damage.

Meanwhile, concerns about the country's disaster preparedness were discussed at an emergency meeting of the Inter-ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee.

Speaking to The Daily Star, a source present at the meeting quoted National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman as asking, "If we are so helpless in containing a fire in such a critical area, how will we handle multiple incidents at once?"

The airport's firefighting team reached the scene within three minutes of the fire breaking out, but failed to contain it due to its intensity, airport authorities told the meeting, the source said.

The fire began near Gate No. 8 of the import cargo complex and quickly engulfed warehouses packed with imported chemicals, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and garments. Thirty-seven units from 13 fire stations, joined by the air force, navy, army, Civil Aviation Authority, Border Guard Bangladesh, and police, worked to control the blaze.

About seven hours after it started, the fire service announced around 9:18pm that the flames had been brought under control. Flight operations resumed shortly after.

At yesterday's meeting, Lt Col Tajul Islam of the fire service explained that the cargo section contained highly combustible materials in small, compartmentalised steel rooms with an "extremely high storage density", which, combined with hazardous goods and confined spaces, accelerated the spread of the fire.

Firefighters had to cut through steel partitions to gain access, and even after the flames were doused, residual heat from the metal made cooling efforts difficult. Four units remained on site as a precaution.

Despite the challenges, Tajul said the fire service's response was timely. "There were no delays or obstructions in reaching the scene," he said.

An investigation committee has been formed to identify the cause of the fire and evaluate the airport's firefighting systems, including hydrant functionality and suppression mechanisms.

Tajul confirmed that while cracks

Gaza truce put to test

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conditions, with the United Nations saying it caused a famine in northern Gaza.

Fearing the truce may collapse, some Palestinians rushed to buy goods from a main market in Nuseirat, and families left their homes in Khan Younis further south after airstrikes hit nearby.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier yesterday instructed security forces to take "strong action against terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip", his office said in a statement, accusing Hamas of "a ceasefire violation".

"Earlier today [Sunday], terrorists fired anti tank missiles and opened fire on IDF forces" in Rafah, the military said in a statement. "The IDF responded with air strikes by fighter jets and artillery fire, targeting the Rafah area."

The truce in the Palestinian territory, brokered by US President Donald Trump, took effect on October 10, but the Israeli government and Hamas have been accusing each other of violations of the ceasefire for days.

The deal established the outline for hostage and prisoner exchanges and was proposed alongside an ambitious roadmap for Gaza's future. The

Media professional found dead at Dhaka home

Police suspect suicide; news portal says claims linking death to workplace complaint 'unfortunate'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A graphic designer of the online news portal Dhaka Stream was found dead at her home in Dhaka's Sobhanbagh area on Saturday evening.

The deceased was Sornomoy Biswas, 28. She joined Dhaka Stream early this year as a trainee graphic designer.

An unnatural death case was filed with Sornomoy Biswas, 28, at the Bangla Nagar Police Station over Sornomoy's death, said Sub-Inspector Saiful Islam, who is investigating the case.

Saiful suspects Sornomoy died by suicide.

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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

Add indigenous voices to nat'l youth policy
Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for a review of the National Youth Policy 2017 to make it more inclusive for indigenous youths.

They argued that the policy must ensure recognition, representation, and meaningful participation of indigenous youths in national development.

The Bangladesh Indigenous Youth Forum (BIYF) organised the dialogue titled "No One Left Behind: Ensuring Inclusion, Meaningful Participation, and Progress of Marginalised Indigenous Youths through Re-evaluation of the National Youth Policy 2017" at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka.

Presenting the keynote paper, BIYF General Secretary Monira Tripura said indigenous youths remain overlooked in policy and development plans despite their significant role in the country's workforce and culture.

Falguni Tripura, general secretary of the Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network, said the lack of data on indigenous youths makes policymaking difficult.

"We need youth friendly spaces and counselling support, especially in the CHT and remote plains. We must work together for



Students of Government Science College in Tejgaon stage a protest at Farmgate in the capital yesterday, demanding the removal of illegal shops and rickshaw stands occupying the road and footpath near their institution to ensure safe and congestion-free movement for both students and commuters.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regular review of youth policy
- Data collection for accurate representation
- Promotion of youth-friendly spaces
- Addressing barriers in remote areas

a fairer and more inclusive future," she said.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum, said the policy should be reviewed every five years. "Now is the right time to include indigenous voices. They are equal citizens of Bangladesh, and their rights are part of the state's responsibilities," he said.

Ripun Chandra Banai, an executive member of the forum, urged the government to ensure indigenous participation in the 2027 policy review and formally recognise the term "Adivasi" in state documents.

Writer and researcher Pavel Partha said the youth policy lacks an inclusive and pluralist vision and fails to represent rural and indigenous youths. He called for bilingual education, digital access, and protection of traditional skills.

Drinjo Chambugong, staff reporter at Prothom Alo, said indigenous organisations should gather accurate data before seeking stronger inclusion in policy. He suggested they prepare a 15- to 20-point action plan for the next review. BIYF President Anthony Rema, VP Tony Chiran and Finance Secretary Anannya Drong were also present.

RAKIB MADBER

Jagannath University (JnU), one of Bangladesh's oldest and historic institutions of higher learning, marks 20 years as a full-fledged public university today.

Renowned for its long legacy of education, culture, and activism, it has shaped generations of students and played a vital role in the country's political and intellectual life.

Yet, despite its proud past, the university continues to struggle with inadequate facilities for its nearly 19,000 students. Chronic shortages of residential halls, classrooms, transportation, medical services, and library resources have long hindered academic progress and campus life.

JnU has only one residential hall that can house about 1,200 students. The rest live in rented houses or shared messes, which has become an added financial burden for many from outside Dhaka.



Although two decades have passed since its establishment, no new permanent dormitories have been built. Most halls from the college era were occupied after independence, and efforts to reclaim them have yielded little progress.

Recently, the university gained legal possession of the Habibur Rahman and Bani Bhaban halls, where new residential facilities are being developed under the supervision of the Bangladesh Army. However, students complain that construction is moving too slowly.

The seven-acre campus accommodates 38 departments and two institutes across eight academic buildings, leading to a severe shortage of classrooms. Some departments with five running batches are allotted only two or three rooms, forcing them to share space or reschedule classes.

JnU also operates only 23 buses for its 19,000 students, two of which have been out

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'Media trials'
undermine
justice system
Says CA's press
secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser Shafiqul Alam yesterday warned that "media trials" and excessive public pressure are corroding the neutrality of Bangladesh's justice system, making it difficult for judges to adjudicate cases "calmly and rationally".

Speaking at a panel discussion titled "State & Trends of Death Penalty Sentencing Practices in Bangladesh," held at Drik Gallery in Panthapath, Alam said the country's justice system operates in a "toxic environment" where sensationalism often outweighs sober deliberation.

The event was organised by Dhaka-based research organisation Decage as part of an ongoing art exhibition called "Living on Death Row."

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Car showroom owners protest extortion, threat
Keep 550 centres closed for half a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

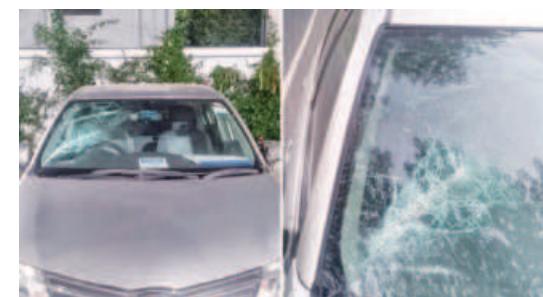
A reign of terror has gripped car showroom owners in the capital.

Extortionists demand large sums from these businesses, and when the owners refuse to pay, they send photos of assault rifles, hurl cocktails near the shops, and even threaten to kidnap their children.

The wave of threats and violence has left traders feeling helpless and customers scared to visit showrooms.

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Motorcade of AK Azad attacked in Faridpur



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

The motorcade of former independent MP from Faridpur-3 AK Azad came under attack, allegedly by a group of Jubo Dal activists, in Faridpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

The incident occurred around 4:45pm at Parmanandapur Bazar under Krishnanagar union.

Witnesses said Azad, managing director of Ha-Meeni Group, arrived at Parmanandapur around 4:00pm to prepare for his campaign when a procession led by Lutfar Rahman, former joint secretary of the upazila Jubo Dal, and Krishnanagar union Jubo Dal President Nannu Mollah reached the spot.

They shouted slogans, calling Azad an "ally of the fascist Awami League."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক
দিছে দেশের সর্ববৃহৎ
CRM সেবা



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প্রতিবার লেনদেন শেষে কার্ডটি সংগ্রহ করুন।



ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সহযোগী

Efforts to portray BNP as opposing July uprising will fail: Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed has dismissed any attempt to portray his party as being opposed to the July uprising and urged everyone to refrain from misinterpreting his statements.

"I just want to say that our young generation, who were involved in the July uprising, gave their lives and faced bullets -- they may have some minor faults or made some small mistakes," he said.

"They are like our children. They might make some mistakes. We don't take those so seriously," Salahuddin said during a briefing at the BNP chairperson's office in Dhaka's Gulshan yesterday.

The briefing was held following NCP chief Nahid Islam's comment on a statement made by Salahuddin on Saturday.

On Saturday, Nahid asked Salahuddin to apologise for calling July warriors, who had gathered at the venue of the July charter signing ceremony, the "fascist followers of Awami League".

"In this context, the Jamaat ameer made a post. I saw that he also urged not to call the July warriors' allies of fascism'. I agree with that. And all of us should hold on to that statement. They should too," said Salahuddin.

Regarding his Saturday's speech, he said, "I don't think it was distorted. But they [political leaders] gave their statements cutting out a part of my statement."

He further said, "Due to their age, many may have spoken emotionally. I don't want to criticise that."

The BNP leader said, "Those who identify themselves as the force of the July uprising and have formed new political parties inspired by that spirit -- I wish them a bright future."

In response to a question on whether there was an attempt to portray BNP as being against the July uprising, Salahuddin said, "It would be wrong to think a fascist regime fell in just 36 days. The July uprising was the outcome of 16 years of continuous movement and struggle."



PHOTO: STAR

Encroachment, pollution choking Boral river

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Rampant encroachment and indiscriminate pollution have long been choking the Boral River in the Chalan Beel area of Pabna's Chatmohar upazila by restricting its natural flow.

Boral is one of the key rivers of the region, stretching around 220 kilometres while connecting with the Padma and Jamuna through four districts before flowing into the Chalan Beel.

The river has been filled up in many areas, with hundreds of different establishments -- shops, markets, and residential buildings -- being built along its 20km stretch in the upazila, including at Notunbazar Kheyaghat, and in Haripur Bazar area.

SM Mizanur Rahman, a member of the Chalan Beel Rokhha

Andoloni, said over 100 structures have been constructed at the Natunbazar Kheyaghat area. He alleged that residents living on the riverbanks often dispose of their sewage into the river. Furthermore, factory waste is also continuously being dumped into the river.

"We have been continuing our movement for decades demanding measures to save the river, but many people are reluctant to help our cause," he said.

In Haripur Bazar area, the river became noticeably narrower due to encroachment. Near the Muktiyoddha Sangsad, much of the river has been grabbed to set up a hawkers' market a few years ago, said locals.

