

"The situation still remains catastrophic because what's entering is not enough... there is not enough food."

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on hunger crisis in Gaza

The Daily Star

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SECOND EDITION



DHAKA SATURDAY OCTOBER 25, 2025

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 272

KARTIK 9, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

JAMADIUL AWVAL 2, 1447 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00



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HSIA CARGO COMPLEX FIRE

Safety standards flouted at import section

Experts link fire incident to years of negligence, poor compliance

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and RASHIDUL HASAN

The import section of the cargo complex at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), which was devastated by Saturday's fire, was not in compliance with internationally recognised safety standards, experts said.

Although safety protocols were followed in areas such as the export section of the cargo complex under EU and UK (ACC3 and RA3) validation, the import section was left out.

Users have repeatedly complained that import cargoes were often left carelessly outside designated sheds, and several theft incidents occurred in this key area.

The blaze destroyed valuables worth \$1 billion, according to initial estimates. The government has launched a probe to determine the cause of the fire.

As per EU/UK ACC3/RA3 requirements, airlines carrying cargo from a third country (outside the EU or UK) must have ACC3 validation, while handlers providing cargo services to ACC3 airlines must have RA3 validation.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines holds both ACC3 (as an airline) and RA3 (as a cargo handler) certifications. ACC3 requires airlines to meet EU security standards through verified cargo handling and screening, while RA3 allows ground handlers to manage cargo bound for the EU.

A member of Biman's investigation committee, requesting anonymity, compared the import cargo section to a slum, saying it was in total disarray. "There was no fire control mechanism in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards," he said.

He added that the courier shed was in particularly poor condition, with no fire safety plan from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

The probe member also highlighted that there are only two water hydrants at Dhaka airport for firefighting, raising questions about CAAB's seriousness in safety management.

A major freight forwarder, requesting anonymity, said the fire occurred because safety and security measures at the cargo complex failed to meet internationally recognised standards for such a sensitive area.

Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq, chairman of CAAB, however, declined to take direct blame for the blaze. While the building belongs to CAAB, operations are conducted by Biman, clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents, and customs authorities, he said at a media briefing on Tuesday.



- Import section left out of EU, UK safety validation
- Experts say fire control system was absent
- Only two water hydrants available at Dhaka airport
- Cargo stored haphazardly, blocking firefighting access
- CAAB, Biman, customs, C&F agents blamed for lapses



Neglect in maintenance has led to the collapse of a portion of the Buriganga riverside walkway at Kadamtali in Pagla, Narayanganj. Berthing of cargo vessels for unloading sand and bricks in the area also contributes to the damage. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Govt project to save 4 rivers around Dhaka falters

PINAKI ROY

Even 16 years after the High Court directive to restore Dhaka's four rivers to their original state, the government has yet to complete even half of the work, including boundary demarcation and walkway construction, aimed at preventing encroachment.

In June 2009, the court ordered the authorities concerned to demarcate the original boundaries of the Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakkhya to protect them from encroachment and pollution.

Following the order, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) was tasked with installing over 10,000 demarcation pillars and constructing 220 kilometres of circular walkways along both banks of the four rivers.

However, BIWTA has so far completed 72

kilometres of walkways in two phases of a project initiated in 2014. Besides, it has installed 6,200 pillars demarcating the boundaries of the rivers.

In the first phase, 20 kilometres of walkways were constructed along the river ports in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Tongi and two eco-parks were built in Shyampur and Narayanganj. This phase cost the government Tk 142 crore.

The BIWTA began constructing another 52 kilometres of walkways in 2018 under the project's second phase, which remains incomplete.

According to project officials, the walkways will extend from Kamarpara to Dhour in Tongi; from Gabtoli to Sadarghat; from Fatulla to Nitaiganj Khalghat; and from Bosila bridge to Sadarghat via Gabtoli.

- Out of 220 km of planned walkways, 72 km built
- 6,200 out of over 10,000 demarcation pillars installed
- Portions of walkways in ruins; boundary walls collapsed
- Cost rose from Tk 845.55cr in 2018 to Tk 1,275cr

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BNP bloc at unease as partners can't use paddy sheaf

Party to urge EC not to implement changes ahead of polls

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Already struggling with seat-sharing negotiations, the BNP now faces a new challenge after the advisory council approved changes to the rules on electoral symbols for alliances.

The amendment to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) makes it mandatory for candidates of alliance partners to contest under their own party symbols, instead of the coalition leader's.

BNP and alliance leaders said the change has unnerved smaller partners who fear it will sharply reduce their chances of winning seats.

"The ground situation for alliance candidates is already weak. The new rule adds fresh concern and could strain BNP's ties with its allies," said a BNP Standing Committee member, seeking anonymity.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed told a press briefing yesterday that the party will soon write to the Election Commission, urging it not to implement the change.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka on a perilous path

Lax regulations, weak oversight fuel capital's unplanned expansion

HELEMUL ALAM

Once regulated by strict rules, Dhaka's urban landscape has undergone a radical transformation over the last two decades, driven by the gradual relaxation of regulations, aggressive increases in floor area ratio (FAR), and weak enforcement of relevant laws.

Near-unregulated vertical

expansion has put immense pressure on utilities and infrastructure, worsened traffic congestion, and compromised fire safety in many areas of the city, according to experts.

Urban planner Emdadul Islam, also a former chief engineer of Rajuk, recalled that the height of buildings in the neighbourhoods of Gulshan, Banani, and Dhanmondi was

once capped at just three storeys. In the 1980s, the rules were relaxed, allowing the construction of buildings up to six storeys.

Persuaded by developers, the government introduced FAR – a limit on how much floor space is permitted on a piece of land – in 2008 to encourage vertical growth and preserve open land. But in practice, the move made

matters worse.

"The idea was to save horizontal space while meeting the housing demand... But in most cases, developers went for expansion both vertically and horizontally, wiping out open spaces," Emdadul explained.

Developers have often managed to bypass the rules altogether mainly due to

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HEIGHT LIMITS ON 5-KATHA PLOT IN CORE DHAKA CITY AREAS

YEAR	HEIGHT
1980	1-3 storeys
1990	4-6 storeys
2008	6-10 storeys
2022	5-8 storeys
2025	6-10 storeys

Trade talks with Canada off

Says Trump after ad invokes late president Reagan as free-trader

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday trade talks with Canada were terminated after a Canadian political advertisement used the recorded voice of late president Ronald Reagan saying tariffs cause trade wars and economic disaster.

Trump, who imposed import tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and autos earlier this year, called the video ad fraudulent.

"Based on their egregious behavior, ALL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH CANADA ARE HEREBY TERMINATED," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Canada has responded to the tariffs with trade sanctions of its own, but the two sides have been in talks for weeks on a deal for the steel and aluminum sectors.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said this week that the ad from his provincial government, more than a week old, had caught the Republican president's attention.

The ad's voiceover consists of Reagan, a hero to many US Republicans, criticising tariffs on foreign goods while saying they cause job losses and trade wars.

"I heard that the president heard our ad. I'm sure he wasn't too happy," Ford said on Tuesday.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation said the ad used "selective audio and video", and that it was examining legal options.

"The ad misrepresents the Presidential Radio Address (by Reagan in 1987), and the Government of Ontario did not seek nor receive permission to use and edit the remarks," a Foundation statement said.

The video uses five complete sentences from the five-minute weekly address, spliced together out of sequence.

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Embracing the AI revolution, human style

RBR

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its phenomenal popularity with us, the users, remind me of Seven of Nine, the Borg character from the Star Trek Voyager TV series.

Seven was originally human, before her Borg assimilation, and later, when liberated by the crew of Star Trek, she was working on reclaiming her lost humanity, while retaining some of her Borg knowledge. She is half-human, half AI, or something like that.

Technological innovations like AI can analyse data by using algorithms and improve our performance, our ability to perform simple tasks, such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving, that, in any circumstances, would require human intelligence. With this AI breakthrough, we have now become half-human and full lazy.

Bringing AI into the lives of ordinary people is a stroke of genius, but for older people of Generation X, who are still in the workforce, this knowledge and know-how gave rise to complexes. Terms like algorithms, data, and performance remind me of my math teacher in detention class, and are downright too much of a stress for me, a happy human of Generation X.

In such a technologically awkward moment, I was introduced to ChatGPT, a conversational AI chatbot, by a junior colleague when he saw me struggling to translate a big Bangla script.

And in the blink of an eye, the 1,000-word document got translated

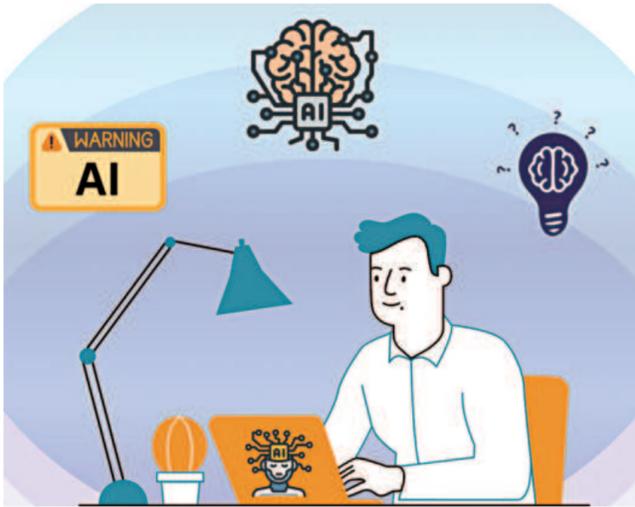


ILLUSTRATION: ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

as soon as I pressed the button. I was astounded. I felt like the country mouse visiting the town mouse.

Anyway, leaving aside the corny jokes, I dread handing an assignment to my sub-editors because of my poor grammar, writing errors, and their sneer. So, I have decided to cheat, be corrupted, and ruin my human intelligence to score brownie points with them by chatting with ChatGPT. I now know the shortcut to successful writing.

"Asking AI to write for you is a wasted exercise and robbing yourself of your own skill growth, no matter how tempting the idea of having a write-up in two minutes might sound. And don't think you are fooling anyone; most people can tell when it's AI slop and tune out mid-read.

However, AI is a fantastic assistant if you use it correctly. Here's how to do it right. If you have a write-up to write, do your research, jot down your points, formulate your flow, and just

write. Don't bother too much with the grammar or spelling. Just make sure to write and tell your story, however you want. Once done, give it to the AI and simply ask it to format and edit it for clarity and fix any spelling and sentence structure mistakes. The final output will be infinitely better than whatever slop the AI would have come up with if left on its own," says a disciplinarian sub-editor, who works with young writers in an English magazine.

"It's inevitable. It's the future. Students and young office executives will opt for AI assistance for any assignments. However, to know how to properly use AI to your advantage is the point of concern now. Students should be discouraged from uncontrolled, mindless AI usage rather than being deprived of modernisation and technological advancements," says a part-time professor in a reputed university.

"The first indication that anything is written by AI is that it has absolutely no character and no 'signature.' Like a fingerprint, everyone's write-ups are unique from each other. You can claim to tailor your prompts to create a unique write-up, but there is no escaping their bland writing style and even worse humour," the sub-editor vents his frustration with detecting AI presence in write-ups he edits.

So, to sum up, AI is here to stay, reshaping how we think, write, and create. The key lies in balance – using it wisely to enhance, not replace, our human touch.

Stronger military ties key to offsetting Chinese influence in Bangladesh

Says US envoy nominee

UNB, Dhaka

Brent Christensen, nominee for US Ambassador to Bangladesh, on Thursday described Bangladesh's upcoming polls as "the most consequential election in decades."

"The United States supports Bangladesh in its journey toward a bright and democratic future," he told the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations during his nomination hearing.

Christensen, who has "over twenty years of experience working on US policy towards Bangladesh," including a prior tour in Dhaka, made the remarks in his opening statement.

Senator Pete Ricketts of Nebraska asked about Bangladesh's growing military cooperation with "Communist China," referring to a Chinese-built submarine base in Pekua and Dhaka's plan to buy Chinese J-10 fighter jets.

"If they finalise the sale, it would lock Dhaka into a decades-long financial and strategic relationship with the Chinese defence industry," Ricketts said, asking how Christensen would engage with Bangladesh's leadership to discourage dependence on Chinese platforms.

Christensen replied that he shared the senator's concern over Chinese influence in South Asia and, if confirmed, would "clearly articulate the risks from Chinese activity... as well as highlight the opportunities and benefits that come with a closer partnership with the United States, especially military to military."

Ricketts also referred to the "Think Twice Act," a bill meant to dissuade countries like Bangladesh from buying Chinese weapons. Asked what alternatives the US could offer, Christensen said, "One of the things we can do through our US military groups is highlight some of the allied systems that might be more affordable for a country like Bangladesh... and encourage their interoperability with other platforms as we conduct additional military exercises with them."

Christensen noted that Bangladesh, the world's eighth most populous country, often does not receive the attention it deserves due to its larger neighbours. He said its strategic location makes it vital to an open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

"Bangladesh is also at a pivotal point. Student-led protests in August 2024 brought down a government that had been in power for 15 years," he said.

Christensen said Bangladesh hosts nearly 1.3 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar. "The disproportionate effort by the United States to fund the response is not sustainable," he said, urging other nations to step up.

He said he would work with Bangladesh, the international community, and US partners to find a viable and lasting solution. The US Embassy in Dhaka has been without an ambassador since Peter Haas completed his tenure in mid-2024, with chargés d'affaires filling the role since then.



Brent Christensen

China vows massive high-tech sector development in next decade

AFP, Beijing

China will develop its high-tech sector on a massive scale in the next decade, top officials vowed yesterday, a day after meetings on the country's future policy priorities concluded in Beijing.

The four days of closed-door discussions began on Monday and involved high-ranking officials outlining long-term strategies for the 15th Five-Year Plan, which starts next year.

The country has poured support and investment into developing its science and technology sectors, part of ongoing efforts to present itself as a world leader in those areas ahead of Washington.

Yesterday, officials in Beijing promised that industries such as "quantum technology... hydrogen and nuclear fusion energy, (and) brain computer interfaces... are poised to gain momentum".

"The new scale added in the next 10 years is expected to reshape China's high-tech sector," development official Zheng Shanjie told reporters at a news conference.

Trade talks with Canada off

FROM PAGE 1

"When someone says, 'Let's impose tariffs on foreign imports,' it looks like they're doing the patriotic thing by protecting American products and jobs," Reagan says. "And sometimes for a short while it works – but only for a short time."

He also says: "...over the long run such trade barriers hurt every American worker and consumer", and that the result of trade wars is that "Markets shrink and collapse; businesses and industries shut down; and millions of people lose their jobs."

The ad does not, however, mention that Reagan was using the address to explain that tariffs imposed on Japan by his administration should be seen as a sadly unavoidable exception to his basic belief in free trade as the key to prosperity.

The Canadian government had no immediate comment. Trump has called tariffs "the most beautiful word in the dictionary" and used them to apply pressure to countries around the world.

His trade war has increased US tariffs to their highest levels since the 1930s and he has regularly threatened more duties, sparking concerns among businesses and economists.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney told reporters yesterday that Canada will not allow unfair US access to its markets if talks on various trade deals with Washington fail.

Safety standards flouted at import section

FROM PAGE 1

He attributed much of the responsibility to these three parties, particularly Biman, which handles ground operations, but said it would be "premature" to assign direct blame before the investigation concludes. He also noted that firefighting trucks could not reach the fire source because large quantities of goods were piled in front of the import cargo warehouse.

Aviation experts, however, held CAAB responsible alongside Biman, C&F agents, and customs authorities for failing to discharge their duties. Biman handles ground operations, C&F agents manage cargo clearance, and customs authorities oversee cargo management. Although goods are supposed to be cleared within 21 days, insiders said items often remain for years.

The CAAB chief claimed that

operations at the airport follow ICAO protocols, a set of practices ensuring the safety, security, and efficiency of international civil aviation.

Aviation expert ATM Nazrul said the import cargo section lacks standard practices, with goods stored haphazardly inside and outside the building, which made it difficult for firefighters to reach the blaze. He urged CAAB to adopt international standards in the import section.

In April 2016, the UK and EU banned direct flights from Dhaka due to safety concerns at HSI. Bangladesh later regained approval after committing to improved scanning, screening, explosive detection, fire control, and overall incident management at the airport and cargo complex.

Boshra Islam, general manager of public relations at Biman, said almost all sections of HSI follow ACC3 and RA3 standards, except the import

section. The last ACC3 validation by the EU was conducted on March 3–5, 2024, and the last RA3 validation on May 15–17, 2023, both covering only the export cargo section. The ACC3 is valid until March 4, 2029, and RA3 until October 4, 2026. She confirmed that import cargo facilities are not included in these validation programmes.

Aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam said even if ACC3 and RA3 standards are not mandatory for the import section, the same level of compliance should be maintained because it is an equally important part of the airport. Since import cargo is often not released immediately – sometimes taking up to two weeks – strict safety and compliance measures are essential.

Referring to delays in cargo release, Alam said this makes the strict implementation of safety and compliance standards in the import section even more crucial.

Govt project to save 4 rivers

FROM PAGE 1

In its verdict, the HC directed the then deputy commissioners of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj to conduct and complete a river survey based on both Cadastral Survey (CS) and Revisional Survey (RS) records by the end of 2009.