According to locals and shopkeepers, the hawkers' market was previously located near the Chatmohar Dakbungalow area but was relocated to the riverbank after

filling up a portion of the river.

"A total of 24 shops are located in the hawkers' market. We are paying Tk 400 for each shop as a monthly fee to the market's committee," said Md Jonab Ali, a shop owner.

Asked about illegal encroachment, he said he was unaware of the land ownership and had simply rented the shop.

The National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) earlier published a list of encroachers on their website in 2019. Authorities subsequently demolished a few of the illegal structures, but encroachers later returned to grab more land on the riverbank.

Musa Nuser Chowdhury, upazila nurbahi officer of Chatmohar, said he had joined recently and was unaware of what happened earlier.

"However, we are taking action if anybody attempts to encroach on the river," he claimed.

Car showroom

FROM PAGE 3
"They [extortionists] even threaten to kidnap our children, mentioning their names and schools," one showroom owner told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity. "They come on motorcycles, throw cocktails in front of the showroom, and flee."

Abdul Haque, president of Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association (BARVIDA), said at least 12 such attacks have taken place on showrooms near Kuril Biswa Road in the last six months.

Unknown miscreants send pictures of AK-47 rifles via WhatsApp from foreign numbers and demand extortion money," Haque said. "If anyone agrees to pay, the criminals provide online payment account details or send local associates to collect the cash."

In protest, around 550

showrooms across the country remained closed for half a day yesterday.

Owners and employees formed a human chain at the Coca-Cola intersection on Pragati Sarani, issuing an ultimatum to halt all vehicle clearance, tax payments, and registrations if the situation does not improve by October 30.

Soon after the programme, Haque received another call from an unknown foreign number.

"It was from the extortionist gang," he said. "They told me, 'Hold human chains or whatever you want; you must pay us...'"

BARVIDA leaders said six general diaries have been filed over the recent attacks.

Despite informing the DMP commissioner and Rab director general, they said, the situation has not improved.

Contacted, Al Amin, additional deputy commissioner of DMP's Gulshan Zone, confirmed that several GDs were filed with Bhatara Police Station in this regard.

"Police have increased patrols in the area and are investigating the complaints with top priority," he said.

'Media trials' undermine justice system

FROM PAGE 3
Supreme Court lawyer Mohammad Shishir Monir said judges in the lower courts frequently crumble under the intense social and media pressure, and they lack the maturity and impartiality required to handle death penalty cases fairly.

Monir said around 2,156 prisoners are currently on death row. He proposed a moratorium on executions until the system is

reformed.

He called for a permanent investigation agency for murder cases and an end to the practice of sending convicts to condemned cells before final verdicts.

Barrister Mushfiqul Huda called for

independent homicide units in every district and criticised reliance on confessional statements -- a colonial legacy he termed "the culprit of the law".

He cited the trial of revolutionary Khudiram Bose as the first death sentence in the

subcontinent based solely on a confession, lamenting that the practice persists.

He said the justice system frequently acquits wealthy offenders while sentencing the poor to death, underscoring the need to modernise confession procedures to prevent wrongful convictions.

He said the justice system frequently acquits wealthy offenders while sentencing the poor to death, underscoring the need to modernise confession procedures to prevent wrongful convictions.

Steeped in history

FROM PAGE 3
full fledged university, it still suffers from housing, infrastructural, and administrative limitations," said Fahmidha Trishna, a student of Mass Communication and Journalism.

Amid these crises, the construction of a new campus in Teghoria, Keraniganj, offers hope. Spread over nearly 200 acres, it is expected to ease accommodation, transport, and infrastructure shortages once completed.

Construction began in 2018 but has been delayed by contractor negligence and bureaucratic hurdles. Following student protests earlier this year, the education ministry handed over supervision of the project to the Bangladesh Army.

According to the administration, the first phase of the new campus is expected to be completed by December 2026.

The history of Jagannath University dates back to 1858, when Dhaka Brahma School was founded and later renamed Jagannath School in 1872. It became a college in 1884 and was upgraded to a university in 2005.

Jagannath College also played a key role in major political movements, including the Language Movement and the Liberation War.

Vice Chancellor Prof Rezaul Karim said, "With everyone's cooperation, we will continue to overcome all challenges and move forward in the days to come."

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) Chattogram

REF: 18.16.0000.000.373.15.0007.25

Date: 19th Oct, 2025

Notice for Time Charter Employment of MV Banglar Nabojatra (IMO No. 1038597) open at Jingjiang Nanyang Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., China agw wp uce subject to readiness of the ship.

28-10-2025 (12.00 hours BST) at BSC Bhaban, Chattogram.

Tender opening date, time and place:

28-10-2025 (12.05 hours BST) at BSC Bhaban, Chattogram.

N.B.: tenders can also be submitted via email to the address: md@bsc.gov.bd

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

খাদ্য অধিবক্তৃতা

সংস্থাপন শাখা

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১৮ অক্টোবর ২০২৫ প্রিস্টার্স

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিজ্ঞপ্তি আবিষ্কৃত কর্তৃপক্ষের ১৪৩১ শূন্য পদে জনপ্রেরণ কর্তৃপক্ষের ৮৮ পর্যায়ে উপর্যুক্ত পরিদর্শক (প্রেক্ষ-১৫) নিয়োগের বাছাই পরীক্ষা (MCQ প্রতিক্রিয়া) প্রযোজন করা হবে।

এতোব্যাপক পদের অধিবক্তৃতা জন্য আবাসন যাচাই করা হবে। খাদ্য অধিবক্তৃতের ১৭.১১.০০১৫ (প্রেক্ষ-১৫) নিয়োগের সময়ে খাদ্য অধিবক্তৃতের ১৩.০১/১০২০৩৪৪ তারিখের ১৩.০১.০০০০.০০১.১১.০০১.২৪.১১১২

স্থায়ী নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রযোজন করা হবে। আবাসনের সুযোগ প্রদান করা হবে। আবাসনের সুযোগ প্রদান করা হবে। আবাসনের সুযোগ প্রদান করা হবে।

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প্রযোগের প্রত

DOHA TALKS

Pakistan and Afghanistan agree to new truce

Both sides to meet again on Oct 25 in Istanbul

REUTERS, Islamabad

Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to an immediate ceasefire during talks in Doha, both sides said yesterday, after a week of fierce border clashes, the worst violence between the South Asian neighbours since the Taliban seized power in Kabul in 2021.

The ceasefire "has been finalised", Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif posted on X yesterday, saying both sides would meet again on October 25 in Istanbul to discuss "detailed matters".

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement the parties agreed on a complete and meaningful ceasefire.

Qatar's foreign ministry, which mediated Saturday's talks along with Turkey, said the follow-up



Afghan refugees deported from Pakistan wait at a UNHCR registration centre after arriving at the zero point border crossing in Spin Boldak district, Kandahar province, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ukrainian drones cause fire at Russian gas plant

Zelensky urges allies against appeasing Russia after US trip

AGENCIES

Ukrainian drones attacked the Orenburg gas processing plant, the world's largest facility of its kind, and damaged part of it but no employees were hurt in the attack, the region's governor said yesterday.

The governor, Yevgeny Solntsev, said on his official Telegram channel that the drone strike had caused a fire to break out at a workshop at the plant which emergency services were working to put out.

It is the first time that the plant, part of the Orenburg gas chemical complex, which includes Gazprom's production and processing facilities in the Orenburg region with an annual capacity of 45 billion cubic metres of gas, has been reported to have been hit.

The plant processes gas condensate from the Orenburg oil and gas condensate field, as well as from Kazakhstan's Karachaganak field, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday urged allies against appeasing Russia, in a statement after he returned from a trip to the United States where he failed to secure long-range Tomahawk missile supplies.

Zelensky came to Washington after weeks of calls for Tomahawks, hoping to capitalise on US President Donald Trump's growing frustration with Russian



Residents stand near their apartment buildings hit by a Russian drone strike in the town of Shakhtarske in Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

counterpart Vladimir Putin after a summit in Alaska failed to produce a breakthrough.

But the Ukrainian left empty-handed as Trump eyes a fresh diplomatic breakthrough on the back of last week's Gaza peace deal.

Ukraine will never grant terrorists any bounty for their crimes, and we count on our partners to uphold this very position," Zelensky wrote on social media on his return from Washington. He called "for decisive steps" from European and American allies.

Trump has appeared far more upbeat about the prospects of a deal since a lengthy call Thursday with Putin, in which they agreed to

meet soon in Budapest.

After meeting with Zelensky at the White House, Trump said on social media that their talks were "very interesting, and cordial, but I told him, as I likewise strongly suggested to President Putin, that it is time to stop the killing, and make a DEAL!"

Russia's Defence Ministry said yesterday that Russian forces had pushed Ukrainian forces out of the settlements of Chunyshye in the Donetsk region and of Poltava in the Zaporizhzhia region.

Russian forces had also destroyed a US-made HIMARS rocket launcher system in Ukraine's Chernihiv region using an "Iskander M" missile, the ministry said.

Trump calls Colombian president 'a drug leader'

Vows to end US payments to the country

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump yesterday called Colombian President Gustavo Petro an "illegal drug leader" and said the United States would cease "large scale payments and subsidies" to the South American nation.

"The purpose of this drug production is the sale of massive amounts of product into the United States, causing death, destruction, and havoc," he said in a Truth Social post.

The Colombian embassy in Washington, DC, did not respond to a request for comment.

Relations between Bogota and Washington have frayed since Trump returned to office. Last month the US revoked Petro's visa after he joined a pro-Palestinian demonstration in New York.

In September, Trump designated countries such as Afghanistan, Bolivia, Burma, Colombia and Venezuela among those the United States believes to have "failed demonstrably" in upholding counter narcotics agreements during the past year.

China accuses US of cyberattacks on nat'l time centre

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday accused the United States of conducting cyberattacks on Beijing's national time centre that could have caused severe damage to critical financial and telecommunications infrastructure.

Beijing has stepped up espionage warnings in recent years as relations with the United States and other Western nations have worsened.

Chinese authorities found "irrefutable evidence" of efforts by the US National Security Agency (NSA) to hack the National Time Service Center, between 2022 and 2024, according to a statement published on the official Ministry of State Security WeChat account.

The facility is responsible for coordinating clocks around the country used by everything from computer servers to train stations and power grids.

The ministry accused the NSA of exploiting weaknesses in the messaging service of an unspecified foreign mobile phone brand in order to steal login credentials from employees at the time centre.

The attacks could have jeopardised power grids, transport, and even space launches, the ministry said. Chinese authorities have since "severed attack chains, upgraded protective measures, and eliminated potential threats."

"In recent years, the United States has aggressively pursued cyber hegemony, repeatedly trampling on international cyberspace rules," the ministry said in its statement.

Surveillance worries emerge for No Kings protesters

REUTERS

People who take part in Saturday's mass "No Kings" protest against President Donald Trump's administration may be targeted for federal government surveillance with a range of technology that could include facial recognition and phone hacking, civil libertarians said.

"No Kings" organizers expect 2,600 rallies across all 50 US states. But the level of surveillance at protests and the type of technology in use is likely to be both location-specific and dependent on the police forces present, said Thorin Klosowski, a security and privacy activist with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said Friday.

For instance, crowds in Washington, DC, where anti-scale fencing has been erected around the White House complex, are likely to be surveilled differently than those in a small rural town.

"Under previous administrations, law enforcement surveillance of peaceful demonstrations was already commonplace and corrosive of free expression," Ryan Shapiro, executive director of government transparency group Property of the People, said in an email Friday. "Given Trump's open hostility to even minor dissent, such surveillance now poses an existential threat to what remains of American democracy and only underscores the need for mass protest."

The Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been implementing Trump's immigration crackdown and has amassed a digital surveillance arsenal, according to various news outlets.



A Palestinian walks past a damaged vehicle following an Israeli raid in Tubas, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday.

Iran executes man over espionage

AFP, Tehran

Iran executed a man convicted of spying for Israel's intelligence agency, the judiciary said yesterday, the latest in a series of executions following a 12-day war in June between the two countries.

"The execution of this spy... was carried out after confirmation by the Supreme Court and the rejection of his pardon request at Qom Prison," Kazem Mousavi, chief justice of Qom province, was quoted as saying by the judiciary's Mizan Online website.

The identity of the man -- who was hanged on Saturday in the holy city of Qom, south of Tehran -- was not immediately revealed.

According to the Iranian authorities, the suspect began contacting Israeli intelligence in October 2023 and was arrested between January and February 2024.

Houthi rebels detain 20 UN staff in Yemen

AFP, Sanaa

The UN's office in Yemen said yesterday that 20 of its staff were still being detained by Houthi rebels following a raid on their building in Sanaa the day before.

On Saturday, the UN office had said Houthi security forces had made an "unauthorised entry" into their compound, adding the staff there were "safe and accounted for".

"Five national staff and fifteen international staff remain detained within the compound," Jean Alam, spokesman for the UN resident coordinator, said yesterday.

"The United Nations is in contact with the authorities in Sanaa and with relevant Member States and the Government of Yemen to resolve this serious situation as swiftly as possible, end the detention of all personnel, and restore full control over its facilities in Sanaa."

The rebels had already stormed UN offices in Sanaa on August 31, detaining more than 11 employees, according to the UN. Those employees were suspected of spying for the United States and Israel, a senior Houthi official told AFP at the time on condition of anonymity.

In a statement on Saturday, UN Secretary-General Stephane Dujarric's spokesperson said: "We will continue to call for an end to the arbitrary detention of 53 of our colleagues."

He was responding to a televised address on Thursday by rebel leader Abdelmalek al-Houthi, during which he claimed his forces had dismantled "one of the most dangerous spy cells," which he said was "linked to humanitarian organisations such as the World Food Programme and Unicef".

Sabotage or not, govt must account for fires

Repeated fire incidents expose governance failures

Three devastating fires occurring at three different sites within five days—each with significant economic implications—have raised serious concerns about our state of governance and preparedness. In particular, Saturday's blaze at the cargo village of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka has exposed how ill prepared the authorities were: even after deploying almost all available fire service units, it took about seven hours to contain the fire. By then, everything at the cargo complex had turned to ashes, disrupting national and international flights and leaving hundreds of passengers stranded.

It has been alleged that the HSIA authorities were initially hesitant to accept support from fire units rushed in from other parts of the capital, preferring to rely on the unit stationed within the airport compound. The Dhaka Customs Agents Association stated in a press release that a lack of coordination between the fire service and HSIA caused delays in the emergency response.

It is understandable that, as a key point installation (KPI), the HSIA complex would have extremely sensitive security protocols. But that must not prevent emergency services from accessing a disaster zone—especially in circumstances where those protocols lack sufficient provisions and capacity. According to former director of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, there was no hydrant installed at the cargo village. This is both shocking and unacceptable. Evidently, airport authorities have not learnt any lessons from the past fire incidents occurring in 2013 and 2017 at the same cargo village.

In the wake of the recent spate of fires, some leading business figures have expressed fears that these disruptions, coupled with slow and poorly equipped responses to emergencies, could further undermine confidence. The statement issued by the chief adviser's press wing—that if these incidents prove to be "acts of sabotage" meant to sow panic and division, they will succeed only if we allow fear to overtake reason—rather raises the question of why the government is suspecting foul play in the first place. We expect the government to act on its words that any credible evidence of sabotage or arson will be met with a swift and resolute response."

The other two fires—one at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) and the other in Dhaka's Mirpur area, both linked to garment production—have again exposed the failure to enforce fire safety laws and building codes. It is beyond comprehension how the CEPZ authorities could have allowed production to commence in a building that did not have a safety compliance certificate.

Whether these fire incidents were acts of sabotage or not, one thing is clear: in all three cases, there have been governance failures on multiple counts. Lack of enforcement, inadequate inspections, and poor contingency planning do not bode well for our capacity and competence. It also raises questions of accountability: why have officials in charge, for instance, failed to take appropriate precautionary measures in time? Installations vital to the nation, such as airports and EPZs, must take all possible precautions to prevent any repetition of such disasters.

A tariff schedule that hurts businesses

It does not make economic sense

The possibility of an indefinite transport owners' strike in the wake of the Chittagong Port Authority's (CPA) revised tariff schedule—which imposed a punishing 41 percent average increase in service charges—was a predictable crisis. The result is that the transport of import and export cargoes has come to a standstill since October 18, with transport owners protesting the fourfold hike in vehicle entry fees. The CPA increased entry fees for all types of vehicles. For instance, heavy vehicles such as trucks and covered vans will have to pay Tk 230 per vehicle from Tk 57.50 earlier.

Business leaders are frustrated by what they believe is an arbitrary government move that has made Chattogram port prohibitively expensive and will likely severely affect Bangladesh's competitiveness. What is most puzzling about the tariff hike is that the government did not hold any proper dialogue with all stakeholders, leading to anger and suspicion within the business community. Some have alleged that the hike was enforced to favour foreign operators who are set to take over port operations. Transport owners are similarly worried as they are also having to absorb the shock of the enhanced fees.

According to a report, prior to the imposition of the new tariffs, the shipping adviser had a meeting with port users on September 21 when he deferred the decision to enforce the new tariff structure for a month, assuring further negotiations. But those negotiations did not take place, and the government declared the new tariffs effective from October 14. We fail to understand why the government chose to impose such a heavy financial burden on businesses and services linked to the Chattogram port at a time when they are already under considerable strain with the country graduating from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2026, while absorbing the impact of increased US tariffs.

The RMG sector, in particular, is likely to be heavily affected by this unprecedented rise in the cost of doing business. Already, during the recent devastating fire at the cargo village of Dhaka airport, businesses—including RMG exporters—have suffered monumental losses worth an estimated one billion dollars.

The government, therefore, must recognise the punitive consequences of sudden tariff increases at a time when businesses dependent on the port are struggling on multiple fronts. We urge it to impose a moratorium on the new Chattogram port tariffs and hold meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders before enforcing such a decision. The country's competitiveness in the global market is at stake.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Muammar al-Gaddafi killed

On this day in 2011, Libyan de facto leader Muammar al-Gaddafi was killed by rebel forces following a revolt that ended his rule.

EDITORIAL

Constituent power and a pathway for implementing July Charter



Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir
is professor at the Department of Development Studies in University of Dhaka.

RASHED AL MAHMUD TITUMIR

The much awaited signing of the July National Charter on October 17 represents a defining moment in Bangladesh's long struggle to restore democracy. Emerging from the popular uprising of July 2024, the charter embodies the collective aspirations of citizens who sought to replace authoritarian repression with participation and accountability. Nearly all major political parties have now endorsed the charter. There are some who have not signed it owing to concerns about the charter's implementation rather than its content. This last bit indicates a broad recognition that the charter belongs to the nation as a whole.

Despite such consensus, divisions remain. The unresolved dissents on issues such as the composition of the Upper House, the appointment of the Election Commission and the framework for constitutional bodies threaten to become fault lines that could derail the entire process. But forcing through these contentious provisions would not be a solution either.

At a time when the economy is under strain, youth unemployment is rising, and institutions remain fragile, Bangladesh cannot afford another instability. The central question, therefore, is not whether the charter should be implemented, but how.

People as the source of constituent power

Following the Indian precedent in the *Kesavananda Bharati* case of 1973, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh sided with the doctrine of the basic structure, meaning constitutional elements such as democracy, the separation of powers, and the rule of law cannot be altered through ordinary amendment.

In any democracy, a distinction exists between "constituted power" and "constituent power." Constituted power refers to authority exercised within the framework of an existing constitution. Constituent power denotes the authority to make or remake that framework. The constituent power resides exclusively with the people. No government, commission, nor political party can claim it on their behalf. The July uprising reaffirmed this fundamental truth: legitimacy must originate from the people, and not from the state.

The optimal constitutional and unifying way forward is, thus, to place the charter before the citizens for

a referendum since there is a broad agreement on holding a referendum. The design of this referendum is, however, critical. A referendum with multiple, complex questions on specific provisions risks confusion and political manipulation, as seen, for example, in the failed 2022 constitutional referendum in Chile. Instead, such a referendum should ask one foundational question: whether the people of Bangladesh endorse granting constituent power to the next parliament. This simple process would allow citizens themselves to authorise their representatives to translate the charter's principles into a new constitutional framework. By doing so, Bangladesh would root its democratic renewal in the consent of the governed, transforming the charter from a negotiated political document into a legitimate social contract.

The July National Charter already provides a moral and political base for reforms. The challenge lies in determining the appropriate procedure for its implementation. Given the diversity of parties and persistence of disagreement, the charter can be put before the people,

approval while preserving space for parliamentary deliberation.

The election with such a referendum would not be an ordinary contest for power but an exercise in democratic renewal. The parliament emerging from it would function as authorised to give constitutional form to the aspirations expressed in the charter.

The democratic legal path

A referendum that authorises the next parliament to exercise constituent power would provide the necessary legal foundation to address the constraint while maintaining constitutional continuity. The parliament, deriving its constituent power directly from the people, would also ensure that reform remains rooted in the consent of the people rather than negotiation between parties.

Any attempt to impose it through decrees or administrative orders would violate both the constitutional principle of popular sovereignty and the moral legacy of the uprising. Only through a fair and transparent referendum can the charter acquire enduring legitimacy.

Democracy is not a gift conferred by those in power, but a continuous expression of the people's constituent



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Similarly, the call for a constituent assembly, while appealing, is fraught with risks. Historical examples, including the French Revolution's descent into terror, exhibit exclusion and conflict in the absence of a popular mandate. These showcase that legitimacy cannot be manufactured, rather it shall be conferred by the citizens.

The optimal constitutional and unifying way forward is, thus, to place the charter before the citizens for

the sole authority. The proposed referendum elegantly resolves this. It does not ask citizens to vote on technically complex issues but to make a sovereign decision.

Then the provisions of the charter, where consensus was reached, would form the core mandate for the new parliament, while the contested provisions can be placed by the parties in their manifestoes, seeking mandate from the electorates. It would allow reforms to proceed with public

authority. The referendum offers citizens the opportunity to decide whether the next parliament should possess the mandate to reshape the constitutional order.

The July National Charter thus stands not only as a political agreement but as a pivotal opportunity for a renewed social contract. In reaffirming that power belongs to the people alone, Bangladesh can transform the promise of the uprising into a durable democratic order.