The CS, conducted between 1888 and 1940, defined and recorded the legal boundaries of properties for managing land ownership, while the RS was carried out later to update the land records based on the CS.

The HC also ordered that all river lands – except those legally leased out – must be identified and demarcated with boundary pillars by November 2010 to keep those under full control of the government.

Initially, the Public Works Department (PWD) was assigned to put up demarcation pillars. It proceeded with the installation of 9,577 boundary pillars without adhering to CS records.

Following protests from environmentalists, the government decided to discard those and install pillars afresh.

Under the second phase of the project, BIWTA is supposed to install 10,820 demarcation pillars along the four rivers; construct riverbank protection walls stretching up to 44.8 kilometres; and build three eco-parks and several jetties.

Contacted, Abu Zafar Mohammad Shahinawaz Kabir, the project director, said, "Work remained suspended for one and a half years due to legal complications. Land grabbers obtained court orders to halt work in many areas, prompting us to seek intervention from the High Court," he said.

Of the 220 kilometres of planned walkways along both banks of the four rivers, the government has so far undertaken projects covering 72



The walkway along the Turag river in Diabari.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

kilometres. Once the second phase is completed, the BIWTA will launch the third phase to build the remaining stretches within the city's inner circle, the project director said.

"So far, 87 percent of the project [second phase] has been completed. At least 6,200 demarcation pillars have been installed, and walkway construction [72 km] is at the final stage," he said.

When the second phase of the project was taken up in 2018, the cost was estimated at Tk 845.55 crore. In July 2022, the deadline for its completion was extended to June last year, raising the cost to Tk 1,181.10 crore.

But the project could not be completed within the revised timeframe, resulting in further cost escalation.

The project director said the new deadline is June next year, and the project cost has been revised up to Tk 1,275 crore due to a rise in overhead or indirect costs as well as other factors.

Meanwhile, parts of the 22km-walkway that was built along the riverbanks in Kanchpur, Shyampur, Dharmaganj, Ramchandrapur and

Tongi have fallen into disrepair.

During a recent visit to Shyampur, it was found that the boundary wall along the walkway collapsed. Pedestrians must exercise caution while crossing the stretch as they risk falling into the river if inattentive.

Asked, the project director said the walkways in Shyampur and Kadamtali areas are in poor shape due to a lack of maintenance.

Referring to the project, environmental activist Sharif Jamil said, "In the name of complying with the 2009 court order, government agencies under the previous administration went for faulty demarcation of rivers, and conducted some sporadic eviction drives, leaving foreshore and riverbanks in the hands of grabbers."

The walkway project is nothing but a tool for corruption to make money from both the project and river grabbers, alleged Sharif, member secretary of Dhora, an NGO working on environment and climate change.

Unabated encroachment and pollution are gradually turning the rivers into narrow canals that carry pollutants downstream, he added.

Dhaka on a perilous path

FROM PAGE 1

minimal oversight by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), entrusted with enforcing building regulations in the capital.

Recently, a three-member government body revised the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) 2022 and proposed raising FAR further in most core city areas – a move that, according to urban planners, would allow developers to build even taller structures in the already overcrowded capital.

The proposal was approved in principle at a meeting of the advisory committee on DAP review, chaired by Land Adviser Ali Imam Majumdar on October 19.

Welcoming the development, Liaquat Ali Bhuiyan, senior vice-president of Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB), said the move would help the sector come out of stagnation.

"Industries linked to the real estate sector will also benefit from this," he added.

PERILOUS PATH

Urban planner Adil Mohammed Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said global planning norms are not followed in the case of Dhaka city.

Traditionally, plot-based development (small plots with strict height limits) coexisted with block-based colonies in Dhaka city, which included houses, schools, and open space. Dhaka initially followed the plot-based model, capping the height at two-and-a-half storeys that ensured airflow and sunlight.

But all this changed with the formulation of the 2006 Building Construction Rules after developers promoted FAR as a way to meet the housing demand.

They promised to leave more open space while constructing structures. But in practice, neighbourhoods have become mismatched: four storey houses are seen beside 10-storey high-rises, he said.

"Even in developed countries, height limits preserve neighbourhood character... High-rises belong in business districts, not alleys in residential areas," Adil pointed out.

In most countries, FAR rarely exceeds 2 in residential areas, meaning that the total floor area is twice the size of the land, he said.

But the 2008 rules allowed FAR between 3.5 and 6.5, depending on road width. This enabled 10-storey buildings beside narrow roads and 20-storey high-rises beside main roads. Now, 14-storey towers rise from alleys barely wide enough for rickshaws.

Adil said the authorities are approving the construction of high-rises in congested neighbourhoods with lanes too narrow for fire trucks. "Some roads are too narrow for two cars to pass, yet developers want towers there. It's chaos."

Many high-rises are unreachable by fire trucks or ladders. Developers who pledged open spaces in return for higher FAR often build structures without leaving adequate open space, he said.

Mohammad Fazole Reza Sumon, former president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said that with higher FAR, the population of urban areas could go beyond the designed capacity, putting unbearable strain on utilities and infrastructure.

For example, Purbachal was originally designed for 10 lakh residents, but was later revised to accommodate 15 lakh.

With higher FAR, its population could soar to 60 lakh, putting utilities and infrastructure under severe strain. This is precisely why areas like Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi are already struggling.

An increase in the number of residents beyond capacity will lead to a surge in vehicles, worsening traffic congestion in the city, he noted.

Another negative impact of unplanned urban expansion is the loss of daylight.

In small plots of 4–5 kathas, residents of two or three-storey buildings have access to at least two hours of natural light daily. But if high-rises are built on adjacent plots, they block all sunlight to neighbouring homes, Sumon said.

This is why buildings are limited to 3–4 storeys in most residential neighbourhoods in India, Pakistan, South Korea, the US or Australia, he said.

DETAILED AREA PLAN

The 2022 DAP sought to introduce area-based FAR, depending on road width and civic facilities. Later, FAR was raised for almost all areas in the capital following demands from developers.

Though the approved plan capped FAR between 2 and 4.5, the limits were raised in many areas in September 2023. FAR is now between 5 and 5.5 for residential areas in Gulshan, Banani, and Dhanmondi.

"When it comes to planning, FAR 5 or 5.5 is unthinkable for residential plots... On narrow roads, it should not exceed 2.5 – at most 3. Raising it to 5.5 means disaster for neighbourhoods," said Adil.

Mohammad Ashrafur Islam, project director of DAP and Rajuk's chief town planner, said a three-member subcommittee, led by Housing and Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, revised DAP 2022 and prepared a proposal after discussions with all stakeholders.

He said the proposal, approved in principle by the advisory committee recently, will be sent to the law ministry soon for vetting.

According to the proposal, FAR has been raised in most core city areas, including Kazipara, Shewrapara, Jatrabari and Badda, while it has been slightly reduced in a few areas, including Dhanmondi and Gulshan.

Ashrafur said flood flow zones will be unified under a single category to protect them from encroachment. Development or construction on agricultural land will be prohibited, with the exception of projects of national interest.

It will be mandatory for a developer to install a Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) if the plot size is five katha (3,600sq ft) or larger, he added.



UN must continue evolving for global peace

Says Prof Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the United Nations, which celebrated its 80th anniversary yesterday, must continue to evolve and adapt if it is to fulfill their collective aspiration for peace and multilateralism.

"We join the call for reforming the UN to make it more agile, integrated, and equipped to deliver the aspirations of all people in an evolving global

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People risk their lives crossing the main road through gaps in a divider in the Mirpur 2 area of the capital, ignoring the footbridge located right above them. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NCP won't be a 'pet' opposition

Says Sarjis Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizens Party aims to either form the government or play the role of a strong opposition, said Sarjis Alam, the party's chief organiser for the northern region, yesterday.

He also said the NCP does not want to be a "pet" opposition like the Jatiya Party.

He made the remark at a coordination meeting of the NCP held at the Shaheed Abu Sayeed International Convention Centre in the capital's Shahbagh area.

The meeting was organised by the party's Dhaka city (north and south) and Dhaka district units.

"NCP did not emerge to become the 46th political party in Bangladesh. We will either represent the people as the ruling party in parliament or become a strong opposition. We are not here to be a pet opposition like the Jatiya Party," said Sarjis.

Sarjis said the party will start announcing convening committees for its district and city units from today. He expressed hope that the convening committees for Dhaka north and south city units would be finalised within three days.

"All district and city convening committees must be formed by

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

DENGUE SURGE

Mitford hospital stretched to the limit

HELEMUL ALAM

It was around 1:00pm on Thursday when this correspondent entered one of the medicine wards at Mitford hospital in Old Dhaka. Just at the entrance, two women were found wailing -- they had just lost a loved one to dengue.

The body of Ibrahim, 50, lay on a bed placed on the floor. His daughter-in-law Rachona Akhtar sat silently beside him, her eyes swollen with tears, while her husband and relatives completed the formalities to take the body home to Keraniganj for burial.

"We never imagined this would happen," Rachona said in a trembling voice. "He had fever for three days, but we thought it was nothing serious. We gave him medicine from a local pharmacy."

Ibrahim, who supported his family by selling pickles, was brought to the hospital on Wednesday night when he began struggling to breathe. Despite being admitted at 9:00pm, he passed away 16 hours later.

"We didn't even know it was dengue until yesterday," Rachona said quietly.

Dr Ripon Biswas, medical officer at Mitford hospital, said Ibrahim arrived in critical condition with septicemia -- an infection that had spread throughout his body -- along with hepatitis and fluid accumulation in his lungs and abdomen.



MITFORD DENGUE SITUATION

All 10 ICU beds occupied, patients treated on floor

Hospital aims to increase ICU capacity to 30 beds

15 dengue deaths, 1,223 cases recorded so far

259 deaths reported so far

Most fatalities linked to late hospitalisation, comorbidities

Multiple viruses circulating, delaying dengue diagnosis

"We tried to move him to the ICU," Dr Biswas said, "but there were no available beds. Our ICU has only 10 beds, and they are always full."

Since September, Mitford hospital has been facing overwhelming pressure from

dengue patients, many in severe condition. On Wednesday alone, 20 new dengue patients were admitted to a ward designed for just six beds.

"We never turn away a critical patient," Dr Biswas added. "When no beds are available, we treat

them on the floor. Our doctors and nurses do their best, even when ICU support is needed but unavailable."

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, at least 259 dengue patients died while 63,170 others were hospitalised as of Thursday. Among the deaths and cases, 1,223 and 15 respectively were reported at Mitford hospital.

During a visit to the ward, this correspondent found several patients lying on mats and beds placed along the floor.

Among them was Yunus Mallik, 85, from the Mitford area, who had been receiving treatment since Wednesday. His grandson, Robiul Islam, said they came to Dhaka from Bagerhat for another medical issue, only for Yunus to be diagnosed with dengue after days of fever.

"Doctors said many dengue patients need ICU care, but there just aren't enough beds," Robiul said.

Another patient, Abdur Rahman from Keraniganj, was admitted the previous day with nausea and fever. "They said it is dengue," he said weakly. "I am lucky to have found a bed."

Dr Md Mofizur Rahman Mollah, assistant director (finance and store) at Mitford hospital, said the facility currently has 10 ICU beds and five paediatric ICU (PICU) beds.

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'Ahmad Rafique was a social revolutionary'

Speakers recall Language Movement veteran's lifelong struggle for equality, social change

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafique could not practise as a doctor after completing his medical degree, he chose instead to become a "doctor of society," dedicating his life to bringing social change, said speakers at a memorial meeting yesterday.

They described him as a "social revolutionary" who rejected the idea of private property and spent his life opposing liberalism and striving to build an egalitarian society.

Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury presided over the meeting at the Abdul Karim Sahityabisharad Auditorium of Bangla Academy. He was the convener of the National Committee for the Condolence Meeting, which organised the programme.

Serajul Islam said Ahmad Rafique was a true Language Movement veteran in two senses -- by being part of that historic movement and later by enriching the Bangla language through his research and writings.

"He fought to establish the language and later continued his cultural fight," he said, adding that the Language Movement was not only about

Ahmad Rafique was a true Language Movement veteran in two senses -- by being part of that historic movement and later by enriching the Bangla language through his research and writings.

SERAJUL ISLAM CHOUDHURY

establishing a state language but also had an appeal for social reform.

Ahmad Rafique realised that appeal and joined the East Pakistan Communist Party, he said, adding that Rafique believed a revolution would not happen without cultural preparation.

As a result, Rafique started his cultural struggle, wrote poems, published essays on literature, arts and culture, translated medical terms into Bangla, and conducted intensive research on Rabindranath Tagore.

"He couldn't continue his medical profession as the authorities denied him enrolment as an intern, but he tried to treat the whole society as his patient," Choudhury said, urging people to work for establishing a discrimination-free society to pay tribute to Ahmad Rafique.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, presidium member of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said although Ahmad Rafique left the party, he always upheld socialist thoughts and worked for the betterment of humankind.

"I learned his name first during the Liberation War from Ila Mitra [a veteran Indian communist leader] who spoke to Ahmad Rafique several times. Later when I met him, a wave of warmth swept through my heart at his gentle, smiling expression."

Ahmad Rafique was a straightforward person who expressed his emotions without hesitation.

Bangladesh Jasad leader Dr Mushtaq Hossain said Ahmad Rafique's life should be documented as he was one of the idols for every idealistic politician.

Cultural activist Mofizur Rahman Laltu said recitation artists found their voices in the poems of Ahmad Rafique's book *Biplop Ferari Tobu* (A Revolutionary, Still a Fugitive). "It's an inspiring book which is still relevant, and it inspired us even during the anti-fascism movement in recent years," he said.

The programme began with songs of Rabindranath Tagore, performed by artist Ashim Dutta. The audience paid tribute with flowers to Ahmad Rafique's portrait and observed a one-minute silence.

Ahmad Rafique passed away at Dhaka's Birdem Hospital on October 2 at the age of 96.

'Will build a united country with the inclusion of all'

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said if his party comes to power, it will make sincere efforts to address the problems of all indigenous groups.

He particularly reassured the Garo community while addressing the Dhaka Wangala Festival 2025, organised by the community on the Banani Bidyanketan School and College premises in the capital.

Fakhrul said BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman made it very clear in the 31-point reform agenda announced in 2022 that the party would work to build a "rainbow nation" in Bangladesh -- one that will be formed with the inclusion of all communities.

"Our responsibility is to integrate all communities to some extent with the mainstream of society, to improve their economic condition, and at the same time to preserve and promote their cultures and heritages..."

Wangala, the "Hundred Drums Festival," is a post-harvest celebration of the Garo community.

The BNP leader said he had the opportunity to develop close relations with various indigenous communities over the past several months and had also attended their gatherings in Mymensingh.

Fakhrul urged members of the indigenous communities to rise as proud citizens of Bangladesh. "You have to stand tall as Bangladeshi citizens," he said.



Rezwan's floating school wins Unesco Confucius prize

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshi architect Mohammed Rezwan's solar-powered floating schools have received the Unesco Confucius Prize for Literacy 2025, one of the world's highest honours for advancing education and lifelong learning.

The Chinese government sponsors this award, said a press release.

Among hundreds of nominations worldwide, Unesco selected three winners: Bangladesh's Shidhulai Floating Schools, Ireland's Learn



PHOTO: COLLECTED



with NALA eLearning, and Morocco's Second Chance School and Inclusive Education Program.

The 20th award ceremony was held on September 27 in Qufu, Shandong Province, China, the birthplace of Confucius.

Rezwan accepted the trophy and certificate on behalf of his organisation, Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, which launched the world's first floating

school in 2002. Growing up in Chalanbeel, he saw how annual floods forced schools to close for months.

His simple yet transformative solution was to take schools to the water. Today, solar-powered boats serve as classrooms, libraries, and training centres that keep learning alive even when villages are submerged.

Unesco praised the initiative for "delivering literacy education

to marginalised learners in flood-prone regions through locally rooted innovation." The Shidhulai floating school programme has now been replicated across Bangladesh by other NGOs and inspired similar projects throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The Bangladesh government has incorporated Rezwan's floating

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Police block march of graduates with disabilities

Protesters seek jobs thru executive orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday blocked a procession of graduates with disabilities near the National Museum in Shahbagh, Dhaka as they marched towards the chief adviser's residence, Jamuna, demanding recruitment through executive orders and other facilities.

Under the banner of "Chakri Pratyashi Protibondhi Graduate Parishad", graduates from universities and colleges began their pre-announced march from Raju Memorial Sculpture on the Dhaka University campus in the afternoon.

Many of the demonstrators were seen carrying white canes, while some joined the protest on crutches.

As the procession reached near Shahbagh, police intercepted it when the protesters attempted to break through the barricade. Amid resistance, demonstrators staged a sit-in at the spot which continued for more than two hours.

"We are graduates, not beggars. Employment is our right. We have repeatedly tried to draw the government's attention, but our demands have gone unheard," said one of the protesters. Talking to The Daily Star around 5:30pm, Khalid Monsur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said the protesters were still demonstrating near the National Museum.

Hefazat demands ban on Iskcon at Ctg rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh staged a rally in Chattogram city yesterday, demanding ban on the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon).

The organisation also condemned the killing of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif in the port city last year, as well as the recent attempted murder of a mosque khatib in Gazipur. The rally was held after the Juma prayers on the Anderkilla Shahi Jame Mosque premises.

Speakers at the rally said when incidents occur in the hills or against minority communities, the chief adviser reacts promptly on social media, but when an imam or khatib is attacked, there is no response.

The event was presided over by Hefazat's central Nayeb-e-Ameer, Ali Usman. Central joint secretary generals Harun Izhari and Nasir Munir, among others, were present at the event.

After the rally, Hefazat activists brought out a procession from the mosque premises.

On November 26 last year, 32-year-old Alif, a member of Chattogram District Bar Association, was killed during clashes between police and followers of former Iskcon leader Chinmoy Krishna Das in the Chattogram Court Building area.



Labourers in the process to produce cocopeat from coconut coir at Rahimabad village in Bagerhat, Khulna, yesterday. Local entrepreneurs collect, dry, and refine coconut husks to make cocopeat, a popular soil substitute in agriculture, nurseries, and rooftop gardens for its excellent water-retention properties.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

54 health centres without essential medicine supply

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

For the past 14 months, 54 union-level health and Family Welfare Centres (FWCs) across Patuakhali district have been operating without any supply of essential medicines.

Most of these facilities are also struggling with acute manpower shortages, leaving thousands of marginalised people deprived of basic healthcare.

According to the Family Planning Department, each union is supposed to have one such centre to provide healthcare for rural communities. However, 54 out of 77 unions in the district currently have functional FWCs.

Each FWC is meant to provide 26 types of essential medicines for common ailments such as fever, cough and skin diseases, as well as for maternal and child healthcare. But supply of essential drugs to these 54 centres has been suspended since August 2024.

Lamia Begum, 23, of Bakulbariya village, who brought her 18-month-old child to Bakulbariya Union Health and Family Welfare Centre in Galachipa upazila with fever and cold, said she received no medicine.

"The doctor prescribed some medicines but said none is available here. We are poor; we come here because treatment and medicine are supposed to be free. Now I'll have to buy

medicine from outside," she said.

Another patient, Sumi Akter, 21, who brought her two-year-old son with fever, echoed the same.

"The nearest upazila-level hospital is 15 kilometres away, and going to the district town costs even more. My husband is a day labourer — we can't afford frequent trips for treatment," she said.



The Bakulbariya FWC, established in 2018, is also facing a severe manpower crisis. Of its six sanctioned posts, only two are currently occupied.

Family welfare assistant Ranjita, who manages patients at the FWC besides additional duty in a neighbouring union, said, "We haven't received any medicines for 14

months. The number of patients has dropped considerably."

A similar situation was found at Auliapur Union Health and Family Welfare Centre under Patuakhali Sadar upazila, which is running without essential drugs while five of its seven sanctioned posts remain vacant.

Nasima Begum, a family welfare assistant at the centre, said, "We used to get around 23 types of medicines, but for over a year, there has been no supply. Earlier, we treated about 50 patients a day; now only around 10 come. Without medicine, we can only give prescriptions."

According to official data, out of 54 FWCs in Patuakhali, only 33 have sub-assistant community medical officers appointed. Of 21 pharmacist posts, 11 are vacant; so are 24 of the 78 family welfare visitor posts, and 88 of the 317 family welfare assistant posts.

Contacted, Dr Md Shamsuzzaman, assistant director of the District Family Planning Office, said, "Previous 5-year plan ended in June 2024, but the next 5-year plan was not approved timely. So there has been a halt in medicine supply and services have been disrupted to some extent. However, the problem will be resolved soon. We expect to resume medicine supply to all union-level centres within the next week."

Six years on, Babuhat market remains half-built

Traders, locals bear the brunt

KMHABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Nearly six years after construction began, the new Babuhat market in Pirojpur's Nazirpur remains only 30 percent complete, leaving traders and thousands of dependents struggling.

Rusting iron rods jut from unfinished floors, concrete pillars rise from bare earth, and empty shop frames stand abandoned where bustling businesses once thrived.

The four-storey market, part of the Countrywide Rural Market Infrastructure Development Project, was awarded in December 2019 to Shimran Mayan Trade International and Elite ETCL (Pvt) Ltd for Tk 3.3 crore, with work originally scheduled for completion in June 2021.

Despite disbursing roughly Tk 1 crore — nearly one-third of the cost — most work remains unfinished.

"Over two dozen shops were demolished to make way for the new market," said trader Mamun Bepari. "We expected to return quickly, but the delay forced us to move our businesses elsewhere."

Fellow trader Shahjahan Sarder added, "Thousands in Nazirpur and neighbouring Bagerhat districts rely on this century-old marketplace that sits on Saturdays and Tuesdays every week. Their livelihoods are now at risk."

The project was reportedly awarded to Noore Alam Siddique Shahin, younger brother of then minister SM Rezaul Karim, whose influence allegedly discouraged scrutiny.

A team from the LGED headquarters visited in April 2022, expressed dissatisfaction, and warned the upazila engineering office, but the situation remains unchanged.

Locals said that as Shahin was very powerful, they could do nothing while he delayed the work. He left the country after the fall of the Awami League government last August, leaving the project in limbo.

Contacted, Executive Engineer Mohammad Azizur Rahman declined to comment.

UNO Sajia Sahnaz Tama said they are contacting the LGED to come up with a solution.



Rezwan's floating

FROM PAGE 3 schools into the National Adaptation Plan 2050.

"Education is not only about reading and writing," Rezwan said. "It is about fostering peace, equality, and resilience. With literacy and knowledge, our youth can build a future where no disaster prevents children from learning."

A photo series titled "Boat Schools of Bangladesh — Future That Floats" is on display at the French National Museum

of Immigration History's Migrations and Climate exhibit in Paris through April 5, 2026. The TRT World documentary "Bangladesh Turns Tide on Climate Change with Floating Schools" is a finalist for the Save the Children Global Media Awards 2025.

Rezwan's work is also featured in Julia Watson's book Lo-TEK: Water, which highlights 22 contemporary TEK-based innovations worldwide.

NCP won't be a 'pet'

FROM PAGE 3 November 15," he said.

"By December 30, NCP must have convening committees in every ward — from district and upazila to union, thana, and city levels. If we can do this, NCP will contest the next national election as one of the two strongest political parties in Bangladesh."

The convener of each committee must be over 40, and the member secretary must not be younger than 35.

"Anyone who held positions in the Awami League or its affiliated bodies before the July uprising cannot join NCP convening committees," he said.

He also instructed that inactive or controversial individuals must be excluded.

Hasnat Abdullah, the chief organiser of the NCP for the southern region, alleged that the country is heading towards another engineered election.

Accusing political parties of colluding over the allocation of deputy commissioners at the Secretariat, Hasnat said, "We want to tell the interim government: you are here to ensure fairness, but we see you bowing to certain political parties and assisting them in DC appointments." Criticising the Election

Commission, Hasnat remarked, "Our Election Commission is a spineless body. Political parties have treated it as spoils and divided it among themselves. They go to the advisers and dictate who can stay and who cannot. Every institution in Bangladesh has been divided between these two parties."

UN must

FROM PAGE 3 landscape," he said in a message marking the United Nations Day that falls on October 24.

On this occasion, Prof Yunus said they pledge that Bangladesh will continue to do its part to ensure a stable and peaceful world, as envisioned in the UN Charter.

On this day, on behalf of the people of Bangladesh, Prof Yunus wished all Member States, Partners in the UN System, and other stakeholders a happy United Nations Day.

"This is an occasion for the international community to renew its pledge to build a world free from fear and want, and rejuvenate the spirit of multilateralism and consensus building that the UN embodies," said Prof Yunus.

PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 25

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:50	12:45	4:00	5:32	7:15
AZAN 4-50 12-45 4-00 5-32 7-15				
JAMAAT	5-25	1-15	4-15	5-35 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A farmer tends to seedlings of various winter flowers at a nursery in Alankarkathi village of Nesarabad (Swarupkathi) upazila in Pirojpur. These seedlings are supplied from various nurseries, at both retail and wholesale prices, to different parts of the country. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Mitford hospital stretched to the limit

FROM PAGE 3 "We are trying to increase the ICU capacity to at least 30 beds," he said.

According to the hospital's internal death review, most fatalities occur due to late hospitalisation and underlying health complications.

"People should get tested early," Dr Mollah advised. "If someone develops a fever,

they should take the NSI test on the first day. After three or four days, the result may turn negative even if the patient has dengue."

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, noted that four viral infections — influenza, dengue, chikungunya, and Covid-19 — are currently

circulating simultaneously. This overlap, he said, often causes confusion and delays in seeking treatment.

"Many patients don't recognise warning signs like severe abdominal pain, breathing difficulty, bleeding, extreme fatigue, or a sharp drop in urine output," he said. "By the time they reach hospitals, their condition is already

critical." He also highlighted that delays in referring critically ill patients from district hospitals to Dhaka are contributing to rising fatalities.

"District-level hospitals must follow national treatment guidelines strictly and treat patients locally whenever possible," he urged.

Groom found dead in Faridpur sugarcane field

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A groom was found dead, hours after his wedding, in a sugarcane field in Faridpur's Saltha upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Md Jamal Fakir, 28, son of Md Rozab Fakir of Pisonail village in Ballabhdhi union.

Jamal married Rokeya Akter, 23, daughter of Md Liton Bhuiya of Ghonapara in Nagarkanda upazila, at a family ceremony on Thursday afternoon.

After the wedding, Jamal and his bride returned to his home in Pisonail village, said family members and neighbours.

Around 7:00am yesterday, some locals found Jamal's body with a towel tied around his neck, hanging from a bamboo fence in a sugarcane field — about half a kilometre from his house. They then informed his family.

Speaking to reporters, the bride said she learned about her husband's death when the body was brought home.

Jamal's elder brother, Jalal Fakir, termed the death "shocking and mysterious," saying, "He had no enemies, and we cannot understand why this happened."

Md Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Saltha Police Station, said police recovered the body and sent it to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

ব্যবহৃত স্ট্র্যাট বিক্রয়
বনানী ব্লক-এ, ২৭ নং রোডে
১৭৭০ ব.স্ক. এর ১টি ব্যবহৃত স্ট্র্যাট
ও পাবিক, গ্যাস বিদ্যুৎ সংযোগ
সহকারে বিক্রয় করা হবে।
যোগাযোগ # ০১৭১২০২১০৭২

Bangladesh Earthquake Society (BES) এর Life Member পের জন্মতারা
আগামী নির্বাচনী কমিটির নির্দেশ উপলক্ষে আগামের জন্য বাংলাদেশের ককরা ভাঙ্গা আপনার নাম, ছবি, বর্তমান ঠিকানা, ছাফি ঠিকানা, জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র নম্বর, সন্মত নম্বর, ইমেইল এড্রেস এবং মোবাইল নম্বর নিম্নের ইমেইলে ০৫ নভেম্বর ২০২০ এর মধ্যে পরামর্শের আবেদন করা হলে।
কোম্পানি ড. মো. জাহাঙ্গীর আলম
সেবার-সেক্রেটারি, এডব্লিউ কমিটি, BES
ইমেইল: b.earthquake.s@gmail.com
ফোন: ০১৬১৩-১৩২৮৩

INTERNATIONAL

‘No crazy war, please!’

Venezuela's Maduro tells US after Trump authorises covert action; new US strike on alleged drug-smuggling boat kills 6

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Thursday pleaded against a “crazy war” as an escalating US military campaign sent tensions soaring.

Maduro's comment came after US President Donald Trump said he had authorized covert action against the South American nation amid a military campaign targeting what Washington says are drug traffickers in the Caribbean and Pacific.

“Yes peace, yes peace forever, peace forever. No crazy war, please!” Maduro said in English in a meeting with unions aligned with the leftist leader.

The United States has deployed stealth warplanes and



navy ships as part of what it calls anti-narcotics efforts, but has yet to release evidence that its targets – eight boats and a semi-submersible – were smuggling drugs.

Speaking to reporters Thursday, Trump again denied that he had sent B-1B bombers to Venezuela, but said “we're not happy with them. They've emptied their prisons into our country.”

The president said “we're not going to necessarily ask for a declaration of war” from Congress, which has the constitutional power to do so.

“We're just going to kill people who come into our country.” The US strikes, which began on September 2, have killed at least 37 people, according to an AFP tally based on US figures.

An overnight US strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat operated by a Venezuelan gang killed six people in the Caribbean Sea, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said yesterday.

Regional tensions have flared as a result of the campaign, with Maduro accusing Washington of seeking regime change.

Late Thursday, the government in Trinidad and Tobago – located just off Venezuela's coast – announced that a US warship would dock in its capital from October 26-30.



Rescuers work at the site of a Russian airstrike amid ongoing attacks on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, yesterday. In a separate incident, a man detonated an explosive device at a railway station in northern Ukraine, killing three others before succumbing to his injuries, officials said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

‘No basic means to live’

Exhausted Gaza people struggle to rebuild

AFP, Gaza City

A fragile ceasefire has brought respite to Gazans exhausted by two years of fighting, but even without the daily bombing they are struggling to live amid the catastrophic destruction wrought by the war.

The reconstruction task ahead is enormous, given that vast swathes of the Palestinian territory were flattened during Israel's military campaign and most of the population were displaced at least once.

Many in the southern city of Khan Yunis have now been told by Israeli forces to move again to avoid the so-called Yellow Line, behind which Israeli troops are stationed under the ceasefire deal with Hamas.

“I am tired of displacement, very tired. I prefer to die, just like my son. It is better for the dead,” Riyad Abu Anza said.

AFP footage showed Palestinians carrying buckets, brooms and backpacks through a sandy neighbourhood of rubble and tents.

Abu Alaa Skeik, from Gaza City, said his house was completely destroyed during the gruelling war,

sparked by Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

The 52-year-old said that his family now lived in a tent next to what was left of his home.

“At first, our struggle was with the war – we were escaping death and bombardment. But today, our struggle is with life itself,” he said.

“We want to provide food, get water, rebuild our home and send our children back to school. We are exhausted,” he added.

Umm Mohammed Muhareb, who was displaced to the coastal area of Al-Mawasi, said that fear lingered despite the fighting largely halting.

“The situation now is calmer than before,” the 45-year-old told AFP.

“We don't hear the sounds of bombing like we used to, but the fear is still in our hearts, because we never know when things might get worse again.”

The truce faced its toughest test on Sunday, when Israeli forces unleashed a wave of strikes in Gaza after two soldiers were killed.

The strikes killed at least 45 Palestinians, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.



BNP bloc at unease as partners can't use paddy sheaf

FROM PAGE 1

“For the sake of fair politics and a fair election, this needs to be reconsidered,” he said.

After the advisory council gave final approval to the amendment on Thursday, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said the change aims to give voters a clear idea of each candidate's party identity.

Of the 50 parties that took part in anti-government protests alongside the BNP, two alliances and five other parties have sought to contest 106 seats under a BNP-led coalition in the upcoming polls, slated for February.

BNP leaders said the party, which has pledged to form a national government if elected, is ready to share a significant number of seats with allies. However, alliance partners fear defeat if they are barred from using BNP's “paddy sheaf” symbol, arguing that local BNP activists are unlikely to support them under their own banners.

Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said, “When small parties contest under their

own symbols, big party activists don't help them. If the RPO changes are enforced, there's no point in forming an alliance.”

Fariduzzaman Farhad, coordinator of Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote and chairman of the National People's Party, said rural voters hardly recognise small-party symbols.

“It's difficult to make a symbol familiar to everyone within two months. This will also complicate BNP's seat-sharing decisions,” he said.

Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mustafizur Rahman Iran echoed the concern.

“The paddy sheaf will be promoted nationally, but how will I benefit if I contest under my own symbol – the pineapple? There's clearly a complication here,” he said.

Alliance leaders also criticised the government and the EC for amending the RPO without consulting political parties. Samamona Jote's Farhad said that unilateral decisions by the government were “creating problems for the election process and political parties.”

Bobby Hajjaj, chairman of the Democratic Movement, said, “Changing

election law without discussion is not logical or acceptable.”

Shahadat Hossain Salim, spokesperson for the I2 Party Alliance and Bangladesh LDP secretary general, said many smaller registered parties will “definitely face trouble” since they cannot use BNP's symbol.

Meanwhile, leaders of four parties expressed partial support for the change but suggested that alliances should retain the option to use a common symbol.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, president of Nagorik Oikya under the Ganatantra Mancha, said, “Using a popular common symbol helps alliance partners. Removing that option brings no real improvement.”

Saiful Huq, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party, said, “Our party's position is positive – registered parties should use their own symbols. But politically, it's risky.”

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, echoed the view that alliances should have flexibility in symbol use.

Cox's Bazar airport

FROM PAGE 12

said the gazette notification declaring Cox's Bazar airport an international one would come into immediate effect in the public interest.

However, construction of the new terminal building – covering about 11,000 sq ft – has not yet been completed.

According to CAAB sources, the necessary facilities required for operating an international airport have not been fully established. Moreover, no foreign airlines have confirmed plans to operate flights to and from Cox's Bazar yet.

Biman officials earlier said they were planning to operate flights to the Kolkata-Cox's Bazar route via Dhaka later this month on a limited scale.

Launched in 2021, the upgradation project aims to transform Cox's Bazar into a full-fledged international gateway.

A separate runway expansion project – extending the existing 6,775 ft runway to 10,700 ft to accommodate wide-body aircraft – is progressing steadily and is scheduled for completion by December 2026.