National unity is key to Bangladesh's success



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SIBBIR AHMAD

The signing of the July National Charter, which brought together 24 political parties, represents a significant, albeit incomplete, step towards national consensus. This event, the culmination of extensive negotiations between the National Consensus Commission and 30 political parties, is noteworthy in the context of Bangladesh's deeply fractured political history, as it placed ideologically opposed parties on a unified platform.

This coalition, which is rare in our history, comes following the projection of a united front in another recent event on the world stage. When Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus led the delegation to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) this year, he introduced this unprecedented political culture. For the first time, six senior leaders from the country's three major political parties joined the official delegation, standing alongside government representatives. This was not merely a symbolic gesture, but a deliberate effort to show the world that Bangladesh's democratic transition is not the project of one interim

administration alone, but a collective national commitment.

In New York, when party leaders and government officials sat together in meetings with investors, diplomats, and global stakeholders, they sent a message of trust and reassurance: the democratic process will continue beyond February's election, no matter who comes to power. Investors and development partners could see that political stability and continuity are now shared priorities across the spectrum. This new approach reduced the sense of uncertainty that often clouds Bangladesh's business climate, while projecting political maturity and responsibility to the outside world.

The impact was twofold: economic and political. On one hand, the presence of leaders from across the political divide gave foreign investors confidence that Bangladesh would not allow partisan rivalry to disrupt long-term business interests. On the other hand, it also reshaped the country's global image. Instead of being seen as a deeply polarised and conflict-ridden democracy, Bangladesh presented itself as cooperative, united, and

forward-looking. For a young democracy, such unity on the world stage is a strong sign of maturity.

The Foreign Ministry and the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) also jointly organised "NRB Connect Day," where non-resident Bangladeshis were invited. Once again, leaders from major political parties shared their visions for the country directly with the diaspora. NRBs were given a platform not only to be courted as investors but also to be engaged politically as stakeholders in Bangladesh's future.

Considering the diaspora's immense contributions through remittances and knowledge networks, this was a powerful shift towards inclusion.

What Dr Yunus's initiative in UNGA achieved was much more than diplomatic optics. It broke with decades of exclusionary practice. By bringing opposition voices into the delegation, he transformed external representation into a shared national duty rather than a partisan privilege.

This simple act holds the potential to reduce political polarisation at home. If leaders can sit across from one another abroad, engaging constructively with international stakeholders, it becomes harder to sustain toxic "us versus them" narratives in Dhaka.

The initiative also planted the seeds for something even more significant: institutionalising political consensus on core national issues. Democracy, economic reforms, climate action, and foreign policy are too important to be rewritten every election cycle.

By jointly presenting Bangladesh to the world, the major political forces began to outline a minimum consensus that could provide policy continuity beyond electoral politics. Such continuity is essential to attract foreign direct investment, strengthen bargaining power in international negotiations, and build long-term resilience.

In this sense, the all-party delegation was not only about representing Bangladesh abroad but also about reshaping Bangladesh's domestic political culture. It showed that rival parties can cooperate when national interest demands it, which we saw at the signing ceremony of July charter. It offered citizens a glimpse of what inclusive politics could look like: less confrontational, more dialogic, and more attuned to the country's collective needs.

For Bangladesh, a country that needs both foreign investment and global goodwill to sustain its growth, this unity could not have come at a more important time.

The significance of these events cannot be overstated. By breaking tradition, reducing polarisation, engaging the diaspora, strengthening global bargaining power, and signalling political maturity, the interim government has set a precedent that future governments should institutionalise. National unity in external representation must not remain a one-time experiment; it should become a permanent practice of Bangladesh's statecraft, at home and abroad.

HSC results expose long-hidden cracks in our education



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H. M. NAZMUL ALAM

For two decades, Bangladesh lived under a comforting numerical, statistical, and sweetly deceptive illusion. Year after year, Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) results painted a glowing picture of academic progress. Pass rates soared above 80 percent, GPA-5s multiplied, and education officials celebrated success as if knowledge itself had bloomed in every classroom. Yet, beneath those glossy percentages lay an unspoken truth that has finally emerged in 2025. The latest HSC results, with a pass rate of 58.83 percent, the lowest in 21 years, have jolted the nation awake. More than half a million students failed. The numbers that once flattered now frighten, revealing a system that mistook certification for learning.

For years, a high pass rate had become a proxy for progress, while inflated marks and liberal "sympathy grading" turned mediocrity into merit. In 2005, the average pass rate stood at 59.16 percent. Within a year, it climbed past 60 percent, never to fall below that mark until now. In the years following the pandemic, it even touched a surreal 100 percent due to automatic promotions and relaxed evaluations. The country basked in statistical glory while its classrooms quietly crumbled. Teachers marked papers generously, grace marks were liberally distributed, and results became an instrument of political self-congratulation. In a society obsessed with numbers, no one dared to ask what those numbers truly meant.

This year's results puncture that illusion. Only 69,097 students achieved GPA-5s, compared to nearly 150,000 the previous year. In 202 educational institutions, not a single student passed. Board-wise, the Dhaka Board fared best with 64.62 percent, while Cumilla languished at the bottom with 48.86 percent. The failure rates in key subjects such as English and ICT dragged down the overall average, revealing deep-rooted weaknesses in core competencies that years of statistical inflation had concealed.

The immediate reaction has been one of disbelief. Parents are devastated, students are confused, and educational authorities are defensive. But the truth is simple: the results are not worse; they are merely real. The reasons behind this collapse are neither sudden nor



FILE PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The 2025 HSC results should not be seen as a catastrophe but as a mirror, marking the start of intellectual honesty in education.

mysterious. The foundation of Bangladesh's education system has long been fragile. The crisis begins at the primary level, where rote memorisation substitutes for comprehension, and teaching quality varies wildly. The weaknesses accumulate through secondary education, only to manifest catastrophically at the higher secondary level. For years, the system managed to hide these cracks with inflated grading, often to meet political expectations. Now, stripped of those cushions, the cracks have widened into chasms.

Repeated policy changes have not

assessment patterns came without adequate teacher training or infrastructure. It created an education that was neither traditional nor innovative, merely inconsistent.

Equally damaging has been the social environment in which this system operates. In a culture that prizes certificates over competence, students are conditioned to chase grades, not understanding. Coaching centres, guidebooks, and "shortcut" learning have replaced critical thinking. The rise of AI-based summarisers and digital "totka" (shortcut) lessons has only worsened this trend. Students

The consequence is predictable: weak instruction breeds weaker comprehension, which in turn produces dismal outcomes. In rural areas, absenteeism, outdated methods, and inadequate monitoring compound the problem. When more than 200 institutions produce zero pass rates, it is not the fault of one examination but of a structure that has failed both its teachers and its students.

It would be easy to blame this year's stricter evaluation process or the discontinuation of grace marks for the sudden drop. But that argument ignores the deeper rot. A nation

cannot inflate results indefinitely without eroding the very meaning of education. The 2025 results, therefore, should not be seen as a catastrophe but as a mirror. They reflect what has long been hidden: a generation that has been taught to pass exams, not to learn; to memorise answers, not to question ideas.

What this result exposes most painfully is the bankruptcy of the political narrative surrounding education. For years, governments have showcased rising pass rates as proof of national progress. Education became a performance metric in political speeches, not a genuine developmental priority. Budgets were announced with slogans, not strategies. Infrastructure projects were inaugurated, but pedagogy was neglected. When education is treated as propaganda, the outcome is inevitable: a nation that can produce certificates but not citizens.

There is also a moral dimension to this failure. When society measures a student's worth solely by grades, it perpetuates a toxic cycle of pressure and deception. Students learn that numbers matter more than knowledge, that success is statistical, not intellectual. Parents and institutions reinforce this illusion, until the system collapses under its own weight. The 2025 results are not the fall of education; they are its reckoning.

Yet, amid the despair, there lies a rare opportunity. This year's outcome can be the beginning of intellectual honesty in education. It invites policymakers to abandon the politics of pass rates and confront the reality of learning deficits. It challenges institutions to rebuild classroom integrity, not grade inflation. It compels teachers to reclaim their role as educators rather than result producers. And it urges parents to value curiosity over certificates.

To repair this system, Bangladesh must return to fundamentals. The obsession with examinations must give way to an emphasis on learning. Teacher training must become continuous and professional, not occasional and ceremonial. Curricula must foster analytical thinking instead of rote memorisation. Digital tools should enhance, not replace, understanding. Education policies must be evidence-based, stable, and shielded from political interference. Most importantly, society must redefine what it means to be "educated."

The HSC results of 2025, harsh as they appear, are not the end of the story. They are the beginning of truth-telling. For years, Bangladesh believed that it was doing well because the numbers said so. Now, the numbers say otherwise, and perhaps for the first time, they are telling the truth. The real challenge is whether the nation has the courage to listen.

Behind our RMG miracle lies exploited labour



Dr Abdullah A Dewan is professor emeritus of economics at Eastern Michigan University in the US, and a former physicist and nuclear engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission.

ABDULLAH A DEWAN

Bangladesh's RMG industry is often celebrated as a "miracle," a story of how a low-income country became one of the world's leading apparel exporters. The sector employs over four million workers—80-85 percent of them women. Yet beneath the statistics lies a harsher truth: this miracle rests on exploited labour, suppressed voices, and unpaid value. It is an incomplete miracle because it does not translate into dignity, security, or fairness for those who generate its profits.

The women who form the backbone of the industry carry a double burden. They endure long hours under unsafe conditions and return home to household responsibilities that society rarely shares. Many work six or even seven days a week, often for wages that barely meet subsistence. They have elevated the condition of their families and country, but the system has not lifted their lives. Instead, wage disparity and a persistently low wage share of value added keep them trapped in a cycle of adversity rather than prosperity.

Persistent labour unrest is the clearest symptom of neglect. Workers repeatedly take to the streets to demand higher wages, safer workplaces, and timely payment—often at significant risk, as protests are met with police crackdowns, intimidation, or dismissals. The grievances are familiar: delayed wages, unaffordable housing, lack of childcare, and denial of healthcare. Workplace hygiene remains dismal in too many factories: overcrowding, poor ventilation, unsafe wiring, and inadequate sanitation.

The Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 should have been a turning point, yet safety enforcement remains inconsistent. International

buyers demand audits, but these are selectively applied and easily manipulated.

Bangladesh is not unique in facing such challenges, but comparisons show how far it lags. In Vietnam, wages are higher, working conditions better, and labour representation more structured. Trade unions, though restricted, negotiate with some leverage, and the state has invested in dispute resolution mechanisms that reduce violent clashes. Cambodia has made progress under international pressure: minimum wages have risen, and civil society plays a role in monitoring compliance, though constraints remain. India presents a mixed picture. Large export-oriented factories tied to global brands often maintain acceptable standards, but small units remain notorious for abuses. Enforcement varies widely by region. By most measures, Bangladesh trails its peers. Its exports surge, yet its workers remain precarious.

At the heart of the problem lies wage disparity. Economists track this through the wage share of value added—the portion of output that accrues to workers as pay after materials and overhead. In Marxian terms, the surplus value generated by workers far exceeds their wages. Surplus value is the portion of labour left unpaid after costs—wages, materials, and overheads—are deducted. It accrues to factory owners, global brands, and the economy, but not to workers themselves. Rough estimates illustrate the scale: in Bangladesh, workers' minimum wage is set at \$110-115 (Tk 12,500) monthly, they generate about \$500 in output, and receive a worker's share of approximately 27 percent.