Two groups

FROM PAGE 12

member secretary (media cell), told The Daily Star that the altercation was “purely personal” and unrelated to party activities.

“Even if they identify themselves as NCP members, they are not registered under our Mohammadpur or Bangshal units,” he said. “They only show up at our events. We've decided that such individuals will no longer be allowed to participate in party activities.”

Riyan and Imtiaz could not be reached for comments.



This photo, taken Thursday and released yesterday by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency via KNS, shows leader Kim Jong Un encouraging soldiers of the Overseas Military Operations Forces during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Memorial Museum of Combat Feats in Pyongyang.

PHOTO: AFP

India trials Delhi cloud seeding to combat smog

AFP, New Delhi

India trialled cloud seeding over its smog-filled capital for the first time, spraying a chemical from an aeroplane to encourage rain and wash deadly particles out of the air.

Cloud seeding is the practice of using aeroplanes to fire salt or other chemicals into clouds to induce rain.

New Delhi city authorities, working with the government's Indian Institute of Technology

Kanpur, launched a test run on Thursday afternoon using a Cessna light aeroplane over the city's northern Burari area.

“A trial seeding flight was done... in which cloud seeding flares were fired”, Delhi Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said in a statement late Thursday.

“This flight was the proving flight for checking the capabilities for cloud seeding, the readiness and endurance of the aircraft,

the capability assessment of the cloud seeding fittings and flares, and coordination among all involved agencies.”

It comes ahead of a planned rollout of the scheme. Delhi's Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said that “if conditions remain favourable, Delhi will experience its first artificial rain on October 29.”

It was not immediately clear what chemical was used in the test to encourage the rain.

ASIA TRIP

Trump aims to clinch deal with China's Xi

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump will test his deal-making prowess in a region battered by his hardball trade policies on a trip to Asia next week, as doubts hang over his highly anticipated meeting with China's Xi Jinping.

Trump, who left Washington last night, is set for a five-day trip spanning Malaysia, Japan and South Korea, his first to the region and his longest journey abroad since taking office in January.

The Republican leader hopes to pile up trade, business and ceasefire deals before turning to the toughest challenge, a face-to-face with Xi on Thursday in South Korea.

The trip comes as Trump works to maintain the signature foreign policy achievement of his second term, a fragile ceasefire he helped strike in the Israel-Gaza conflict, while the Russian war in Ukraine rages and a trade war with China shows little sign of abating.

DIGITAL CONTENT

EU accuses Meta, TikTok of breaking rules

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday accused Meta and TikTok of breaking the bloc's digital content rules, putting the companies at risk of hefty fines.

The European Union has a bolstered legal armoury that demands Big Tech prevent the spread of illegal content and ensure digital markets are open to competition.

Yesterday, the European Commission said Meta's Facebook and Instagram platforms and TikTok breached the Digital Services Act (DSA), the EU's content moderation law attacked by US President Donald Trump's administration.

It is the first time the commission has accused Meta of breaching the DSA, which the US giant rejected. Although the announcement includes TikTok, owned by China's ByteDance, it risks angering Trump, who has threatened to impose fresh tariffs on countries with regulations that seek to “harm” American technology.

Despite his threats, the EU has said it will enforce its rules.

BEATING OUR OWN SCORES

During July to Sept '25
WE HAVE HANDED OVER 15 PROJECTS

AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Splendor Mansion | Mirpur | 11 months ahead
Meadow View | Bashundhara R/A | 8 months ahead
City Life | Chattogram | 6 months ahead
The Santorini | Bashundhara R/A | 5 months ahead
Mulberry | Bashundhara R/A | 5 months ahead
Sandringham | Bashundhara R/A | 3 months ahead
Zenith | Aftabnagar | 3 months ahead
Wood Green | Uttara | 2 months ahead
Prime View | Uttara | 1 month ahead

ON TIME

New Horizon | Purana Paltan
Montage | Bashundhara R/A
The Retreat | Bashundhara R/A
The Boulevard | Bashundhara R/A
Dreamsville | Bashundhara R/A
Gold Star | Bashundhara R/A



A landmark ordinance, but execution is key

Govt approves revised labour law with sweeping changes

The biggest problem with Bangladesh's reform drive isn't a crisis of laws but rather the opposite of it. We have perhaps more laws than could be expected—and certainly more than some other countries do—but where they often come undone is in their inadequate and uneven implementation. Add to that the questionable provisions and omissions in some of the more critical pieces of legislation dealing with crimes, rights, and other aspects of governance. Enactment alone, therefore, cannot guarantee desired outcomes. It must be done right and followed through on properly.

The approval of the Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, has once again brought these issues to the forefront. On paper, the revised law represents a sweeping reform measure, incorporating a total of 184 changes to its previous iteration. For instance, for the first time, it recognises domestic workers, seafarers, and employees of non-profit organisations, granting legal protections previously denied to these groups. Equally important is the criminalisation of blacklisting, a practice that long allowed employers to punish workers for raising grievances. Moreover, stricter measures against sexual harassment have been introduced, maternity benefits expanded, and gender-based wage discrimination prohibited. A dedicated fund for accident compensation and rehabilitation has also been created, while mandating private-sector employers to establish provident funds or enrol workers in a universal pension scheme.

The simplification of trade union formation is another significant development. By allowing unions to be formed with as few as 20 workers in smaller factories, the law strengthens the ability of workers to collectively bargain and assert their rights. Prior to its approval on Thursday, the interim government also ratified three key ILO conventions on occupational safety, health, and freedom from workplace violence and harassment, making Bangladesh the only South Asian country to ratify all ten fundamental ILO conventions. Together, these measures demonstrate a policy commitment to align national standards with international labour norms, and have the potential to make our workplaces more equitable, humane, and just.

But after enactment comes implementation, and this is where the main challenge lies. From that perspective, Bangladesh has only done half the work, making any complacency premature. For decades, we have seen how our workers, especially in labour-intensive sectors, were often left unprotected, enduring unsafe working conditions, delayed or withheld wages, and minimal legal recourse to address any grievances. Sadly, this pattern continued even during the tenure of the interim government formed after the July uprising, despite the sacrifices of workers in that revolution. This is why there are reasonable doubts that even this new landmark ordinance may come undone if the authorities, labour institutions, employers, and of course, political parties do not commit to rigorous enforcement going forward.

We must, therefore, view the amended law as but the first step in achieving workers' rights. In the coming days, the nation will be observing carefully to see how faithfully its provisions and commitments are honoured. In the new Bangladesh promised by the uprising, workers must be properly empowered, their voices duly respected, and their safety and welfare genuinely protected.

Why can't we stop illegal sand mining?

Political will and decisive action a must to stop this organised looting

Illegal sand extraction has emerged as one of the gravest forms of environmental plunder in recent years, and recent reports reveal the sheer scale of this destructive trade. Along the Meghna River in Munshiganj Sadar upazila, politically backed groups—allegedly led by local BNP leaders—are operating outside their licensed zones, dredging sand perilously close to fertile farmlands. Despite repeated drives, fines, and arrests by the administration, and protest by farmers, the extraction continues unabated, accelerating erosion and swallowing tracts of the farmlands. According to a *Prothom Alo* report, the sand extractors are often getting tipped off before raids, which allows them time to move their machine from the unauthorised zone. This reflects deep-rooted collusion and a failure of governance.

Similar patterns of environmental degradation, administrative inertia, and political protection have been reported from Narsingdi, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Chandpur, and Rangpur in recent months. In Narsingdi's Raipur upazila, sand traders—who are allegedly part of an organised armed gang linked to politically influential groups—have turned the Meghna into their fiefdom, attacking villagers and even firing upon mobile court teams. In Moulvibazar, despite over 50 raids and Tk 17 crore worth of confiscated sand, the illegal extraction continues to devastate roads and riverbanks. These accounts reveal not isolated lawlessness but an entrenched and lucrative black economy sustained by political muscle and administrative compromise.

Riverbank erosion, habitat destruction, and waterway destabilisation are destroying ecosystems and livelihoods simultaneously. Farmlands once yielding multiple crops are vanishing, as seen in Munshiganj's Charmsura, where farmers have already lost significant portions of their ancestral land. The unregulated dredging also disrupts fish breeding cycles, thus violating ministry bans during the Hilsa spawning season. Such degradation not only undermines local food security but also erodes public trust in state institutions tasked with environmental protection.

The persistence of these practices points to a crisis of enforcement. Local administrations cite budget constraints or lack of manpower, but these excuses have been given for many years. By now authorities should have solved these issues. In fact, accountability must begin with political will: leases should be revoked immediately upon violation, and administrative officers who fail to act decisively should face disciplinary measures. Transparent reporting and coordination among the land, fisheries, and environment ministries are equally essential. The government must dismantle the networks that protect these illegal operations, enforce strict penalties, and ensure that licensed extraction remains within legal and ecological limits.

'Sir, I am a teacher': The paradox in the cry

BLOWN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA



Last week, when police were seen dragging a man with a torn shirt in their effort to clear the road from a blockade imposed by teachers, we heaved a heavy sigh. The man was heard pleading, "Sir, I am a teacher. Don't beat me," while we as a nation took a walk of shame. But the shelf-life of any reaction today is shorter than the whisker of a foxtail. These short reels, which have become de facto news sources, simply scratch the surface and move away to find new baits.

They do not tell us the full story of how these teachers under the "Leaders of the Alliance for Nationalisation of MPO-Listed Educational Institutions" banner protested for a week and a half in the streets, seeking a 20 percent salary housing allowance, along with an increase in medical and festival allowances. After the police attack and public humiliation, the government initially offered five percent and then reluctantly agreed to raise allowances to 15 percent in two phases: 7.5 percent from November 1, 2025, then a further 7.5 percent from July 1, 2026. The partial concessions for teachers under duress are in contrast with the various plans to revise the pay structures for the cadre services by the National Pay Commission 2025. Privileges for recruiting and promotional activities, including holding examinations, interviews, setting questions, are being increased for government officials. Bangladesh Bank, too, has adopted a talent retention programme by increasing increment amounts for candidates with better results and performance in the foundation trainings.

These recommendations have reignited the old contest between administrators and educators. The moment, when a teacher addressed a police constable as "Sir," symbolised not only the pay disparity but also the erosion of teachers' dignity. For the university teachers, the cry is quieter than that of MPO or primary teachers—a muffled whisper in private chat groups. The absence of university teachers' associations after the fall of the previous regime

has forced teachers to speak only in private. The mood in our WhatsApp groups is that of disappointment and resentment. University teachers, a potpourri of mismatched factions, lack the shared voice that school and college teachers or bureaucrats possess. They complain about the way civil servants are swiftly securing their interests. Even the online stakeholders' consultations organised by the pay commission do not interest public university teachers, as they



FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

The moment, when a teacher addressed a police constable as 'Sir,' symbolised not only pay disparity but also the erosion of teachers' dignity.

consider them a chronicle of an outcome foretold. I am not aware of any initiative taken by the university administration to contact the interim pay commission, which has a six-month mandate to draft a new salary structure by December, with rollout likely in early 2026. Some proposed changes include keeping the pay ratio between the highest and lowest grades at 8:1 to 10:1. The commission wants to trim the existing 20 grades and increase medical and education allowances, which is a welcome move. For public university teachers and other members of semi-governmental institutes, there are supposed to be "targeted supplements." Sceptics, however, doubt any drastic change, as the current administration is not

from one of these colleges who has been working for seven months without any pay. No wonder desperate teachers come to Dhaka to stage protests and face daunting water cannons or sound grenades, that too probably for a Tk 2,000-Tk 3,000 raise. Therefore, I have mixed feelings when government officers propose Tk 6,000 for an exam-related role, prompting university teachers to seek the same if not more.

The eighth pay scale (2015) stripped university teachers of increments for results, retirement benefits, timescales, and selection grade promotions and downgraded their equivalence with senior bureaucrats. During the July uprising, teachers were seen demanding not only

better pay but also dignity. Fatigue and fragmentation after the regime change have muted the call for an independent academic pay scale. The same pattern is repeated in semi-government research bodies. A scientific officer at Grade-9 earns between Tk 22,000 and Tk 53,000, often without the allowances enjoyed by their administrative counterparts. These are the top researchers and technicians who study climate resilience, disease prevention, and renewable energy or implement development projects, and yet they earn less than the officer who processes their project file.

Such disparity breeds corruption, as incomes fall below a decent living standard. Inflation and heavy taxation worsen it. Why are we not surprised that many of our technical graduates, such as doctors and engineers, are now vying for administrative, police, or customs jobs in the civil service examinations? Somehow, we have promoted a system that fattens the civil service managers and starves the mentors and scientists at the universities and other research organisations.

This imbalance is slowly eroding our system from within. The search for better homes among our new generations suggests that the country is far from congenial to merit. Education, at the expense of using a cliché, is the backbone of a nation. If you do not pay your educators, and if you create a system that makes educators cut corners and opt for compromises, then they become a poor role model for their students. What's needed now is not another token increment but a structural correction. First, we need to decide what we want from our educators. How much respect are we willing to give them? The pay hierarchy needs to be rational and pragmatic. We must establish an academic and research pay framework that equates senior professors and principal scientists with senior secretaries, both in pay and in prestige. Allowances should reward teaching excellence, publication, mentorship, and innovation, not just attendance. Housing, healthcare, and pension benefits must be equalised across cadres.

Equally vital is the system of listening to the collective grievances. Reviving independent, apolitical professional bodies is essential not just for negotiating pay, but for reclaiming dignity. We do not want our teachers touching the feet of a policeman, saying, "Sir, I am a teacher!"

A one-day holiday won't let millions vote

Parthib Mahmud is business analyst at Ontik Advisory.

PARTHIB MAHMUD



During a national election, the state offers a single public holiday. However, one solitary day is not sufficient for all citizens to wake up, travel hundreds of kilometres, cast their votes, return, and resume work the next morning. In our migration-shaped country, where many travel from rural to urban areas for work, it entrenches disenfranchisement.

After three widely criticised elections that failed to attract voter participation, the upcoming one is being promoted as a turning point—a chance to finally let citizens reclaim their political rights. But legitimacy cannot be restored through empty gestures. When most voters are "absent" from their registered hometowns, a single day off is a symbolic gesture, not genuine access.

Bangladesh's internal migration is massive as thousands of people move to Dhaka, Chattogram, Gazipur, and Narayanganj—the industrial lungs of the economy—while their voter registration remains tied to ancestral addresses. Millions of registered voters live far from where they are originally registered. In the 2014 election, turnout was around 40 percent nationwide and as low as 22 percent in some constituencies of Dhaka. That

low participation was not only due to political boycotts but also due to logistical impossibility. It is unrealistic to travel kilometres after work, vote the next day, and be back at the workplace by morning. Buses are overbooked, transport runs on a skeletal schedule, and workers bound for shifts cannot afford two full days off. As a result, millions of urban workers are quietly excluded from democracy.

For the upcoming election, the Election Commission (EC) is reportedly considering a postal voting system for Bangladeshi expatriates. However, the far larger and politically disenfranchised population of internal migrants is missing from this consideration. They build the highways, run the factories, and perform various blue and white-collar jobs that sustain the GDP trend. Yet their votes, unlike those of expatriates, are not being considered.

One might think a public holiday ensures everyone's access. Factories and offices often do not let staff leave early; an extra day off can cost wages or even jobs. Return bus and train tickets can double or triple in price. For low-income urban migrants, that alone is enough to make them surrender their franchise altogether. A "national day

off" is a gesture—gestures do not put ballots into voters' hands.

Instead of pretending that one day solves everything, we must reimagine the mechanics of access. For this election, a practical step would be to extend the voting holiday to include the day before or after polling, staggered by division, to reduce economic disruption while giving voters a travel

One might think a public holiday ensures everyone's access. Factories and offices often do not let staff leave early; an extra day off can cost wages or even jobs. Return bus and train tickets can double or triple in price. For low-income urban migrants, that alone is enough to make them surrender their franchise altogether. A 'national day off' is a gesture—gestures do not put ballots into voters' hands.

buffer. Bangladesh Railway and BRTC could run reserved services on key routes—such as from Dhaka to the north and south and from port cities to the interiors—ensuring schedules are announced early and tickets remain affordable. Satellite booths could be set up in dense worker zones such as industrial estates, export-processing

zones, economic zones, and portside neighbourhoods, with limited booths tied to voters' home constituencies. Employers, too, should be required to grant paid or unpaid leave for travel to vote, beginning with large export industries and urban service sectors.

In the medium term, reforms could include enabling internal migrants to request ballots by post or via secure drop boxes in their city of residence, with biometric verification and a transparent chain of custody to ensure security. Voters should also be allowed to temporarily shift polling stations within their constituency or current city without permanently changing registration. Countries with high internal mobility—India, Indonesia, the Philippines—have already experimented with advance polling, multi-day voting, or absentee ballots to reach internal migrants. Bangladesh can similarly shift from ritual holidays to practical enfranchisement.

Democracy is not about a ceremonial day off; it is about practical access. For a nation that prides itself on development metrics, our electoral logistics remain stubbornly primitive. We can send satellites into orbit and export billions in garments, yet somehow we cannot guarantee a worker two extra days or a bus seat to exercise a constitutional right.

The upcoming election is expected to restore public faith in institutions. But a credible poll needs more than open competition—it needs inclusivity. Nothing says "this election belongs to the people" if millions are left stranded between work and home, between eligibility and access. We must make time, transport, and logistics part of the rights we promise.

Japan has opened up opportunities, let's not ruin it

AN OPEN DIALOGUE



Dr. Abdullah Shibli is an economist, working with a non-profit fiscal intermediary. He previously worked for the World Bank and Harvard University.

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Bangladesh is hoping to send at least one lakh people to Japan over the next five years to work in various skilled and semi-skilled jobs. During a meeting with a Japanese parliamentary delegation at the Jamuna last month, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus announced, "We plan to send 100,000 young people to Japan. They will receive language training, skill development, etiquette lessons, and even some history education." One can hope that this training will be offered and the certification completed before the aspiring migrants head for the airport in Dhaka.

Let us now examine the challenges the trainees will face once they are in Japan and how best to prepare them quickly in an intensive immersion curriculum, that is in the works.

A little background for this labour migration project to Japan is in order. Japanese companies are experiencing severe labour shortages, and in the face of a looming crisis, various government and non-governmental agencies in Japan have reached out to Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia in the past, to teach and train young people to motivate them to migrate to Japan on short-term work visas. Bangladesh is now joining this initiative to ease its domestic jobs crisis.

Fortunately, our Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), entrusted with the Japan labour migration initiative, can learn from research studies and reports that show what worked and what failed in the past for job-seekers from various Southeast

Asian countries to Japan.

There is no denying that the chance to work in Japan, a developed country, will be a life-changing experience for a Bangladeshi citizen, and prospective migrants are very likely to prefer this destination over Malaysia or the Middle East.

In the past, Bangladesh has sent workers and students to Japan, but life is tough for new settlers who do not speak Japanese. Studies show that basic proficiency in Japanese is crucial to new immigrants' successful integration, as it affects their access to healthcare, mental wellbeing, and employment opportunities.

I have come across many workers who went to Japan but left during its recession, which followed the global economic crisis a decade ago. Some of them are now living in Boston in the US. The experience of these Bangladeshis is varied. Most of them had to overcome many hardships without the support of their community. On the other hand, a Filipino migrant who is now settled in the US had a more pleasant experience. One common issue they all mentioned is the language barrier. They all testified that insufficient fluency can lead to social and psychological stress and create barriers in daily life, such as navigating medical systems and workplace administration.

The government of Japan is aware of the considerable hurdles it has faced since the initiation of the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) in 1993 to train and recruit foreign workers in skilled and semi-skilled jobs. TITP had been the primary pathway for more than three

decades to recruit foreign labour despite widespread allegations of exploitation, poor working conditions, and other harms. In April 2019, Japan established a new status of residence, Specified Skilled Worker (SSW), to welcome capable specialists from overseas to work in certain Japanese industrial fields, as workers ready to take on jobs without

new programme.

Unfortunately, migrants as well as recruiting agencies often are reluctant to spend money on human resources development because of "market failure." In other words, the worker may not get a job or good salary after training in a certain field or may leave the job for another industry. Learning another language,

in language, skills development, etiquette, and Japanese history—not only helps the current cohort of job-seekers but also creates a "network good." As more trained workers establish themselves in Japan, they share knowledge, build reputations, and open pathways that make it easier for future generations of Bangladeshi workers to find opportunities

certification centres.

It is not clear if the trainees will receive any allowances during the training period. The news reports indicate that the Japanese government and non-governmental agencies will provide funding for the multi-year initiative. With legislation in Japan opening the door to lower-skilled foreign labour, their government has also awakened to its responsibility to support the social integration of immigrants through language instruction and other educational supports.

Our prospective migrants have to be cautioned about the hidden enrolment fees often charged by recruiting agencies. Some employers also may withhold a significant portion of trainees' wages for "compulsory savings" that are forfeited if the worker quits. Other issues that migrants in Japan have reported include restricted job mobility, sub-minimum wages, and excessive hours of work. A 2023 investigation found that roughly 70 percent of companies hiring technical trainees in Japan had violated labour regulations.

Our government should take these issues into cognisance, while preparing workers for the Japan migration programme. To increase accessibility, our Japan Desk can expedite the development of Japanese language apps and a Learning Management System (LMS) for online training. The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training need to gear up for the necessary tasks, including job-matching (aligning candidates' skills with in-demand roles), pre-deployment training (in job-specific skills, workplace etiquette, cultural adaptation, and language proficiency), and post-employment support with career counselling and upskilling programmes to help workers stay competitive in global markets.

We must seize this opportunity and not let red tape or inefficiency ruin it.



If the government of Bangladesh invests in training our young people to work overseas, it becomes a win-win venture for both Bangladesh and Japan.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

prior training. The sectors where most foreigners are employed today include manufacturing, services, and wholesale/retail.

For young, college-educated Bangladeshi graduates, another door will open in April 2027, when Japan replaces TITP with Employment for Skill Development, a new system that offers more flexibility for foreign workers. It is expected that both governments will tailor their training and recruitment activities to facilitate a smooth transition to the

particularly Japanese, is risky since the workers are not guaranteed a job. While basic conversational skills can be acquired in 1-2 years, academic language proficiency takes 5-7 years or longer, highlighting the challenges for migrants' children in school.

If the government of Bangladesh invests in training our young people to work overseas, it becomes a win-win venture. Japan benefits from the human capital, and Bangladesh gains valuable "externalities." These benefits arise because the training—

there—an externality for Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh government has set up a Japan Desk at the MEWOE to facilitate recruitment and migration. The Japan Desk has been tasked with several responsibilities, including surveying demand in the Japanese labour market; identifying employment opportunities; arranging Japanese language training and digital testing; strengthening coordination with Japanese and Bangladeshi institutions; and supporting quality

Power subsidies aren't a fix for global shocks

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MD RAZIB and MD TUHIN AHMED

Bangladesh's heavy reliance on fossil fuel imports has emerged as a major threat to its fiscal health and overall macroeconomic stability. Despite mounting fiscal pressures and increasing volatility in international energy markets, the country continues to raise its subsidy allocations for the power and energy sector. In the national budget for FY25-26, the government allocated Tk 37,000 crore in subsidies for this sector—slightly lower than the originally proposed Tk 40,000 crore for FY24-25. However, the revised power subsidy for FY24-25 was later increased to Tk 62,000 crore. Although the proposed subsidy of Tk 37,000 crore for FY25-26 marks a substantial reduction from the revised figure, it remains uncertain whether this cut will hold, given the government's previous tendency to revise allocations upward during the fiscal year.

The government had initially proposed an overall subsidy allocation of Tk 1,15,000 crore for FY24-25, which later rose to Tk 1,33,000 crore after overdue payments were cleared across several sectors. For FY25-

26, the proposed allocation stands at Tk 1,15,741 crore—nearly unchanged from the earlier year's proposal. The lion's share of these subsidies continues to go to the power and energy sector, driven by the country's growing dependence on imported fossil fuels such as crude oil, diesel, furnace oil, coal, and LNG. The global rise in fuel prices—exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war—has significantly increased the cost of power generation. Additionally, the depreciation of the Bangladeshi taka has made imports even more expensive, intensifying the government's subsidy burden. This vulnerability was reflected in FY24-25, when the originally allocated Tk 40,000 crore for energy subsidies had to be increased to Tk 62,000 crore to cover mounting arrears and higher import costs. The trend highlights a structural issue: Bangladesh's energy sector remains highly exposed to external market fluctuations, making it susceptible to price shocks that threaten macroeconomic stability.

The risks are further amplified by ongoing geopolitical tensions. The current conflict in the Middle East has introduced new uncertainty into global energy markets due to potential supply disruptions. The Iran-Israel conflict, in particular, posed a major threat to the global energy market in June 2025, as it risked disrupting the Strait of Hormuz—a vital chokepoint that facilitates the daily movement of over 20 million barrels of oil and substantial volumes of LNG, accounting for nearly one-fifth of the world's total supply. A temporary blockade could push oil

prices above \$100 per barrel, as projected by Goldman Sachs analysts—sharply increasing Bangladesh's import costs. Such a surge would raise electricity generation expenses, disrupt industrial activity, and drive up costs in the transport and agriculture sectors. These effects would, in turn, fuel inflation, elevate living costs, and constrain both public and private investment.

A rising import bill would also place immense pressure on Bangladesh's already strained foreign exchange reserves, potentially triggering further depreciation of the taka. A weakened currency would increase the cost of all imports, risking an inflationary spiral that may prove difficult to control. Although the government has tried to cushion the impact through subsidies, this approach is neither fiscally sustainable nor economically efficient. Blanket subsidies, particularly in the power sector, protect inefficient production systems and delay essential reforms. Underutilised power plants continue to receive high capacity payments from the government, resulting in wasted public resources—funds that could be channelled into more productive areas.

The current subsidy framework also suffers from distributional inefficiencies. A significant portion of energy subsidies benefits wealthier households and industries rather than the low-income groups they are meant to support. This regressive outcome stems from poor targeting mechanisms and weak institutional coordination. The continuation of such subsidies imposes a heavy fiscal burden and limits the

government's capacity to invest in modern energy infrastructure, renewable energy, and crucial social development programmes. Despite these concerns, the FY25-26 budget reflects only marginal reforms. While energy subsidies have been slightly reduced to Tk 37,000 crore, the allocation for LNG subsidies has increased from Tk 6,000 crore to Tk 9,000 crore—signalling a continued reliance on the volatile international energy market.

Bangladesh must therefore embark on rationalising its energy subsidies through a medium-term reform roadmap that balances fiscal prudence with energy security and equity. This requires improving energy efficiency by upgrading transmission infrastructure, conducting regular energy audits, phasing out outdated and underperforming power plants, and renegotiating costly power purchase agreements with independent producers. Diversification of the energy mix is equally vital. The government should invest in local gas exploration and accelerate the transition to renewable energy sources. Aggressively pursuing solar and wind projects could significantly reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. While the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant and the Matarbari coal-fired plant may ease some pressure on energy imports, a comprehensive strategy centred on cost-effective, affordable, and sustainable solutions remains essential. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be utilised to fund gas exploration activities, offering attractive yet fair conditions to international oil companies (IOCs). Properly managed PPPs

and international collaborations can enhance domestic gas production and lower import dependency. Meanwhile, the government should introduce a transparent fuel pricing mechanism that reflects global prices while maintaining a buffer to absorb shocks. High taxes on solar equipment should also be revised to promote cleaner, domestically sourced energy.

Institutional reforms are equally crucial. Strengthening energy governance by reducing corruption, enhancing transparency, and developing competitive energy markets is vital. State-owned enterprises have long suffered from inefficiencies and corruption, leading to inflated costs and declining performance. Effective coordination among the Ministry of Finance, Energy Division, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), and Petrobangla is essential to streamline budgeting, minimise system losses, and ensure reform implementation. Without a credible and coherent policy approach, Bangladesh risks remaining trapped in a cycle of fiscal deficits, currency instability, and energy insecurity. The country can no longer afford a reactive stance in energy policy, especially in a global context shaped by geopolitical uncertainty and climate transition challenges. A well-targeted, proactive, and fiscally responsible subsidy reform strategy is imperative to safeguard Bangladesh's economic future. Rationalising energy subsidies is not only crucial for fiscal relief but also essential for building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable energy system.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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OPINION PIECES TO
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Woman, child killed in Sunamganj bus plunge

STAR REPORT

A woman and her daughter were killed after a tourist bus, bound for Tanguar Haor, plunged into a roadside ditch near Inatnagar village, close to Pagla Bazar in Shantiganj upazila, Sunamganj, early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Monjura Akter, 37, wife of Abdullah Al Mamun, and their 10-year-old daughter Ayesha Siddika. At least ten others were also injured in the incident.

Suman Kumar Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Joykolas Highway Police, said, "We found the bus overturned in a roadside ditch. Firefighters recovered the bodies of the mother and daughter trapped underneath and sent them to Sunamganj District Hospital for autopsy."

Quoting witnesses, the police official informed that the bus of Sejuti Travels carrying 11 senior officials of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and their families left Dhaka for Tanguar Haor.

As the bus reached Inatnagar, it veered off the road and fell into a



ditch. Monjura and her daughter, who were seated in the front portion, were crushed under the overturned vehicle and died on the spot, he added.

In Jashore, two teenagers died after their motorcycle collided head-on with a vehicle at Jahangirpur in Chowgacha, Jashore, yesterday.

The deceased, Imon Hossain, 15, and Ashraful Islam, 16, from Bashapol Kaliaikundu in the upazila, were going to the upazila market, police said.

OC Anwar Hossain of Chowgacha Police Station said the accident left the two dead on the spot.

Police sent the bodies to the Jashore General Hospital for autopsy, he said.

Three children drown in Rangunia pond

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three children drowned in a pond in Rangunia of Chattogram yesterday evening.

The victims are Sumaiya Akter, 5, daughter of Md Raju; Habiba Akter, 6, daughter of Md Kalu — both from Parua union; and Jannat Akter, 5, daughter of Md Naser, who had come to visit a relative's house in the area.

Rangunia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sifatul Majdar said the girls had gone to the pond while playing near their homes. When they did not return, their families began searching for them frantically and later found their bodies floating in the water.

The bodies were taken to a local doctor, who confirmed their deaths.

The bodies will be handed over to their families without an autopsy.

Phulpur road in M'singh unrepaired for 50 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The two-kilometre road stretching from Kulirkanda to Ushumpur in Mymensingh's Phulpur upazila has remained earthen for around 50 years, causing immense suffering to hundreds of people.

On several occasions, the authorities were notified about the situation, but to no avail, said locals.

Khaleda Khatun, headteacher of Kulirkanda Government Primary School in Singheshwar union, said she has been travelling through the muddy road since she joined the institution six years ago. "The road becomes unusable even after a moderate rain," she said.

"Around four years ago, I wrote to the authorities concerned twice, seeking a solution, but no action has been taken yet," Khaleda added.

Swarna Akhter, a second grader, said many students find it difficult to get to school after rain.

Locals said hundreds of students from various educational institutions, including Merigai High School, Horinadi Dakhil Madrasa, and Hosenpur Safia Mohila Dakhil Madrasa, use the road to reach their institutions.

Md Ayub Ali, a 60-year-old farmer from Dhanarbitha village, said, "We are unable to transport our produce through this road smoothly. Very often, we have to



PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

As dusk descends, the riverside at Koilag in Bajitpur of Kishoreganj glows in shades of orange and red. While most people head home, a few fishers remain on the water, casting their nets in the calm of the setting sun. The photo was taken recently.

CHUNARUGHAT IN HABIGANJ

Sand lifting rampant despite crackdown

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Under the cover of darkness every night, valuable silica sand is being illegally extracted by a syndicate from streams within tea gardens in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj.

Locals allege that politically influential groups have long been exploiting the natural resource, disrupting water flow, deepening stream beds, and causing erosion along the banks, putting nearby trees, homes, and settlements at risk.

During a recent visit to the Gilanichhara stream beside Deundi Tea Garden, this correspondent observed a group of workers loading sand onto a tractor with shovels. Upon noticing this correspondent's presence, the workers fled hastily, leaving the tractor behind.

What was once a narrow stream has now turned into a deep trench. The unchecked sand extraction has also caused hill slopes to crumble into the water, widening and disfiguring the natural terrain.

Balaram Ghatual, a local resident, said sand-laden trucks operate at night and that people are too afraid to speak up against the sand looters.

Similar illegal extraction is ongoing at 15-20 other sites across the upazila, including Badargazi and Amparachhara in Paikpara

union; Sutangchhara (Kalishiri and Ghanshyampur segments) in Ahmedabad union; Ichalia area in Gazipur union; Karangi river in Jankura, Mirashi union; and Jibdharchhara in Parkul Tea Garden, Ranigaon union.

"These streams once provided clean water for daily use. Now the water is either dried up or murky and unusable, forcing us to fetch



water from distant sources. The collapse of adjacent hill slopes has left many homes vulnerable," said Sunil Baraik, a worker at Deundi Tea Garden.

Recently, a mobile court drive in Badargazi area led to the arrest of 14 individuals who were caught red-handed while illegally extracting silica sand. They were later sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

On October 15, the

Chunarughat upazila administration sued 19 people for long-term illegal silica sand extraction from Gilanichhara.

The complaint was lodged by Tahsildar Abdullah Al Mamun with Chunarughat Police Station.

The accused are Jasim Uddin, Arab Ali, Mintu Mia, Mozammel Mia, Mizan Mia, Mishuk Mia, Khoyer Mia, Saheb Ali, Rubel Mia, Farhad

leader and incumbent UP member," Abdullah Al Mamun said.

Contacted, most of the accused refuted the allegations.

Mohammad Jahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Chunarughat Police Station, confirmed filing of the case and said efforts are on to arrest the accused.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit, said indiscriminate extraction of silica sand poses a grave threat to the local environment.

"Pried for its physical and chemical properties, silica sand is widely used in industries ranging from glass manufacturing to construction and artificial turf. Extracting silica sand without clearance from the Bangladesh Mineral Resources Development Bureau is illegal. If this continues, we'll be forced to pay a heavy price," he added.

Mohammad Shafiqul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer of Chunarughat, said no leases have been issued for any of these streams for sand extraction. "We regularly conduct mobile court operations, seize sand and vehicles, and fine or jail those involved. However, due to the remoteness of these areas, stringent vigilance remains a challenge," he added.