In Vietnam, wages are \$250-280 against an output of \$600-650, and receive a worker's share of approximately 27 percent.

where workers' share approximates to 42 percent. Cambodian workers earn \$200-205, generate about \$500, and receive a worker's share of approximately 42 percent. In India, wages are \$150-180 against an output of \$450-500, yielding a workers' share of approximately 35 percent. Bangladesh thus shows one of the widest gaps in surplus value share, even though worker productivity here ranks among the most efficient in the region. The disparity reflects deliberate wage suppression, weak labour rights, and the leverage of global brands that pit countries against each other in a race to the bottom.

Competitiveness is often hailed as an achievement, but it is really a hidden subsidy borne by workers. Export growth is trumpeted, foreign reserves are bolstered, and policymakers hail the sector as the nation's engine of development. Yet the workers who make it possible remain on the margins.

Unlike Vietnam or Cambodia, Bangladesh has not institutionalised meaningful welfare protections. Social security, health insurance, and childcare are minimal or absent. Most factories provide little beyond the legal minimum wage. Welfare programmes are donor-driven, temporary NGO projects, or disaster relief—not systemic rights. Vietnam has gradually integrated workers into social insurance programmes. Cambodia has added allowances for housing and transport. India's larger factories often provide health clinics and maternity benefits. These measures are uneven and imperfect, but they recognise that workers deserve more than survival.

Global brands sourcing from Bangladesh cannot claim innocence. Their relentless push for lower prices drives factory owners to suppress wages and compromise safety. Corporate audits and "social responsibility" pledges are often more public relations than real commitments. Civil society has been crucial in amplifying worker voices. NGOs, journalists, and labour activists have kept the issue alive, forcing occasional reforms. International solidarity campaigns

have pressured brands to respond. But these gains remain piecemeal and fragile.

The government must ensure that policy reforms realign incentives so that export success is not built on the backs of exploited labour. This requires raising wages to living standards, protecting freedom of association, and investing in welfare infrastructure. The state's role cannot be that of an enabler of cheap labour.

The story of Bangladesh's garment industry cannot be told only through export earnings, GDP growth, or foreign reserves. It must also be judged by the welfare of its workers. If the foundation is bones broken by labour and hearts broken by neglect, then the miracle is less triumph than mirage. Unless wages and benefits rise to living-wage levels, the garment

miracle will remain a story of profits built on adversity rather than shared progress. The question workers ask, "Are we not part of this success?" will decide whether Bangladesh's development is remembered as an inclusive achievement or a collective betrayal.

International benchmarks prove that progress is possible. Vietnam and Cambodia show that wages can rise, welfare programmes can expand, and disputes can be resolved without violence. Bangladesh must catch up urgently. In this information age, the disparity implied by the wage share of value added, where workers' share is only about 27 percent in Bangladesh, is staggering and unsustainable.

The interim government has streamlined airport facilities for expatriates and the diaspora whose

remittances sustain domestic household consumption and foreign reserves. Meanwhile, workers in export processing zones (EPZs) enjoy a labour regime that is virtually strike- and lockout-proof. By contrast, the RMG sector remains plagued by low wages, long hours, unsafe and unhygienic conditions, and recurrent unrest. At the core of this neglect lies a gendered reality: 80-85 percent of RMG workers are women. They are the indispensable backbone of the industry, yet remain its most disposable asset—underpaid, under-unionised, and too often silenced by threats from rich and politically powerful factory owners. Bangladesh can continue expanding RMG exports while leaving its workers behind, or it can make necessary reforms so that growth translates into dignity.

Addendum to Request for Information (RFI) For Market Engagement of Works Contracts

The Government of Bangladesh has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Resilient Infrastructure for Adaptation and Vulnerability Reduction (RIVER) Project under Local Government Engineering Department, the Implementing Agency of the project and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Construction of 75 nos. of Primary School cum Flood Shelter with Solar PV Nano Grid, Street Light, Lightning Protection & Connecting Roads, Bridge/Culvert, Furniture and Tree Plantation in Faridpur and Madaripur Districts.

Interested Bidders are invited to attend the EME program by completing registration through filling out and submitting the RFI form within **25 October 2025 instead of 20 October 2025**.

Please fill up the Request for Information (RFI) for market engagement of works contract in Google Form through link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdW0uSbGsuEZJXskHsbwcBiC94uABF6iSRXHiv5Hh276y8R1w/viewform>

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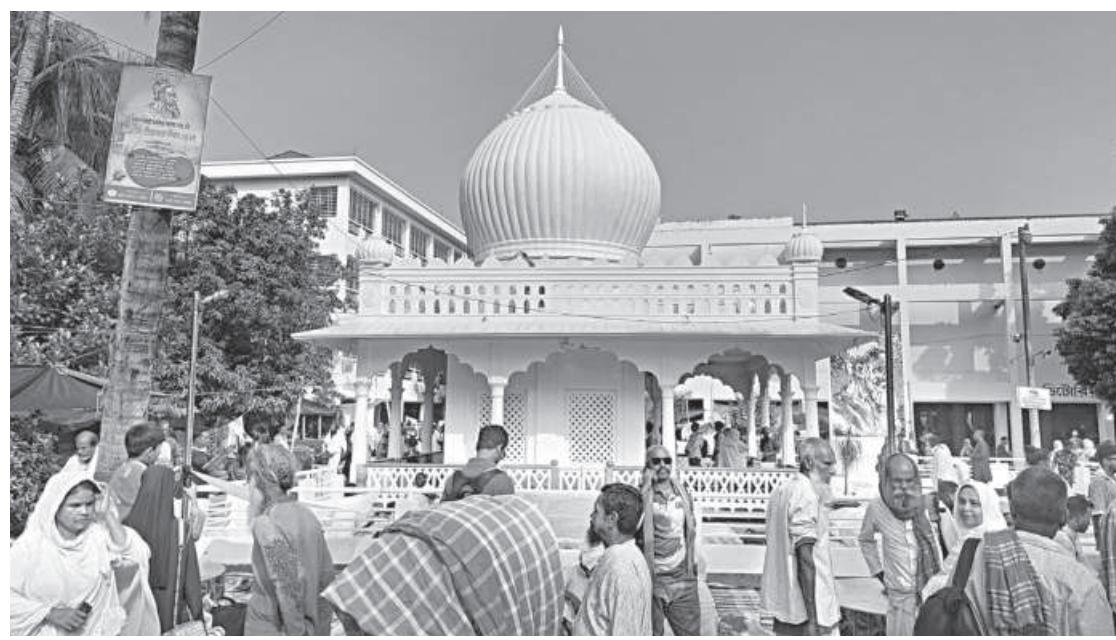
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GD-2215



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Artists perform on the last day of the special programme organised to commemorate the 135th death anniversary of Fakir Lalor Shah at his Akhra Bari in Cheuriya, Kushtia yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Festival ends but Lalor's legacy lives on

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

As the three-day event marking the 135th death anniversary of Fakir Lalor Shah drew to a close yesterday, a note of farewell lingered in the air at his Akhra Bari in Cheuriya, Kushtia.

The festival, which attracted hundreds of devotees, came to an emotional end, with bauls, sadhus, spiritual mentors, and visitors slowly dispersing from the fairgrounds.

For many of those who attended, the departure was not just a physical one but a heartfelt struggle. "The main programme is over but I'll return again during Dol Purnima," said Fakir Mamun Shahabul.

Standing near the shrine, Hriday Sadhu, who had travelled all the way from Faridpur, said, "I've been visiting Sai's Akhra Bari for 30 years. Whenever I come here, my heart feels calm and my mind fills with peace.

That serenity keeps me going on the long journey ahead."

The festival, which began on Friday, witnessed an overwhelming turnout. The atmosphere was vibrant, with



devotees from all walks of life converging to pay homage to the mystic poet.

Strict security measures were in place to ensure the smooth flow of visitors.

For the first time, the Lalor Memorial Festival was observed at the national level. Alongside the celebrations in Cheuriya, the

event was also held at Dhaka's Suhrawardy Udyana.

According to Kushtia Deputy Commissioner Abu Hasnat Mohammad Arafat, around 10-12 lakh people attended this



year's event, which was jointly organised by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Kushtia district administration.

As the last of the devotees filed out of the fairgrounds, the echoes of Lalor's songs and teachings still resonated in the air, leaving behind a lasting sense of peace and spiritual fulfilment.

Media professional found dead

FROM PAGE 2

This prompted Dhaka Stream to issue a statement yesterday, saying there was "no connection" between Sornomoye's death and the complaint against Shahnewaz.

"While we are overwhelmed with grief, we have noticed certain types of campaigns circulating on social media centring Sornomoye's death.

"The current narratives on social media linking the two are baseless and misleading," the statement said.

However, the news portal edited the statement later, saying the comments linking Sornomoye's death and the complaint against Shahnewaz before proper investigation were "very much unfortunate".

The organisation urged a thorough investigation into her death, adding that

police had already decided to conduct an autopsy. "Dhaka Stream will extend full cooperation wherever required."

The statement said Shahnewaz was immediately withdrawn from the newsroom after the complaint was submitted to the human resources department on July 13 under the title "Lodging complaint against inappropriate behaviour in the workplace".

The HR department also formed a two-member investigation committee, it said.

Following the investigation, the committee retained the decision to withdraw Shahnewaz, the statement said.

In addition, Dhaka Stream finalised a code of conduct for all its employees, it said.

The statement also said the complainants expressed satisfaction over these steps.

Dhaka Stream further said that all colleagues were informed about the actions taken and were urged to remain mindful about such behaviour in the future.

The Daily Star tried to contact Altaf Shahnewaz for comments, but he did not respond.

Meanwhile, five eminent academics and women rights activists sent a letter to Dhaka Stream Editor and Publisher Golam Iftekhar Mahmud, asking whether the organisation properly followed the High Court instructions, issued in 2010 to prevent sexual harassment at workplace.

The signatories are Rehnuma Ahmed, Gitiara Nasreen, Mirza Taslima Sultana, Saydia Gulruk.

and Samina Luthfa.

They asked if the news portal maintained an equal male-female ratio in the probe committee or if they kept an external member as per the High Court's instruction.

They wanted to know what the terms of reference of the committee were, since the statement mentioned "inappropriate behaviour", not sexual harassment as the allegation against Shahnewaz.

The activists also wanted to know whether just withdrawing a departmental head from the newsroom even after receiving evidence of sexual harassment was appropriate.

They further asked if Dhaka Stream has proof of the claim that the complainants were "satisfied" with the steps taken against Shahnewaz.

At a joint press conference, Jamaat and seven other parties announced the fourth phase of their simultaneous movement.

They are to hold a rally in the capital today.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said, "The charter does not specify when the democracy that the BNP talks about is one through which a few members of the Ziaur Rahman family seek to assume power."

The democracy that Jamaat speaks of is one through which one or two lakh of its supporters want to gain power, he said.

legal backing of July charter, implementation of PR system for both houses or in the upper house; ensuring a level playing field for all parties in polls; ensuring visible justice for all acts of oppression, killings, and corruption committed by the previous fascist regime; and banning political activities of Jatiya Party and the 14-party alliance.