Honouring two stellar women

bti, Star award 2 individuals in agriculture, environmental awareness categories



STAR REPORT

The 6th winner announcement ceremony of bti-The Daily Star Stellar Women 2025 took place on October 16 at bti Celebration Point, honouring two extraordinary changemakers who have made remarkable contributions to society through their dedication and impact.

This edition of Stellar Women recognised Dr Nasrin Akter Ivy for her outstanding work in agriculture and Shah Israt Ajmery for her inspiring initiatives in environmental sustainability and awareness.

The event was attended by FR Khan, managing director of bti (Building Technology & Ideas Ltd); Aysa Siddiqua, executive director, communication and brand management, bti; and Abul Kalam Azad, digital growth editor at The Daily Star.

Ivy has been instrumental in transforming agricultural practices through sustainable methods that empower rural farmers and promote food security. Her work highlights how science and empathy can go hand in hand to strengthen Bangladesh's agrarian backbone.

Meanwhile, environmentalist Ajmery, chairman of Children Watch Foundation, has dedicated her career to addressing climate challenges through awareness, education, and grassroots action. Her initiatives have not only promoted environmental resilience but also encouraged youth and communities to take active roles in conservation.

Launched as a joint initiative by bti and The Daily Star, the Stellar Women platform shines a spotlight on rising Bangladeshi female professionals whose extraordinary work creates ripples of change across diverse sectors — from healthcare and technology to social development, arts, and entrepreneurship.

Since its inception, the platform has highlighted stories of perseverance, leadership, and innovation, serving as an inspiration for generations to come.

Youth held for raping schoolteacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Police detained a youth on the charge of raping a schoolteacher at gunpoint in the Tarang area of Matiranga upazila in Khagrachhari on Thursday night.

The accused was identified as Liton Tripura, 24. Officer-in-Charge Tawfiqul Islam of Matiranga Police Station confirmed Liton's arrest and said a case has been filed under the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act.

According to the case statement, the victim had gone to Khagrachhari Sadar earlier in the evening and later visited Alutilla with a friend on a motorbike. When they reached Tarang, a man followed them, intercepted them, threatened her with a firearm, and forcibly took her to a nearby forest where he raped her.

Afterwards, he demanded Tk 10,000 from her. The victim's friend managed to inform locals and the army, who conducted a raid and detained the accused.

Liton was later handed over to Matiranga police.



Farmers in Rajshahi take care of their hybrid tomato plants as the flowers begin to bloom. While most winter vegetables are already available in markets, fresh tomatoes are yet to arrive. Growers say it will take over a month for the new crop to be ready. The photo was taken in Debipur village of Mohanpur upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট
ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ), ঢাকা
আইডিইবি ভবন (৪র্থ ও ৫ম তলা) ১৬০/এ
কাকরাইল, ঢাকা-১০০০
[Web: www.cevdsc.gov.bd]
[E-mail: cevdhksouth@yahoo.com]

স্মারক নং- ২(২৩)-জনপ্রশাঃ/সদর/০৪/২০২৩/১০৪৭

তারিখঃ ০৫ কার্তিক ১৪৩২ বঙ্গাব্দ
২১ অক্টোবর ২০২৫ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়, অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ বিভাগ, শুল্ক-১ শাখার স্মারক নম্বর: ০৮.০০.০০০০.০০০.০৩৮.১১.০০২১.২২.২৬৫, তারিখঃ ২৪/০৮/২০২৫খ্রিঃ অনুযায়ী কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ), ঢাকা এর ১৩-২০তম গ্রেডের শূন্য পদে স্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে সরাসরি জনবল নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে পদের পার্শ্বে বর্ণিত শর্তে উল্লিখিত জেলাসমূহের প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশি নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে অনলাইনে (<https://cevdsc.teletalk.com.bd> ওয়েবসাইটে) আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রম.	পদের নাম, বেতনস্কেল ও গ্রেড (জাতীয় বেতনস্কেল, ২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	পদের সংখ্যা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা	যে সকল জেলার স্থায়ী বাসিন্দাগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন
(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)	(৫)
১.	সিনিয়র ডাটা এন্ট্রি/কন্ট্রোল অপারেটর ১২,৫০০-১৪,৩০০/- (গ্রেড-১৩)	০১টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক (সম্মান) বা সমমানের ডিগ্রিসহ ডাটা এন্ট্রি/কন্ট্রোল অপারেটর পদে অনূন ০২(দুই) বৎসরের চাকুরী; এবং (খ) কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরে প্রতি মিনিটে বাংলায় ২৫ শব্দ এবং ইংরেজিতে ৩০ শব্দের গতিসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে Standard Aptitude Test-এ উত্তীর্ণ হতে হবে।	
২.	কম্পিউটার অপারেটর ১২,৫০০-১৪,৩০০/- (গ্রেড-১৩)	০২টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে স্নাতক (সম্মান) বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি; এবং (খ) কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরে প্রতি মিনিটে বাংলায় ২৫ শব্দ এবং ইংরেজিতে ৩০ শব্দের গতিসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে Standard Aptitude Test-এ উত্তীর্ণ হতে হবে।	
৩.	উচ্চমান সহকারী ১০,২০০-১৪,৬৮০/- (গ্রেড-১৪)	১৩টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে অনূন দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের সিজিপিএতে স্নাতক বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি; (খ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা; এবং (গ) কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরে সর্বনিম্ন গতি প্রতি মিনিটে ইংরেজিতে ৩০ শব্দ ও বাংলায় ২৫ শব্দ; এবং (ঘ) কম্পিউটারে Word Processing সহ ই-মেইল, ফ্যাক্স মেশিন ইত্যাদি চালনার দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	
৪.	সীট মুদ্রাক্ষরিক-কাম-কম্পিউটার অপারেটর ১০,২০০-১৪,৬৮০/- (গ্রেড-১৪)	০২টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে অনূন দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের সিজিপিএতে স্নাতক বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি; (খ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা থাকতে হবে; (গ) সীটলিপি এর সর্বনিম্ন গতি প্রতি মিনিটে ইংরেজিতে ৭০ শব্দ বাংলায় ৪৫ শব্দ; (ঘ) কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরে সর্বনিম্ন গতি প্রতি মিনিটে ইংরেজিতে ৩০ শব্দ ও বাংলায় ২৫ শব্দ; এবং (ঙ) কম্পিউটারে Word Processing সহ ই-মেইল, ফ্যাক্স মেশিন ইত্যাদি চালনার দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	
৫.	ক্যাশিয়ার ১০,২০০-১৪,৬৮০/- (গ্রেড-১৪)	০৪টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে বাণিজ্য বিভাগে স্নাতক ডিগ্রি; এবং (খ) কম্পিউটারে Word Processing সহ কম্পিউটার চালনায় দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	
৬.	অফিস সহকারী-কাম-কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরিক ৯,৩০০-১২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০৪টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ বা সমমানের জিপিএতে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা; এবং (গ) গতি প্রতি মিনিটে বাংলায় ২০ শব্দ ও ইংরেজিতে ২০ শব্দ থাকতে হবে। (ঘ) কম্পিউটারে Word Processing সহ ই-মেইল, ফ্যাক্স মেশিন ইত্যাদি চালনার দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	ঢাকা, নারায়ণগঞ্জ ও মুন্সিগঞ্জ জেলার স্থায়ী বাসিন্দা।
৭.	ডাটা এন্ট্রি/কন্ট্রোল অপারেটর ৯,৩০০-১২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০১টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; এবং (খ) কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরে প্রতি মিনিটে বাংলায় ২০ শব্দ; এবং ইংরেজিতে ২০ শব্দের গতিসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে Standard Aptitude Test-এ উত্তীর্ণ হতে হবে।	
৮.	টেলিফোন অপারেটর ৯,৩০০-১২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০১টি	কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজে ০৩ (তিন) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	
৯.	গাড়িচালক (ড্রাইভার) ৯,৩০০-১২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০৭টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে জুনিয়র স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) বৈধ হালকা গাড়ি চালনার ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স; এবং (গ) ন্যূনতম ০৩ (তিন) বছরের গাড়ি চালানোর বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা।	
১০.	সিপাই ৯,০০০-১১,৮০০/- (গ্রেড-১৭)	৫২টি	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত শিক্ষা বোর্ড হতে মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট/সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) উচ্চতা: ৫ ফুট ৪ ইঞ্চি (পুরুষ), ৫ ফুট ২ ইঞ্চি (মহিলা); এবং (গ) বুকের মাপ: ৩০-৩২ ইঞ্চি (উভয় ক্ষেত্রে)।	
১১.	ডেসপাচ রাইডার ৮,৮০০-১১,৩১০/- (গ্রেড-১৮)	০১টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ বা সমমানের জিপিএতে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) মোটর সাইকেল চালনায় বাংলাদেশ সড়ক পরিবহন কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত বৈধ লাইসেন্সধারী; এবং (গ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা।	
১২.	ফটোকপি অপারেটর ৮,৮০০-১১,৩১০/- (গ্রেড-১৮)	০২টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ বা সমমানের জিপিএতে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) ফটোকপি মেশিন চালনায় বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা; এবং (গ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা।	
১৩.	অফিস সহায়ক ৮,২৫০-১০,০১০/- (গ্রেড-২০)	০৯টি	কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ।	

২। আবেদন করার নিয়মাবলী: আবেদন ফরম পূরণ এবং পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাবলি অবশ্যই অনুসরণ করতে হবে:

- (ক) ০১/১০/২০২৫খ্রিঃ তারিখে প্রার্থীর বয়স ১৮-৩২ বছরের মধ্যে হতে হবে। বর্ণিত ছকের ০৩, ০৪, ও ০৬ নম্বর ক্রমিক উল্লিখিত পদের বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়সসীমা সর্বোচ্চ ৪০ বছর পর্যন্ত শিথিলযোগ্য। বয়স প্রমাণের ক্ষেত্রে এফিডেভিট গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়।
(খ) এই নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে বর্ণিত ছকের ০১, ০২ ও ০৭ নম্বর ক্রমিকের শূন্য পদ পূরণে "সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের কম্পিউটার পার্সোনেল নিয়োগ বিধিমালা, ২০১৯" ও ০৩, ০৪, ০৬, ১১, ১২ ও ১৩ নম্বর ক্রমিকের শূন্য পদ পূরণে "মন্ত্রণালয় বা বিভাগের সংযুক্ত অধিদপ্তর, পরিদপ্তর এবং দপ্তরের কমন পদ নিয়োগ বিধিমালা, ২০১৯" এবং ০৫ নম্বর ক্রমিকের শূন্য পদ পূরণে "মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগসমূহের হিসাব কোষের কর্মচারী নিয়োগ বিধিমালা, ২০১৮" এবং ০৮ ও ০৯ নম্বর ক্রমিকের শূন্য পদসমূহ পূরণে "THE MINISTERIAL AND SUBORDINATE EMPLOYEES (CUSTOMS AND EXCISE COLLECTORATES) RECRUITMENT RULES, 1984" এবং ১০ নম্বর ক্রমিকের শূন্য পদ "অধস্তন নির্বাহী গেজেটেড ও নন-গেজেটেড পদ (কালেক্টরেট অব কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ এন্ড ভ্যাট) নিয়োগ বিধিমালা, ১৯৯৬" অনুযায়ী অনুসরণ করা হবে। এছাড়াও নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত বিদ্যমান সরকারি যাবতীয় বিধি বিধান/আদেশ/নিয়মাবলি এবং কোটার ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের সর্বশেষ সিদ্ধান্ত অনুসৃত হবে।

(গ) সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি ও স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকরিরত প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতিক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে। চাকরিরত প্রার্থীদের সকল শর্ত পূরণ সাপেক্ষে আবেদন ফরম পূরণের সময় Departmental Candidate এর ঘর টিক চিহ্ন দিতে হবে। অন্যদের ক্ষেত্রে এই শর্ত প্রযোজ্য নয়। তবে সকল চাকরিরত প্রার্থীকে মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত অনাপত্তি/ছাড়পত্রের মূলকপি জমা দিতে হবে।

(ঘ) চাকুরির আবেদন ফরমে (Applicant's Copy) সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা উল্লেখ করতে হবে। অনাথায় চাকুরির জন্য নির্বাচিত হলে চাকুরির আবেদনে উল্লিখিত সনদ ব্যতীত চাকুরির আবেদনের পূর্বে অর্জিত অন্যান্য শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সনদপত্র অর্ন্তভুক্ত করার সুযোগ থাকবে না।

(ঙ) মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, অভিজ্ঞতা (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে), জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র/জন্ম নিবন্ধন (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে), নাগরিকত্ব, চারিত্রিক ও প্রশিক্ষণের সনদ (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) প্রদর্শন করতে হবে এবং পূরণকৃত Application Form প্রবেশপত্রসহ সকল সনদের ০১ (এক) সেট সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি এবং সদ্য তোলা ২ (দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের রঙিন ছবিসহ উল্লিখিত সনদসমূহের মূলকপি প্রদর্শন করতে হবে।

(চ) বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/বীরশ্রানার সন্তান হিসেবে প্রমাণক হিসেবে আবেদনকারীকে পিতা/মাতার মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/বীরশ্রানার প্রমাণপত্র (সংশ্লিষ্ট বীরমুক্তিযোদ্ধার গেজেট/ভারতীয় তালিকা/লাল মুক্তিবার্তা নম্বর/সাময়িক সনদের নম্বর ও তারিখ/বামুস সনদের নম্বর ও তারিখ উল্লেখপূর্বক) এবং ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী, শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গের কোটায় আবেদনকারীদের ক্ষেত্রে উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদ প্রদর্শন করতে হবে। সংশ্লিষ্ট ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের চেয়ারম্যান বা প্রশাসক/সিটি কর্পোরেশনের ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর বা প্রশাসক/পৌরসভার মেয়র বা প্রশাসক অথবা ক্যান্টনমেন্ট বোর্ডের প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত প্রমাণপত্র উপস্থাপন করতে হবে।

(ছ) প্রার্থীর যোগ্যতা যাচাই: প্রার্থী কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত কোনো তথ্য বা দাখিলকৃত কাগজপত্র জাল, মিথ্যা বা বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে যাচিত ন্যূনতম শর্তের সাথে গরমিল/অসামঞ্জস্যতা পাওয়া গেলে/ভুল প্রমাণিত হলে কিংবা পরীক্ষায় নকল বা অসদুপায় অবলম্বন করলে সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রার্থীর প্রার্থিতা বাতিল করা হবে এবং তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে যথাযথ আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে। ভুল তথ্য/জাল কাগজপত্র প্রদর্শিত হলে পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ যে কোন প্রার্থীর পরীক্ষা চলাকালীন অথবা পরবর্তীতে যে কোনো সময়ে প্রার্থীতা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।

(জ) যদি কোন প্রার্থী বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক না হন কিংবা বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক নন এমন কোন ব্যক্তিকে বিয়ে করেন বা করার জন্য প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ হন কিংবা কোন ফৌজদারি আদালত কর্তৃক নৈতিক স্ফলনজনিত অভিযোগে দণ্ডিত হন তবে তিনি আবেদন করার জন্য অযোগ্য বিবেচিত হবেন।

(ঝ) লিখিত, মৌখিক ও ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোনো প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ প্রদান করা হবে না।

(ঞ) নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত পদের সংখ্যা হ্রাস/বৃদ্ধি ও বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাতিল কিংবা বিধি মোতাবেক নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত যে কোন পরিবর্তন/সংশোধন করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

(ট) Online ব্যতীত কোনো আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।

৩। অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ সংক্রান্ত নিয়মাবলি ও করণীয়ঃ

(ক) পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণে ইচ্ছুক প্রার্থীগণ (<https://cevdsc.teletalk.com.bd>) এ ওয়েবসাইটে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ করবেন। আবেদনের সময়সীমা নিম্নরূপ:

(i) Online-এ আবেদনপত্র পূরণ ও পরীক্ষার ফি জমাদান শুরুর তারিখ ও সময় ২৭.১০.২০২৫ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ সকাল-১০:০০ ঘটিকা।

(ii) Online-এ আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ১৭.১১.২০২৫ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ রাত-১১.৫৯ ঘটিকা। উক্ত সময়সীমার মধ্যে

User ID প্রাপ্ত প্রার্থীগণ online-এ আবেদনপত্র submit-এর সময় থেকে পরবর্তী ৭২ (বাহাত্তর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে sms এ পরীক্ষার ফি জমা দিতে পারবেন।

(খ) Online আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থী তাঁর রঙিন ছবি (দৈর্ঘ্য ৩০০x প্রস্থ ৩০০ pixel) ও স্বাক্ষর (দৈর্ঘ্য ৩০০ xপ্রস্থ ৮০ pixel) স্ক্যান করে নির্ধারিত স্থানে Upload করবেন। ছবির সাইজ, সর্বোচ্চ 100 KB ও স্বাক্ষরের সাইজ সর্বোচ্চ 60KB হতে হবে।

(গ) Online আবেদনপত্রে পূরণকৃত তথ্যই যেহেতু পরবর্তী সকল কার্যক্রমে ব্যবহৃত হবে, সেহেতু Online-এ আবেদনপত্র Submit করার পূর্বেই পূরণকৃত সকল তথ্যের সঠিকতা সম্পর্কে প্রার্থী নিজে শতভাগ নিশ্চিত হবেন।

(ঘ) প্রার্থী Online-এ পূরণকৃত আবেদনপত্রের একটি প্রিন্ট কপি পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যে কোন প্রয়োজনে সহায়ক হিসেবে সংরক্ষণ করবেন এবং মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় এক কপি জমা দিবেন।

(ঙ) SMS প্রেরণের নিয়মাবলী ও পরীক্ষার ফি প্রদানঃ Online-এ আবেদনপত্র (Application Form) যথাযথভাবে পূরণ করে নির্দেশনা মতে ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষর upload করে আবেদনপত্র Submit করা সম্পন্ন হলে কম্পিউটারে ছবিসহ Application Preview দেখা যাবে। যদি Applicant's Copy তে কোন তথ্য ভুল থাকে বা অস্পষ্ট ছবি (সম্পূর্ণ) কালো/সম্পূর্ণ সাদা/ঘোলা) বা ছবি/স্বাক্ষর সঠিক না থাকে তাহলে আবেদন ফি জমা না দিয়ে থাকলেই কেবল পুনরায় (Web-এ) আবেদন করতে পারবেন। উল্লেখ্য যে, আবেদন ফি জমাদানের পরে আর কোন পরিবর্তন/পরিমার্জন/পরিবর্তন গ্রহণযোগ্য নয় বিধায় আবেদন ফি জমাদানের পূর্বে প্রার্থী অবশ্যই উক্ত Applicant's Copy তে তাঁর সাম্প্রতিক তোলা রঙিন ছবি, নির্ভুল তথ্য ও স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত PDF কপি ডাউনলোডপূর্বক নিশ্চিত করে রঙিন প্রিন্ট করে সংরক্ষণ করবেন। Applicant's Copy তে একটি User ID নম্বর দেওয়া থাকবে এবং User ID নম্বর ব্যবহার করে প্রার্থী নিম্নোক্ত পদ্ধতিতে যে কোন Teletalk pre-paid mobile নম্বরের মাধ্যমে ০২ (দুই) টি SMS করে পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে বর্ণিত ছকে ক্রমিক

নম্বর ১ থেকে ৯ নং ক্রমিকের জন্য আবেদন ফি বাবদ ১০০/- (একশত) টাকা ও টেলিটকের এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ (ভ্যাটসহ অফেরতযোগ্য) ১২/- (বারো) টাকা মোট ১১২/- (একশত বারো) টাকা এবং ১০ থেকে ১৩ নং ক্রমিকের জন্য আবেদন ফি বাবদ ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকা এবং টেলিটকের এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ (ভ্যাটসহ অফেরতযোগ্য) ৬/- (ছয়) টাকাসহ সর্বমোট ৫৬ (ছাট্টি) টাকা অনন্যিক ৭২ (বাহাত্তর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে জমা দেবেন। তবে সব গ্রেডের অনগ্রসর (ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী, শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গের প্রার্থীগণ) আবেদন ফি বাবদ ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকা) ও Teletalk এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ (ভ্যাটসহ অফেরতযোগ্য) ৬/- (ছয়) টাকাসহ সর্বমোট ৫৬ (ছাট্টি) টাকা অনন্যিক ৭২ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে জমা দেবেন। বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখ্য, "Online-এ আবেদনপত্রের সব অংশ পূরণ করে Submit করা হলেও পরীক্ষার ফি জমা না দেওয়া পর্যন্ত Online আবেদনপত্র কোনো অবস্থাতেই গৃহীত হবে না।"

প্রথম SMS: CEVDSC<space>User ID লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে।

Example: CEVDSC ABCDEF

Reply: Applicant's Name, Tk-112/- or 56/-will be charged as application fee.

Your PIN is 12345678. To pay fee Type CEVDSC<Space>Yes<Space>PIN and send to 16222.

দ্বিতীয় SMS: CEVDSC<space>YES<space>PIN লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে।

Example: CEVDSC YES 12345678

Reply: Congratulations Applicant's Name, payment completed successfully for CEVDSC Application for CEVDSC Application for <Post Name>User ID is (ABCDEF) and Password (XXXXXX).

(চ) প্রবেশপত্র প্রাপ্তির বিষয়টি (<https://cevdsc.teletalk.com.bd>) ওয়েবসাইটে এবং প্রার্থীর মোবাইল ফোনে SMS এর মাধ্যমে (শুধু যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে) যথাসময়ে জানানো হবে। Online আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থীর প্রদত্ত মোবাইল ফোনে পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় যোগাযোগ সম্পন্ন করা হবে বিধায় উক্ত নম্বরটি সার্বক্ষণিক সচল রাখা, SMS পড়া এবং প্রাপ্ত নির্দেশনা তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে অনুসরণ করা বাঞ্ছনীয়।

(ছ) SMS এ প্রেরিত User ID এবং Password ব্যবহার করে পরবর্তীতে রোল নম্বর, পদের নাম, ছবি, পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থানের/ক্ষেত্রের নাম ইত্যাদি তথ্য সম্বলিত প্রবেশপত্র প্রার্থী Download পূর্বক রঙিন Print করে নিবেন। প্রার্থী এই প্রবেশপত্রটি লিখিত পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের সময় এবং উত্তীর্ণ হলে মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় অবশ্যই প্রদর্শন করবেন।

(জ) শুধুমাত্র টেলিটক প্রি-পেইড মোবাইল ফোন থেকে প্রার্থীগণ নিম্নবর্ণিত SMS পদ্ধতি অনুসরণ করে নিজ নিজ User ID এবং Password পুনরুদ্ধার করতে পারবেন।

i. User ID জানা থাকলে: CEVDSC<space>Help<space>User<space>User ID & Send to 16222.

Example: CEVDSC HELP USER ABCDEF and send to 16222

ii. PIN Number জানা থাকলে: CEVDSC<space>Help<space>PIN<space>PIN No. & Send to 16222.

Example: CEVDSC HELP PIN 12345678& send to 16222.

(ঝ) বিজ্ঞপ্তি পত্রিকা ছাড়াও কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ), ঢাকা ওয়েবসাইটে www.cevdsc.gov.bd এ বিজ্ঞপ্তিসহ এ সংক্রান্ত সকল তথ্য দেখা যাবে। অথবা QR Code স্ক্যান এর মাধ্যমে টেলিটকের জবপোর্টাল (<http://alljobs.teletalk.com.bd>) ওয়েবসাইটে সরাসরি প্রবেশ করেও বিজ্ঞপ্তি পাওয়া যাবে। নিয়োগ পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও অন্যান্য তথ্য www.cevdsc.gov.bd ওয়েবসাইটে হতে জানা যাবে।

(ঞ) অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে কোন সমস্যা হলে টেলিটক নম্বর থেকে ১২১ অথবা alljobs.query@teletalk.com.bd ই-মেইলে যোগাযোগ করা যাবে। এছাড়া টেলিটকের জবপোর্টাল এর ফেসবুক পেজ <https://www.facebook.com/alljobsbdtteletalk> এ মেসেজ এর মাধ্যমে যোগাযোগ করা যাবে।

(ট) ডিক্লারেশনঃ প্রার্থীকে অনলাইন আবেদনপত্রের ডিক্লারেশন অংশে এই মর্মে ঘোষণা দিতে হবে যে, প্রার্থী কর্তৃক আবেদনপত্রের প্রদত্ত সকল তথ্য সঠিক এবং সত্য। প্রদত্ত তথ্য অসত্য বা মিথ্যা প্রমাণিত হলে অথবা কোন অযোগ্যতা ধরা পড়লে বো কোনো প্রতারণা বা দুর্নীতির আশ্রয় গ্রহণ করলে কিংবা পরীক্ষায় নকল বা অসদুপায় অবলম্বন করলে, পরীক্ষার পূর্বে বা পরে অথবা নিয়োগের পরে যে কোনো পর্যায়ে প্রার্থিতা বাতিল করা হবে এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রার্থীর বিরুদ্ধে আইনগত ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা যাবে।

৪। ত্রুটিপূর্ণ/অসম্পূর্ণ আবেদন কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

৫। Online-এ আবেদন ও নিয়োগ পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যে কোন বিষয়ে নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

৬। শেষ তারিখ ও সময়ের জন্য অপেক্ষা না করে হাতে যথেষ্ট সময় নিয়ে Online এ আবেদনপত্র পূরণ ও আবেদন ফি জমাদান করতে পরামর্শ দেয়া যাচ্ছে।



কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট,
ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ) এর ওয়েবসাইটে
প্রবেশ এর QR Code



কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট,
ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ) এর টেলিটক পোর্টালের
QR Code

২১-১০-২০২৫

জুলেদ আহমেদ

কমিশনার

কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট,
ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ) ঢাকা

ও
সভাপতি, বিভাগীয় নির্বাচন/নিয়োগ কমিটি

ESSAY

BETWEEN SILENCE AND SONG: Early Bangla literature and the poetics of the 'Charyapada'



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

Soon after, other Bengali scholars turned serious critical attention to the Charyapada. Prabodh Chandra Bagchi discovered and published Tibetan translations and highlighted the original language of the poems.

AZFAR HUSSAIN

Pandit Haraprasad Shastri read—and was deeply inspired by—Raja Rajendralal Mitra's seminal work *Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*, published in 1882. That book was instrumental in inaugurating a whole new age in the history of Bangla language and literature.

It also prompted Haraprasad Shastri's further explorations of Buddhist philosophy. Naturally, Nepal—the very site of Buddhist literary and philosophical practices—immediately attracted him. He visited the country in 1907.

That visit proved extraordinary. In Nepal's royal library, Haraprasad discovered several unfamiliar texts. Among them was the *Charyapada*, the earliest known example of Bangla literary production, along with *Dakarnab* and *Dohakosh*. In 1916, he published all three together under the title *Hajaar Bochorer Puran Bangla Bhashai Baudha Gaan o Doha*.

Haraprasad Shastri's publication was nothing short of sensational. His book revealed the richness and rigour of the earliest Bangla literary productions, and yet it immediately became a site of fierce claims and contestations. Some Bengali scholars enthusiastically declared the *Charyapada*—a collection of 46 lyrics and a fragment—to be 'ancient Bangla', while others insisted the verses belonged to Asamiya, Oriya, or Maithili traditions.

But it was Sumitkumar

Chattopadhyay's massive intervention—*Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* (1926)—that proved truly consequential, even decisive. With indisputable theoretical rigour—drawing on phonetics, grammar, and prosody—he demonstrated that the *padas* of the *Charyapada* were composed in none other than Bangla itself, making the collection our very first book, our earliest anthology of poems in Bangla literature.

Soon after, other Bengali scholars turned serious critical attention to the *Charyapada*. Prabodh Chandra Bagchi discovered and published Tibetan translations and highlighted the original language of the poems. In 1927, Muhammad Shahidullah, for the first time, explored their theological dimensions, while in 1946, Shashibhushan Dasgupta called attention to the rich theoretical resources animating those earliest lyrics.

Then came Rahul Sankrityayan—the celebrated theorist and scholar from Bihar—who ranged within a broad zodiac of philosophical questions tied to the *Charyapada* brand of Buddhism, writing in both Hindi and English. One should also note Dr Tarapada Mukhopadhyay, who anatomised and analysed crucial lexical, syntactic, and grammatical features of the text. Since these interventions, numerous critical works have continued to enrich our understanding of the earliest literary practices in Bangla.

The songs of the *Charyapada* were

composed roughly between 950 and 1200 CE.

But who were these poets or lyricists? Their number stands at 24, and their names carry striking sound-effects, sharing at the end a common syllable—*pa*—which signifies glory or honour. Among them are Luipa, Kukkuripa, Biruapa, Gunduripa, Chatilpa, Bhusukupa, Kanhapa, Kamalipa, Dombipa, Shantipa, Mohittypa, Binapa, Sarahapa, Sabarpa, Ajebpa, Dhentonpa, Darikpa, Bhadepa, Tarakpa, Kanhanpa, Jayandipa, Dhampa, Tanripa, and Laridombipa.

Of these, Kanhapa is credited with the largest number of lyrics—thirteen—while Bhusukupa composed eight, and Sarahapa only four; the rest are distributed among the others.

Many Bengali scholars suggest Luipa is the earliest *Charyapada* poet. Muhammad Shahidullah, however, argues that Shabaripa holds that place, while the youngest poet was either Sarahapa or Luipa.

Of course, ancient Bangla is exceedingly difficult to grasp. Yet certain translations of the *Charyapada* immediately attest to the lyrical energy, imagistic intensity, and even theoretical richness of these songs. Whenever I recite particular *padas* in the original old Bangla—and yes, I relish doing so—I feel their "magic lyricism," their beautiful sound-patterns, and their remarkable cadences and caesuras.

Although we have a rich homegrown tradition of narrative verse—from Baru Chandidas's SriKrishnakirtan to

Jasimuddin's *Nakshi Kanthar Math*—its dominant current has always been lyrical. And that tradition, richly and rightly, begins with the *Charyapada* constellation of marvelous lyricists, who play exquisitely with sounds, syllables, and silences while weaving intricate networks of evocative and suggestive images, accompanied by even theoretical tropes and tenors.

Therefore, I cannot resist urging those anti-theoretical, self-absorbed aesthetes—those under the spell of bourgeois aesthetics and poetics who stubbornly harbour the idea that theory ruins poetry—to read the *Charyapada* in order to see how the lyrical and the theoretical engage in a mutually enriching conversation within the brief space of a single *pada*.

Indeed, there are poets who theorise by way of composing poems, and compose poems by way of theorising. And the *Charyapada* poets surely belong to that group of poet-theorists. Within this very tradition, then, one must also invoke Lalon Fakir, who produced radically rich and theoretically loaded musical work in the 19th century. Lalon—at once a first-rate poet and theorist, among other things—directly employs the word "tattva" (tattwa) in more than one song, while his meditations on the corporeal and the linguistic remain profoundly integral to his poetics and to his politics alike.

One must emphasise that the language of the *Charyapada* has come to be called "sandhyabhasha." Indeed, it is a language woven out of interplays: darkness with light, what is with what is not, the abstract with the concrete, the spectral with the corporeal, the revealed with the concealed—tensions and transactions that dialectically define its very character. Other crucially constitutive aspects of this twilight-like language include symbols and codes and metaphors—ones that tend to render meaning profoundly indeterminate or uncertain.

For those unfamiliar with the Buddhist *bajrajani sahajija* path, meanings often flounder, totter, or slip away, and certain concepts resist easy unpacking. Reading the *padas* of the ancient Bengali poets, one enters a world of difficult semantic and hermeneutic struggles, where metaphors often prove more tenacious than facts. Yet this does not mean that a special "depth-hermeneutic" is always required. There are always elements—scenes, subjects, sounds, silences—in the *Charyapada* that ordinary readers can still enjoy, even amid its lingering obscurities.

The theological, the theoretical, and the philosophical converge organically in certain lyrics of the early Bangla poets. As noted, these concerns revolve primarily around Buddhism. The *Charyapada* poets interrogate tensions between life and death, joy and suffering, and the question of emancipation, or

even the absolute freedom of the spirit (never to be conflated with the Hegelian Geist)—from the narrowly worldly, without undermining the worldliness of their signifying practices. They also accentuate the need for espousing an ethic of submission to the guru as part of a spiritual struggle toward truth, or even the Absolute.

While some images, symbols, and metaphors in the earliest Bangla lyrics resist easy access, others vividly open up the world of nature as it appears in those songs. Recurring images of the body, mountains, rivers, deer and hunters abound, alongside striking depictions of forests, trees, and flowers. Equally significant are the imagistically rich and spiritually charged celebrations of physical beauty. In one lyric, for instance, Shabaripa portrays a hunting girl whose body seems to embody the forest itself: flowers glimmer in her dark tresses, a garland dances on her bosom, and the poet, entranced, forgets everything else. Here we glimpse a moment of poetic trance, a state of mind attuned to the rhythm between nature within and nature without. In another lyric, flowers drenched in moonlight fall from the endless sky, and on such a night—as the poet suggests—there is nothing to do but drink, get drunk, and celebrate life itself.

Lastly, the aesthetic, the theoretical, the theological, and the metaphysical in the *padas* of our earliest Bengali poets never occult or obscure the social or even the political-economic. Some critics have rightly characterised the *Charyapadas* as songs of the subaltern—songs of the marginalised and the subjugated—that vividly portray the quotidian lives of common, suffering people. In one lyric, for instance, a poet laments that he lives atop a mountain without neighbors, that his cooking pot holds no rice, that his family keeps growing, and that hunger reigns everywhere. Other lyrics, as critics note, become explosive sites of class struggle, offering satirical and subversive images of the oppressive practices of the upper classes. It is telling that the earliest Bangla literary productions emerged from poets acutely sensitive to the struggles of suffering humanity.

Our earliest Bangla poets emphasise the power of humanity as well as the need for celebrating life and sustaining struggles at all levels—spiritual and social ones included—in the face of all possible odds and obstacles.