Six other parties are Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Nizam-e-Islam Party, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, and Bangladesh Development Party.

At 7:50pm, he did not get his phone back.

When contacted, Faisal denied the accusation, saying, "This is completely false. I was not involved in this incident at all."

Meanwhile, in a statement, Fakhrul said, "During the attack and clash at the BNP

backpacks running toward Bangshal Road from the Mokta area on Nurbox Road around 4:30pm.

Following the incident, over a thousand JnU students blocked Tabibazar intersection, demanding justice for Jobayed's murder. Around midnight, they gathered in front of Bangshal Police Station.

say," he said, adding that the nation does not expect such immature statements from him.

Earlier at a programme, NCP Chief Coordinator Nasir Uddin Patwari blasted both Jamaat and BNP.

There is no real democracy in Bangladesh, Patwari said, adding that the democracy that the BNP talks about is one through which a few members of the Ziaur Rahman family seek to assume power.

The democracy that Jamaat speaks of is one through which one or two lakh of its supporters want to gain power, he said.

"Two high-security display cases were targeted, and eight objects of invaluable cultural heritage were stolen," said the ministry statement.

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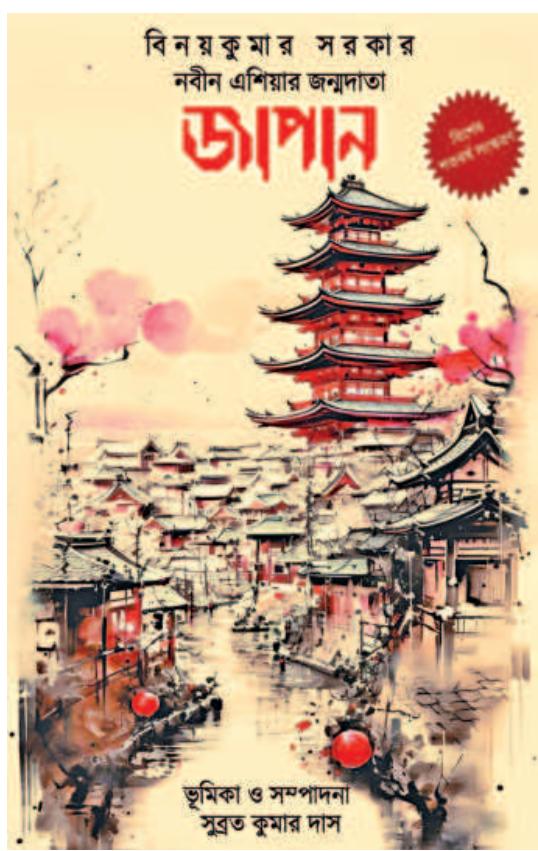
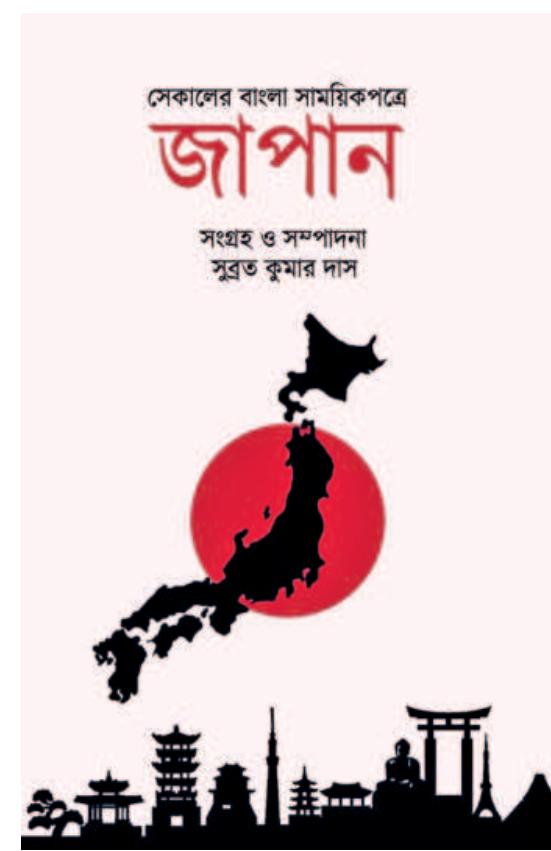
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HOW BENGAL DISCOVERED JAPAN

A 150-year chronicle



Some researchers opined that Bango Mohilar Japan Jatra was the first Bengali book on Japan. However, later studies revealed that, from the early decades of the 20th century, the visits of Bengalis to Japan and the publication of Bengali books about Japan were both noteworthy. At least eight books on Japan have been discovered that predate Tagore's Japan-Jatri, which was published in 1919.

SUBRATA KUMAR DAS

For many decades, it was believed that Rabindranath Tagore's (1861-1941) first visit to Japan in 1916 marked the initial milestone in Japan-Bengal relations. Later, in 1999, a Bengali book was reprinted in Dhaka that offered fresh insight into the century-old ties between the two nations. Bango Mohilar Japan Jatra (A Sojourn to Japan by a Bengali Woman), written by Haripraba Mallik (1890-1972), was a reprint of her 1915 book that recounted the journey of the Dhaka-born Haripraba, who went to Japan with her Japanese husband, Wemon Takeda, in 1912.

Some researchers opined that Bango Mohilar Japan Jatra was the first Bengali book on Japan. However, later studies revealed that, from the early decades of the 20th century, the visits of Bengalis to Japan and the publication of Bengali books about Japan were both noteworthy. At least eight books on Japan have been discovered that predate Tagore's Japan-Jatri, which was published in 1919.

In 1906, two Bengali travellers — Manmathanath Ghosh (1882-1944) of Jessore and Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyay (1882-?) of Kolkata — journeyed to Japan and later published their accounts of the experience in Bengali in 1910. However, the fact remains that, before Ghosh's Japan-Prabash and Bandyopadhyay's Japan, another Bengali book titled Jepan had been published in Calcutta in 1858.

Tagore's first visit to Japan was accompanied by the young artist Mukul Chandra Dey (1895-1989). Dey's book Japan theke Jorasanko (From Japan to Jorasanko) is an important contribution to the subject, although it was published only in 2005. His autobiographical work Amar Kotha (In My Words, 1995) also includes his account of the Japan visit. Two other major Bengali writers who travelled to Japan and published books on the country were Buddhadeb Bose (1908-1974) and Annadashankar Roy (1909-2002). It may also be recalled that Sarojanini Dutta (1887-1925), wife of Gurudas Dutta (1882-1941), accompanied her husband on his visit to Japan in 1920. She wrote a book titled Banganari in Japan (A Bengali Woman in Japan), which

This trend of publishing Bengali books on Japan continued vigorously even after the appearance of Japan-Jatri in 1919. Most of the works written about Japan were travelogues in nature, though there was no dearth of research books on Japan's history, literature, culture, politics, and economics either. Even before Tagore's visit to Japan, the arrival

of Japanese artists and writers in Santiniketan had already inspired him with great enthusiasm for the land of the rising sun. After a few attempts, his efforts bore fruit in 1916. As Asia's first Nobel laureate, Tagore's visit to Japan created an unprecedented stir among the Japanese people. Although the poet had intended to publish a book compiling all his speeches delivered during his five visits to Japan—in 1916, 1924, and 1929—the collection was only published very recently, in 2007.

Tagore's association with the Japanese philosopher Okakura Tenshin (1862-1913) marked a milestone in Japan-Bengal literary and philosophical contact. Tenshin's The Book of Tea, published in 1906, laid the philosophical foundation of the idea of 'One Asia'. During his first visit to India in 1902, Tenshin came into contact with some of the leading intellectuals of Bengal, including Tagore and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). It may be noted, however, that Tenshin passed away before Tagore's first visit to Japan, and in 1924, Tagore opposed Tenshin's 'Asia is One' philosophy—perhaps because, by then, Tagore had moved beyond 'One Asia' towards a vision of 'One World'. The relationship between Tenshin and the Bengali poet Priyamvada Devi (1871-1935) developed into a literary romance during Tenshin's second visit to Calcutta in 1912.

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was published in 1928.

Before Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyay and Manmathanath Ghosh, another Bengali who is reported to have visited Japan was Swami Vivekananda. In 1893, Vivekananda stopped in Japan on his way to attend the World Parliament of Religions, to be held in Chicago. Though Swamiji did not write any book about his short stopover of only a few hours, there is evidence in Vivekananda's biographies that his stay in Japan had a profound impact on him. On May 31, 1893, Vivekananda left Bombay on the Peninsula ship to attend the first ever global conference on religious coexistence. The ship made stops at Colombo, Penang (Malaya), Singapore, and Hong Kong before reaching Japan. He arrived at the port of Nagasaki, and from there travelled to Kobe, where he was allowed to disembark. Travelling by land to Yokohama, he visited three major cities in central Japan: the industrial city of Osaka, the ancient capital of Kyoto, and the present-day capital of Tokyo.

Vivekananda's contact with Okakura can also be recalled in this context. In August 1901, Vivekananda received an invitation to visit Japan but could not accept it due to health issues. Through his American friend Josephine MacLeod (1858-1949), who

Probash, was born in the village of Mathurapur in Jessor. In 1905, Ghosh joined the Swadeshi movement and abandoned his formal education to build his personal future. In 1906, he went to Japan to study industries. Two years later, he returned home and established a factory producing combs, buttons, and mats. Sangsad Bangali Charitabhidhan (Dictionary of Biographies), published in Kolkata, states that he worked in the factory for a salary of only 75 taka and that he even refused an offer of a thousand-taka salary from the King of Mysore. He also played an important role in establishing a match factory in the Bengal region. In 1933, Ghosh went to Japan for the second time to bring home-made crafts.

According to Ghosh's book, he studied soap, pencils, umbrellas, glass, and other items at the Government Art School and Technical Institution in Tokyo. In another Japanese city, Kobe, he learned to make buttons. For six months in Kobe, Ghosh received training in button-making from the household of an Indian-friendly Japanese gentleman. After completing this, he learned to make items using artificial ivory, which he studied in Osaka. Centuries ago, a high quality technical institute had been established in Osaka. At that time, Indian students were studying in various colleges and institutes across Japan. Before completing his celluloid education, Ghosh became associated with an artificial leather factory. Simultaneously, he learned how to make hats and knives. He then learned to manufacture and use camphor. He also set up a small laboratory at home to study peppermint, menthol, essential oils, condensed milk, soap, and soda, among other items.

Happily, Ghosh returned home and did his utmost to apply and disseminate the knowledge he had gained. He made sincere efforts towards Bengal's progress through industrial development. Ghosh documented all this information in the three books he wrote about his days in Japan. Alongside Japan Probash, he also wrote Supta Japan and Nabyo Japan, both of which were published in 1915.

On the same ship that Ghosh took to Japan, he was accompanied by fifteen other young Bengalis. It may be mentioned that Tagore's son, Rathindranath Tagore (1888-1961), was also on the same vessel. According to Prasanta Kumar Pal (1938-2007), in the fifth volume of his much-hailed Rabi Jiboni (Biography of Tagore), Tagore himself went to the wharf to see his son off. All of these young men

Subrata Kumar Das brought to light the 1910 book Japan Probash, written by Manmathanath Ghosh, and published its centenary edition from Dhaka in 2012.

had been in contact with Vivekananda for seven years. Japanese nobles tried to bring him to Japan. On June 16, 1901, he wrote to MacLeod, 'It is really desirable to establish contact between India and Japan.' It was in this context that the Japanese Consul in India met Vivekananda and invited him to visit Japan, although he never received the invitation when it was formally extended. Sadly, the great Bengali soul passed away at the early age of thirty-nine after a prolonged illness.

The truth is that, a decade before Vivekananda's visit to Japan, another Bengali intellectual, Protap Chunder Mazoomdar (1840-1905), had visited the country. On his way back from the United States of America, Mazoomdar landed in Yokohama on December 12, 1883. Undoubtedly, it was a milestone for Bengalis setting foot in the eastern land. He not only delivered a lecture at a university but also wrote scholarly pieces on Japan—its history and culture.

Manmathanath Ghosh, the author of the first original book on Japan in Bengali, Japan

travelled under the initiative of the Association for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education of India (AASIEI), which had been established in 1904 with the objective of developing the technical skills of Indian youth. To achieve this goal, the institution arranged to send talented individuals abroad by providing them with financial assistance. However, the initiative could not continue beyond three or four years due to various reasons.

Before Tagore, another Bengali who went to Japan and wrote an extensive book on the country was Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887-1949). Professor Sarkar first visited Japan in June 1915, staying there for only three months. Although he returned to Japan in 1916, his voluminous book on his first experience in the country was not published until 1923.

The year Sarkar paid his first visit to Japan, another Bengali—the well-known revolutionary Rash Behari Bose (1886-1945)—fled from India and took refuge there. Bose, whose name was associated with the assassination attempt on Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, had to assume the pseudonym Priyanath Thakur and carry a reference letter from Rabindranath Tagore, posing as his relative, in order to evade British intelligence.

In addition to the above-mentioned books, a wide range of writings on Japan can be found in various periodicals published from different cities of Bengal. Many articles were written based on travel experiences in Japan, while others focused on diverse aspects of the country such as its birds, animals, education system, and industrial development. Some were translations from Japanese texts, while a few were written by Japanese visitors to India. Among the more than one hundred articles published on Japan during that era, one of the earliest was Bharatvarsha O Japan (India and Japan), published in 1874 in the periodical Bharat Sangskarak from Kolkata.

All these articles provided basic information about Japan in Bengali. Sometimes they included details such as the cost of travel, food, and lodging in Japan; at other times, they explored the education system, cultural components, and historical aspects of the country. An article titled Japanir Mukhe Japaner Kotha (Japan in the Words of a Japanese), published in 1895 in the journal Shiksha Parikar, revealed many fascinating details. Any researcher working on Japan-Bengal relations cannot but be amazed by the abundance of material published from the Bengal region.

The present article has attempted to develop a sesquicentennial chronology between the two nations—the Japanese and the Bengalis. My study, however, assures me that there are many more links behind these books and the detailed reports published from the Bengali-speaking areas a hundred years ago. I believe that if they can be tied together in a single thread, the history of Japan-Bengal relations will undoubtedly become more illuminated.

Subrata Kumar Das, a Bangladeshi writer and researcher now living in Toronto, has edited books including Manmathanath Ghosh's Japan Probash (Dhaka, 2012), Benoy Kumar Sarkar's Nobin Asiar Janmodata Japan (Kolkata, 2024), and Sekaler Bangla Samoyikpotre Japan (Dhaka, 2012; Kolkata, 2024).



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Rabindranath Tagore at Sankeien Garden, Japan, 1916.

BASKET WITHOUT BASE

NCL T20 reveals flaws again

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu recently laid bare a harsh reality, admitting that he doesn't have enough quality players available and has to work with "what's in his basket".

The reason, as he rightly pointed out, lies in the lack of proper domestic competition. One cannot expect that basket to be filled adequately when only a handful of tournaments are organised just to complete the calendar.

Last year, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) introduced the T20 version of the National Cricket League (NCL) for the first time, aiming to expose domestic players to competitive T20 cricket and help Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) franchises identify local talent.

As the tournament wrapped up its second edition on October 12 —



with Rangpur Division clinching back-to-back titles — it's an opportunity to assess whether the competition has lived up to its purpose.

Minor positives

The second edition, which began on September 14, was initially scheduled in Rajshahi and Bogura but halted after four matches — three washed out — due to rain. Play resumed in Sylhet after 10 days, yet weather continued to disrupt, with six of 32 games yielding no result. Still, scoring rates improved slightly, with averages rising from 155 to 157 and run rates from 7.75 to 7.86. Financially, player fees increased from Tk 25,000 to Tk 40,000, along with higher allowances and logistical costs. But that's where the positives end.

Harsh negatives

The 2025 edition suffered from overused Sylhet pitches and untimely rain. During the final stages, the wickets deteriorated sharply — only one of the last eight matches saw teams post more than 150 runs.

"Sylhet is under too much pressure for domestic and international matches," Chattogram Division wicketkeeper batter Irfan Sukkur told The Daily Star. "Early on, scores were good, but in the last 8–10 matches there were hardly any innings above 150. The wicket was an issue."

While both editions produced two centuries each, the number of half-centuries fell from 41 to 29. Boundaries also dropped noticeably — 596 fours and 309 sixes this year compared to 723 fours and 418 sixes last year.

As the competition wore on, spin bowling dominated more heavily. Four of the top five wicket-takers were spinners, whereas last year's list featured three pacers and two spinners.

"During the playoffs, I saw spinners bowl the first seven or eight overs. In international matches, you might see two at most. There was no reflection of that in the NCL," said chief selector Lipu.

"Batsmen didn't get the chance to face seamers. Captains may have focused on winning, but ultimately, what did we achieve from the tournament?" he questioned.

The packed schedule exhausted players and pitches alike, with Barishal coach Mohammad Ashraful saying the event should run at least a month to allow recovery and adjustment.

Far from destination

It would be unfair to expect the tournament meet all expectations in just two seasons. What matters most is assessing whether it's on the right track. Without better infrastructure, improved conditions, and smarter scheduling, the NCL T20 will keep missing its mark.

"We put in a good effort, but it couldn't fulfil our expectations. Better infrastructure and drainage would have helped. Players also need to improve their fitness and preparation," said BCB tournament committee manager AEM Kawser.

Why always 'uncomfortable' Mirpur?

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Before the start of the three-match ODI series against the West Indies, Bangladesh had managed just one win in eight outings this year. Their recent struggles in the 50-over format, including a humiliating 3-0 defeat to Afghanistan, had drawn widespread criticism for a side that appeared to have lost both confidence and competitiveness in the their once-preferred format.

However, the Mehidy Hasan Mirza-led team finally broke their four-match losing streak with a 74-run victory over the Caribbean side in the series opener on Saturday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. Yet, instead of celebration, the familiar debate over the "Mirpur formula" resurfaced — one that heavily favors spin-friendly conditions.

In an era where defending 207 runs is often seen as improbable, Bangladesh's spinners turned that modest total into a mountain, bowling out West Indies for just 133. While the win brought temporary relief, questions re-emerged about why the Tigers continue to rely on a surface many of their own players have often criticized.

Despite available venues in Sylhet and Chattogram — both offering more balanced conditions — the decision to host the series in Mirpur raised eyebrows. Bangladesh last played an ODI series at the venue back in September 2023 against New Zealand.

"Our women practiced here recently, and we saw that the wicket behaved well. But on the black soil wicket, I thought — and [pitch curator] Tony [Hemming] also had the same idea — that the wicket would be better than this," BCB cricket operation

chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"My assumption is that due to recent rain, preparing the pitch was challenging. Covering and uncovering the wicket repeatedly may have affected how much water was applied. So, it's not easy to prepare a perfect pitch under those conditions," he added.

He added that players were also uncomfortable: "The wickets we practise on don't match what we get here... the wicket definitely had turn... but we are not comfortable."

A BCB official, meanwhile, said Mirpur hosts to ensure "even distribution among venues." On whether the team requested a specific wicket, he said "that would be known to the board or directors."

Currently ranked 10th in the ICC ODI standings and outside the direct qualification zone for the 2027 World Cup, Bangladesh face a crucial year ahead. They are scheduled to host Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia, and India for a total of 12 ODIs next year, along with eight away matches in Zimbabwe and Ireland.

That raises another question: will Bangladesh continue to rely on their spin-heavy home advantage against the world's best sides and to do that, will they prefer continuing playing in Mirpur?

"Australia and New Zealand have excellent spinners and play spin very well. So there's no chance of taking that advantage against them — in fact, we might be the ones struggling," Fahim cautioned.

While next year's venue plan isn't finalised, sources indicate Bangladesh may again lean on their Mirpur formula to bolster qualification hopes.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Abahani fall to Brothers AFTER 11 YEARS

Defending champions Mohammedan and runners-up Abahani endured another frustrating round in the Bangladesh Football League. Abahani suffered a 2-1 defeat to Brothers Union in Cumilla, while Mohammedan squandered an early lead to draw 1-1 with Bangladesh Police in Gazipur yesterday. Both traditional powerhouses remain winless after two rounds, with Abahani having drawn goalless against Rahmatganj and Mohammedan losing 2-0 to Fortis in the opening round.



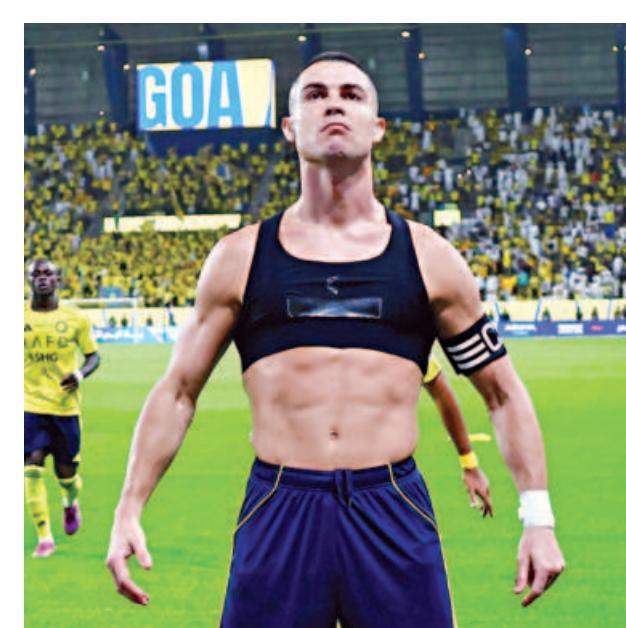
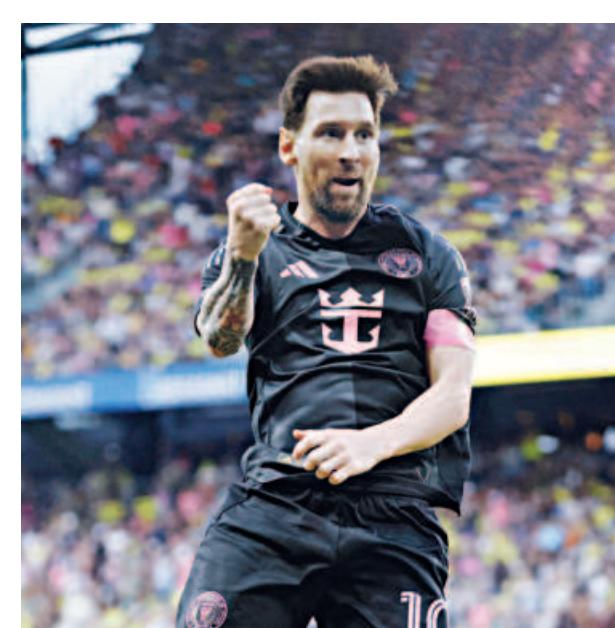
Goals from Nepalese forward Anjan Bista and Brazilian Marcus Rudwere earned Brothers Union their first win over Abahani since 2014. Malian forward Souleymane Diabate reduced the margin in stoppage time but couldn't rescue the Dhanmondi-based side.

It was Brothers' overall third triumph over Abahani in the professional football league since its introduction in 2007. The Gopibagh outfit now sit fourth in the table with three points from two matches.

In Gazipur, Rahim Uddin's 19th-minute volley put Mohammedan ahead, but SM Bablu equalised for Police in the 49th minute. Police have now drawn seven of their 11 league meetings with Mohammedan.

After two games, both Abahani and Mohammedan sit eighth and ninth respectively in the 10-team table with a single point each. Police and Rahmatganj share the top spot with four points apiece, the latter edging Fakirpore Young Men's Club 1-0 in Manikganj.

Career stats so far					
	Appearance	Goals	Assists	Minutes per goal contribution	Hat-tricks incl. penalties
Messi	1130	889	399	72	13 (21.7%)
Ronaldo	1292	949	259	87	29 (43.9%)



On a night when two footballing titans reminded the world of their enduring brilliance, Cristiano Ronaldo fired his 949th career goal — a thunderous strike moments after missing a penalty in a Saudi Pro League fixture — to lead Al Nassr's 5-1 rout of Al Fateh in Riyadh, while across the Atlantic, Lionel Messi delivered a vintage hat-trick and an assist as Inter Miami stormed into the MLS playoffs with a 5-2 win over Nashville in Tennessee on Saturday. Messi sealed the Golden Boot with 29 goals, notched his 50th club hat-trick, and closed the overall gap to six behind Ronaldo's record 66.

What to WATCH

T Sports
ICC Women's World Cup
Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh
Live from 3:30 pm
Ten Cricket and A Sports
Pakistan vs South Africa
2nd Test, Day 1
Live from 11:00 am

Tigresses aim to 'finish strong'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look to beat Sri Lanka to keep their ICC Women's World Cup semifinal hopes alive as they face the co-hosts in their penultimate league-stage fixture in Navi Mumbai today.

After opening the tournament with a win over Pakistan, the Tigresses endured close defeats against England and South Africa, leaving them sixth on the table.

Bangladesh have never beaten Sri Lanka in this format but will take confidence from their narrow one-wicket win in a warm-up game in Colombo last month.

Leg spinner Fahima Khatun, who took two wickets and scored an unbeaten 26 in that match, said the team are "confident" and hopes the batters can "repeat that performance." Reflecting on the campaign, she added the team played "competitive cricket against every team," and aim to "maintain the same intensity and finish strong".

Bangladesh will also be boosted by the expected return of pacer Marufa Akter, though left-arm spinner Nahida Akter remains doubtful after an ankle injury.

Tricky heist to semis

For Bangladesh, the task is complicated: they must beat Sri Lanka and India, and hope England defeat New Zealand and the latter beat India, bringing the net run rate into play.

New events make a splash at national swimming



The Max Group 34th National Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Championships kick off today at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur, featuring four international-standard events and women's diving for the first time. Despite progress in the pool, timekeeping remains manual as the Tk 4-crore electronic timer continues to malfunction since 2019.

► Four new international events introduced: men's 800m freestyle, women's 1500m freestyle, mixed 4x100m freestyle relay, and mixed 4x100m medley relay

► Women's diving events included for the first time

► A total of 42 swimming events and six diving events to be held over four days

► Prize money: Tk 5,000 for new records, Tk 2,000-1,000-500 for medal winners

► Tk 42 lakh total expenditure: Max Group contributes Tk 25 lakh

► Egyptian coach Saeed Magdy guiding swimmers ahead of the South Asian Games.





UN PEACEKEEPERS

Nearly 1,400 Bangladeshis to return due to fund cuts

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Almost 1,400 Bangladeshi peacekeepers deployed in various UN missions will be sent home by mid-2026 due to severe fund cuts by donor countries, especially the US, which has reduced funding globally since the Trump administration.

Bangladesh's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, along with other missions, was informed about the matter by the UN Department of Peace Operations.

"The number of Bangladeshi peacekeepers to be affected because of the fund cuts will be close to fourteen hundred," a diplomatic source at the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN told The Daily Star yesterday.

For Bangladesh, 25 percent of peacekeepers will lose jobs, but this ratio varies slightly. For example,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7



A drone view shows destruction in a residential neighbourhood in Gaza City, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Univ teachers' network slams July charter, Yunus speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Teachers' Network (UTN) yesterday said the much-publicised July National Charter signed on October 17 failed to give any hope to the people and frustrated many of the July uprising stakeholders.

Also, the speech delivered by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the signing ceremony is objectionable and hollow.

In a statement, the platform of university teachers said the charter, which was drafted only based on the political parties' opinions, has failed to make a call for unity, which signals potential new political crises in near future.

"It appeared that the government and consensus commission were busy implementing certain political agenda," said a statement issued by the press team of UTN last night.

The signing ceremony at the parliament's South Plaza drew limited public interest due to ongoing questions about the process and scope of the charter's drafting from the beginning, it added.

The platform added that the government has become detached from the public and excluded the peoples' true aspirations, including those on education and health, from the charter. It offered no ray of hope for women, gender identity minorities, and indigenous people.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

Tk 30,000cr lost to illegal migrations in 2022 alone

Finds Ovibashi Unnayan Karmi Programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unregulated middlemen continue to dominate the recruitment of Bangladeshi migrant workers to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, eclipsing formal and family-based channels, according to a new study by Ovibashi Unnayan Karmi Programme (OKUP).

The research shows that 56 percent of the 1,084 migrant workers from eight migration-prone districts relied on informal or illegal agents to start or facilitate their migration despite ongoing government efforts to regulate the sector.

Only 7 percent of the migrants said they used licensed recruiting agencies, underscoring the limited accessibility of formal channels, especially in rural areas.

Family members were involved in 8 percent of the cases, while distant relatives played a role in 31 percent of the cases.

The study revealed that Bangladeshi migrants in GCC countries lost an estimated Tk 30,000 crore in 2022 alone due to unethical and fraudulent recruitment practices under so-called "free visa" systems.

The research shows that 56 percent of the 1,084 migrant workers from eight migration-prone districts relied on informal or illegal agents to start or facilitate their migration despite ongoing government efforts to regulate the sector.

This amount equals around 0.54 percent of Bangladesh's total GDP that year.

According to the report, these financial losses resulted from inflated recruitment costs, post-arrival extortion and hidden expenses faced by migrants travelling under unregulated "free visa" arrangements.

The inflated costs were three to six times higher than the government-approved migration rates, effectively transferring Tk 30,000 crore in additional expenses to destination countries.

Around 51 percent of respondents said they migrated with a "free visa," while 49 percent travelled under a non-free visa category.

Although the government had set fixed migration fees, the study found that migrants were charged exorbitant and unregulated rates.

The cost was six times higher in Kuwait, three times higher in both Oman and Saudi Arabia, four times higher in Qatar and three times higher in the UAE.

Among the migrants surveyed, 57 percent eventually secured official work permits without additional payments.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

NCP bent on getting shapla, EC won't budge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party once again reiterated its demand for shapla (water lily) as its electoral symbol yesterday and sought a written explanation from the Election Commission regarding the policies or criteria for inclusion or exclusion of symbols.

The party also questioned the basis on which certain symbols are approved or rejected and urged the commission to clarify its position on the matter.

Meanwhile, Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar said that according to the constitution and electoral laws, the shapla symbol does not exist in the commission's approved list. Therefore, it cannot be allocated to any party.

He was speaking to reporters after attending a training session at Sylhet Police Lines yesterday.

The EC earlier said the NCP must choose a symbol from its reserved list.

Regarding the shapla symbol, Hasnat Abdulla, chief organiser of the NCP

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Nahid wrote on his verified Facebook page that Jamaat's movement for PR system "was nothing but a calculated political deception".

Jamaat, NCP in a war of words

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party yesterday traded barbs over the former's demand for a proportional representation system.

Eight parties, including Jamaat and Islami Andolon Bangladesh, announced simultaneous movement, demanding a referendum on the July charter in November and elections under a proportional representation system.

Immediately after the announcement, NCP Convener Nahid Islam on his verified Facebook page wrote that Jamaat's movement for PR system "was nothing but a calculated political deception".

"It was deliberately designed to derail the consensus commission's reform process and divert the national dialogue away from the real question...

"The core reform demand for the establishment of an Upper House based on proportional representation of votes was conceived as a constitutional safeguard. We sought to build a movement around such foundational reforms and to establish the legal framework of the July charter through broad-based national consensus."

"But Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies hijacked this agenda, reduced it to a technical PR issue and used it as a bargaining tool for their narrow partisan interests," the NCP leader wrote.

"Their motive was never reform; it was manipulation. Jamaat-e-Islami never engaged in the reform discourse, neither before nor after the July uprising."

"Now, the people of Bangladesh clearly understand

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Louvre's prized jewels stolen in daring heist

AFP, Paris

Thieves wielding power tools raided the Louvre in broad daylight yesterday, taking just seven minutes to grab some of France's priceless crown jewels but dropping a gem-encrusted crown as they fled, officials and sources said.

Authorities recovered the 19th-century crown -- damaged -- near the museum.

The spectacular heist, one of several to target French museums in recent months, forced the closure of the Louvre, the world's most-visited museum and home to the Mona Lisa.

Police are looking for a team of four thieves, Paris's chief prosecutor Laure Beccau, told the BFMTV channel.

Soldiers patrolled the famed glass pyramid entrance, while evacuated visitors, tourists and

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A woman, her children, and others jaywalk across the busy Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital's Farmgate area between two nearby footbridges and two zebra crossings. The risky move, photographed yesterday, exposed them to the dangers of a fatal accident.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JnU student found dead in Old Dhaka

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A Jagannath University student's body was found on the staircase of a house in Armanitola area of Old Dhaka yesterday.

Md Jobayed Hossain, a postgraduate student of the 2019-20 academic session at JnU's Department of Statistics, had gone there to provide private tuition.

Locals discovered his body yesterday evening and informed the authorities.

The university's proctor, Prof Tazammol Haque, confirmed the death. "I am on my way to the spot," he said yesterday evening.

Regarding the incident, Mehedi Hasan Himel, convener of JnU unit of Chhatra Dal, said, "Jobayed was involved in student politics and was a member of the university unit's convening committee. He was murdered. We demand exemplary punishment of those involved."

Police have detained one of Jobayed's students in connection with the murder, sources said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said a drive was underway to detain other suspects.

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