Dr Azfar Hussain is Director of the Graduate Program in Social Innovation at Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA, where he also teaches Interdisciplinary Studies, and Vice President of the Global Center for Advanced Studies (USA), where he is Professor of English, World Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

POETRY

Carnival of carnage

PURBITA DAS

War scenes creep like a daily soap to watch for seasons on mobile screens now; Rarely remember the scenes But the feelings never leave the humane body. The ancient hunger for humanity Seems like will not be ever fulfilled. The clauses of cruelty categorically encourage the grammar of geographical atrocities. We, the mass, are the mesmerised audience by the audacity of the aluminium power of a ruthless ruler that can't be melted away, dropping the recorded results of historical hegemony. A terrible time of weeping, watching the dead A horrible hour of digesting harrowing details of the industry of pain even after praying for days and nights. Yet A Sun that everybody hopes to witness one day



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

that brings the news of salvation from the humans surrounded by our own makeshift humanity for ages.

Purbita Das is currently trying to find

the lost pieces of her existence through words, at the same time, is a lecturer in the Department of English at University of Science and Technology Chittagong.

POETRY

From the prayer hall

SHIBLEE SHAHED

Whose bell rings in the temple tonight? Whose hymn rises from the Gospel's heart? And in the call of Esha, does the muezzin still implore— "Come, come toward salvation"? Across the purified valley of night, from the world's scattered prayers, gentle lights drift upward, carrying these questions into the dark. From the fading pages of the Avesta, birds and boulevards alike slowly turn to vapour...

Dr Shiblee Shahed is a public health specialist, essayist, poet, and translator. His debut poetry collection was published in 2013 by Shuddhashar Publications and his poems and articles have appeared in numerous national and international outlets. He is a regular contributor to The Daily Star.



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

Overcooked turners, undercooked faith

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

While walking off the ground after the post-match presentation for the third ODI between Bangladesh and the West Indies on Thursday, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul jokingly told the media personnel present there, "You can't call it a paddy field today."

Bulbul was clearly referring to the wicket used in that match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, which produced a one-sided game where the hosts crushed the visitors by 179 runs to take the three-match series 2-1.

The wickets for the first two games in Mirpur had drawn a lot of flak for their dark complexion, and



prodigious spin.

The third ODI took place on the same pitch as the first match, which according to the broadcasters had provided 4.9 degree turn for spinners on average.

More of the same was expected on Thursday. The wicket was still devoid of grass and the soil looked dark, though not as much as it did in the previous two games.

The difference became more apparent when the match began. The ball was still gripping and turning as it had done in the earlier matches, but this time the soil was not exploding when the ball pitched, a sign that this pitch was more compact.

This small detail made a big difference as it meant that the bounce at the pitch was not as erratic as the previous two games.

Batting first, Bangladesh's openers Soumya Sarkar and Saif Hassan took full advantage of it as they judged the turn well and countered with fearless strokes to form a record-setting 176-run stand.

Although the pitch slowed up as the game progressed and Bangladesh's scoring rate dipped after the opening partnership ended, they still posted a commanding 296-8 in 50 overs.

West Indies were crushed under the weight of the target and were bundled out for just 117 by the host spinners.

Prior and even during the series, some BCB officials had said that the wicket can't change overnight. But after the Tigers lost the second ODI in a Super Over, the nature of the surface changed in just two days.

Given the Tiger's recent poor record in ODIs – coming into this series on the back of four consecutive series losses – the management understandably tried to exploit home ground advantage to the fullest, but in the first two games, they went overboard.

This hints at a lack of faith on the players to get the job done on a typical Mirpur surface, which already provides plenty of help for the hosts, against a side that hasn't won an ODI series in Bangladesh since 2011. The defeat brought forth a course correction, which helped Bangladesh get a crucial win and hopefully a lesson that too much of a good thing can also turn costly.

Miraz's captaincy taking a toll on long-term vision?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Under the captaincy of Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Bangladesh's success rate stands at just 23 percent – three wins in 13 matches. Even Miraz's own performance graph has dipped, both as a batter and a bowler, since being entrusted with the ODI armband.

Beyond the bleak win percentage and his personal decline, it's Miraz's captaincy itself that has come under scrutiny for lacking a long-term vision to shape the team's future.

As a bowler, Miraz has always been considered a vital cog in Bangladesh's wicket-taking mechanism. However, that edge now seems missing, with his bowling strike rate rising to 55.7 as captain, compared to his career strike rate of 45.9.

In fact, against Afghanistan earlier this month, his bowling average, economy rate, and strike rate were all significantly worse than those of part-time off-spinner Saif Hassan.

With the bat, Miraz has produced numbers, but those contributions have had little impact on Bangladesh's success rate. During the ODI series in the Caribbean last November-December, he averaged just over 50, thanks to two 70-plus scores. Yet the Tigers ended that series with a 3-0 whitewash.

His 60 off 87 deliveries in the first ODI against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi earlier



this month came when Bangladesh were rebuilding after early wickets. But despite batting deep, he failed to provide the acceleration needed, and the Tigers suffered a convincing defeat.

In total, Miraz has struck four fifties as ODI captain – all in losing causes. The main concern remains his slow scoring rate; his strike rate as skipper has dropped compared to his career strike rate, suggesting that the tempo he has tried to set as captain is misaligned with the demands of modern ODI cricket.

At best, those innings have merely

prevented batting collapses and padded his average, but have rarely translated into competitive team totals.

Beyond his on-field performances, Miraz has also struggled to inspire confidence as a leader with a clear long-term plan. After Bangladesh wrapped up their recent three-match ODI series 2-1 against West Indies in Mirpur on Thursday, Miraz said that planning for a World Cup "should start two to three months in advance."

Even a novice would realise that such a short preparation window could spell

disaster.

A captain needs to trust his instincts, but questions remain about how the dressing room operates under his leadership. His decision-making with DRS, for instance, has been questioned several times.

"It's not fair to blame one person here. When a team is together, the coach, the captain, and everyone else are on the same page. If I take a decision, it might be wrong, but the coach supports me. And even if the coach takes a wrong decision, we all back him," Miraz said when asked about criticisms regarding Super Over decisions.

Does that mean every top-level decision is simply accepted? After the second ODI against West Indies, Soumya Sarkar revealed that it was a management call to opt for the slow, low, and dark Mirpur pitches used in the series. Miraz, meanwhile, insisted that any decision coming from the top is collectively supported. Whether that reflects healthy leadership remains debatable.

With players constantly rotating in and out of the side, struggling to find their footing, Bangladesh's ODI setup currently feels like treacherous quicksand – hardly the foundation for long-term growth, especially ahead of the 2027 ODI World Cup. In terms of setting the right tone for the team, a clear vision from the skipper still appears missing.



NCL four-day competition gets underway today

The 27th edition of the National Cricket League's (NCL) four-day format will get underway today across three cities and four venues in the country. As in previous editions, a total of eight teams will feature in the 2025-26 season of the prestigious domestic first-class competition.

► Mymensingh Division are set to make their debut, replacing Dhaka Metro.

► Kookaburra balls will be used for the first two rounds to help the national Test cricketers prepare for the upcoming two-match Test series against Ireland, scheduled from November 11 to 23 in Sylhet and Mirpur, where Kookaburra balls will also be used. The remaining five rounds of the NCL, which will not feature the national Test cricketers, will revert to Duke balls, as in previous editions.

► Veteran Mushfiqur Rahim will represent reigning champions Sylhet Division this year. Mushfiqur was expected to play for Sylhet during the recently

concluded NCL T20, but due to personal commitments following the tournament's rescheduling caused by inclement weather, he withdrew from participation.

► The competition will run until December 9, with all matches streamed live on the BCB's YouTube channel.

► On paper, Barishal Division appear the least star-studded side, with no current national Test cricketers in their squad. The team will be led by white-ball left-arm spinner Tanvir Islam. A similar situation applies to Rangpur Division, who recently clinched back-to-back NCL T20 titles, though they have Litton Das, Shoriful Islam, and

Rishad Hossain listed as reserve players.

► Sylhet Division look the strongest on paper, with several national cricketers in their ranks. Sylhet will be boosted by the presence of Zakir Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Ebadot Hossain, and Khaled Ahmed, while Jaker Ali, Tanzim Sakib, and Nasum Ahmed are among their standbys.

► Even though NCL T20 saw an increase in players' match fees, the four-day version of the competition will not see a hike in this regard, remaining 80,000 BDT as in previous editions. However, the day allowance will see an increase of 500 BDT, similar to the T20 version.

Topu, Gomez confident as Kings take on Al-Seeb

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings coach Mario Gomez and captain Topu Barman have expressed their confidence about making a positive start to their AFC Challenge League campaign when they take on Omani league winners Al-Seeb at the Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Stadium in Kuwait today.



The match will get underway at 10:00pm Bangladesh time.

The five-time Bangladesh league winners have failed to get past the group stage of the continental competition in all five of their previous continental competition attempts but hope to turn things around this time.

"We are playing with a wonderful team (Al-Seeb), also away. Our team is strong and we are ready for the win," Kings' Argentine coach Mario Gomez told a pre-match press conference on Friday.

Topu, echoing his coach's sentiment, said: "We have taken good preparation for this competition. We have been training together for a long time. For us, this [tournament] is very very important. We'll do our best. Especially, the first match is very very important for us and we'll go for a win tomorrow."

Butler slams players' attitude after defeat to Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team coach Peter Butler expressed anger and disappointment over what he described as "a lack of respect and bad manners" from some of his players following a 3-0 defeat against Thailand in the first of two FIFA international friendlies on Friday.

The hosts took the lead within the opening minute and doubled their advantage five minutes into the second half before sealing victory with a third goal four minutes from time. Ranked 51 places above Bangladesh in the FIFA standings, Thailand dominated proceedings throughout the match, and if not for a number of saves from goalkeeper Rupna Chakma, the margin of defeat could have been bigger, according to a report from the Bangladesh Football Federation.

The game, played at a university ground in Bangkok, left Butler questioning the status and conditions of the fixture.

"I don't know whether we were playing a Tier 1 friendly because we played at a university in an environment where the lights weren't strong enough," Butler said in a video message shared by the BFF. "It didn't feel like a national team game. It felt more like a development fixture. We have to be careful when organising games like this and ensure everything is up to standard."



Butler made six substitutions in the second half, introducing Mosammat Sagorika for Tohura Khatun and Shaheda Akter Ripa for Munki Akter right after the break. Later, Sheuli Azim, Shamsunnahar Sr, Ritu Porna Chakma, and Afeida Khandaker were replaced by Joynob Bibi Rita, Nabiran Khatun, Halima Akter, and Sinha Jahan Shikha respectively.

Butler did not hold back in his post-match criticism, taking issue with what he perceived as poor attitude and discipline among some of his players.

"I think a few girls came with the wrong attitude, and I won't tolerate sloppiness," he said. "If people want to play for me and

represent the country, they can't come with an attitude that's not belittling of national team football."

The former West Ham United midfielder, who has banished several senior players following a boycott controversy, warned that he would take similar action again if necessary.

"If people want to come and test me, let them test me. It's happened before, and if it happens again, I'll stand firm. I will not tolerate a lack of respect and bad manners," Butler declared.

Bangladesh will play their second friendly against Thailand on Monday, where Butler will be looking for a stronger response from his players.

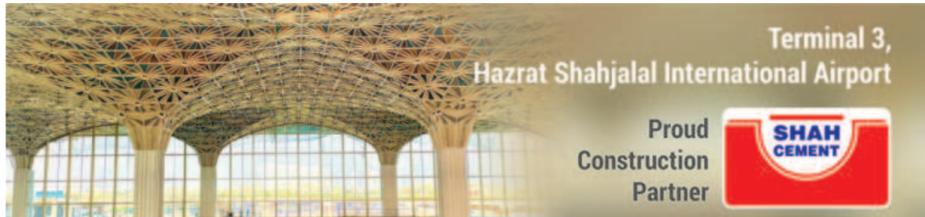


Volleyball team on a roll

Bangladesh players celebrate during their 3-2 sets win against Sri Lanka in the CAVA Cup at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Bangladesh, who won their first two matches, took a 2-0 sets lead in the third match before the Lankans staged a fight-back with back-to-back sets wins. However, the hosts prevailed 15-11 in the decisive final set. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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Two groups clash at NCP meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two groups claiming to be members of the National Citizen Party (NCP) clashed at a coordination meeting in the capital yesterday, reportedly over a financial dispute.

The incident took place around 6:30pm on the third floor of the Shaheed Abu Sayed Convention Centre in Shahbagh, and continued for about 30 minutes.

Party insiders said Riyan, who introduces himself as an NCP leader from Mohammadpur, had taken Tk 2 lakh two months ago from Imtiaz, who claims to head the party's Bangshal unit.

Riyan refused to return the money and the dispute reportedly flared up when the two groups came face to face during yesterday's meeting, leading to heated arguments and a scuffle.

Contacted, Mushfiq Us Salehin, NCP's joint

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A drone view shows tents sheltering displaced Palestinians amid the ruins of destroyed buildings, following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area in Gaza City, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

A life devoted to progressive politics

Speakers tell memorial event on Badruddin Umar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Badruddin Umar was a shining example of intellectual courage – one of the very few academics who made the full transition from academia into politics, said Prof Rehman Sobhan yesterday, paying tribute to the late thinker and political activist.

“Umar, widely recognised for his prolific writings and lifelong commitment to progressive politics, was a rare scholar who combined academic brilliance with lifelong political commitment.”

Prof Sobhan was speaking at a memorial event organised by the Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation at Bengal Shilpalay yesterday.

Urging young researchers to study Umar's political journey alongside his writings, Prof Sobhan said, “Umar spent more than 50 years on the front lines of progressive politics. Studying his journey will help explain how the left movement developed, split into factions, and eventually declined.”

“Umar's writings made him a cult figure not just here but also in West Bengal, widely read among left intellectuals.” Calling him “perhaps our greatest political historian”, Prof Sobhan praised the “meticulous research” behind Umar's books, especially “The Emergence of Bangladesh”, for

Umar spent more than 50 years on the front lines of progressive politics. Studying his journey will help explain how the left movement developed, split into factions, and eventually declined.

Prof Rehman Sobhan

Tarique likely to return by Nov

Says Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman is expected to return to the country by November, said Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed while talking to journalists at his Gulshan residence yesterday afternoon.

When asked if there is any specific date for Tarique's return, he said, “You will know the exact date very soon. We expect he will come back by November.”

“Within this month, BNP will give the green signal to single candidates in 200 constituencies so that they can begin election-related preparations.”

Speaking about forming an alliance, he said, “Discussions are ongoing with all parties, including the NCP. But it's too early to say anything about forming an alliance. Talks are still underway.”

In reply to whether Tarique would contest in the national election, Salahuddin said, “No doubt, the acting chairman will take part in the election, but the constituency will be decided later. He can contest from any seat.”

Responding to another question, he said, “Considering her health condition, our leader Khaleda Zia will decide whether to contest or not. We certainly want her to take part in the election.”

Asked about BNP's call for the removal of “party-affiliated advisers”, Salahuddin said, “We did not directly ask anyone to resign. If anyone wishes to take part in the election, then naturally they should step down from the government.”



US, others must press Israel to abide by truce

Says Erdogan on Gaza ceasefire deal, calls for possible use of sanctions or halting arms sales

AGENCIES

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said the United States and others must do more to push Israel to stop violating the Gaza ceasefire agreement, including the possible use of sanctions or halting arms sales.

Nato member Turkey, one of the most vocal critics of Israel's attacks on Gaza, has joined the ceasefire negotiations as a mediator after largely indirect involvement. Its increased role followed a meeting last month between Erdogan and US President Donald Trump at the White House.

“As Turkey, we are doing our utmost for the ceasefire to be secured. The Hamas side is abiding by the ceasefire. In fact, it is openly stating its commitment to this. Israel, meanwhile, is continuing to violate the ceasefire,” Erdogan told reporters on his return flight from a regional Gulf tour.

“The international community, namely the United States, must do more to ensure Israel's full compliance to the ceasefire and

agreement,” he said, according to a transcript of his comments shared by his office yesterday.

“Israel must be forced to keep its promises via sanctions, halting of arms sales.”

Ankara would join a “task force” to oversee implementation of truce

Erdogan urges Gulf nations to fund Gaza reconstruction

UN calls on Israel to open Rafah crossing, increase aid

Ankara has said that it would join a “task force” to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire, that its armed forces could serve in a military or civilian capacity as needed, and that it will play an active role in the reconstruction of the enclave.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu hinted on Wednesday at his opposition to any role for Turkish security forces in the Gaza Strip, reports Reuters.

Asked about Netanyahu's comments, Erdogan refrained from his usual criticism of the Israeli leader and appeared to soften his earlier commitment to taking a role on the field in Gaza, saying talks on the issue were still underway.

He also reiterated a previous call for Gulf countries to now take action on financing efforts to rebuild Gaza, saying nobody could single-handedly complete this task.

Meanwhile, the United Nations wants Israel to allow in “more [aid] trucks at more crossing points” to Gaza, an official said yesterday, as aid levels remain far lower than specified by the ceasefire agreement.

Palestinians in Gaza continue to struggle to find food and clean water despite the ceasefire, and many remain unable to return to their homes due to the presence of Israeli troops, reports Al Jazeera online.

Dhaka slams ‘Israeli claim of sovereignty’ over the West Bank

BSS, Dhaka

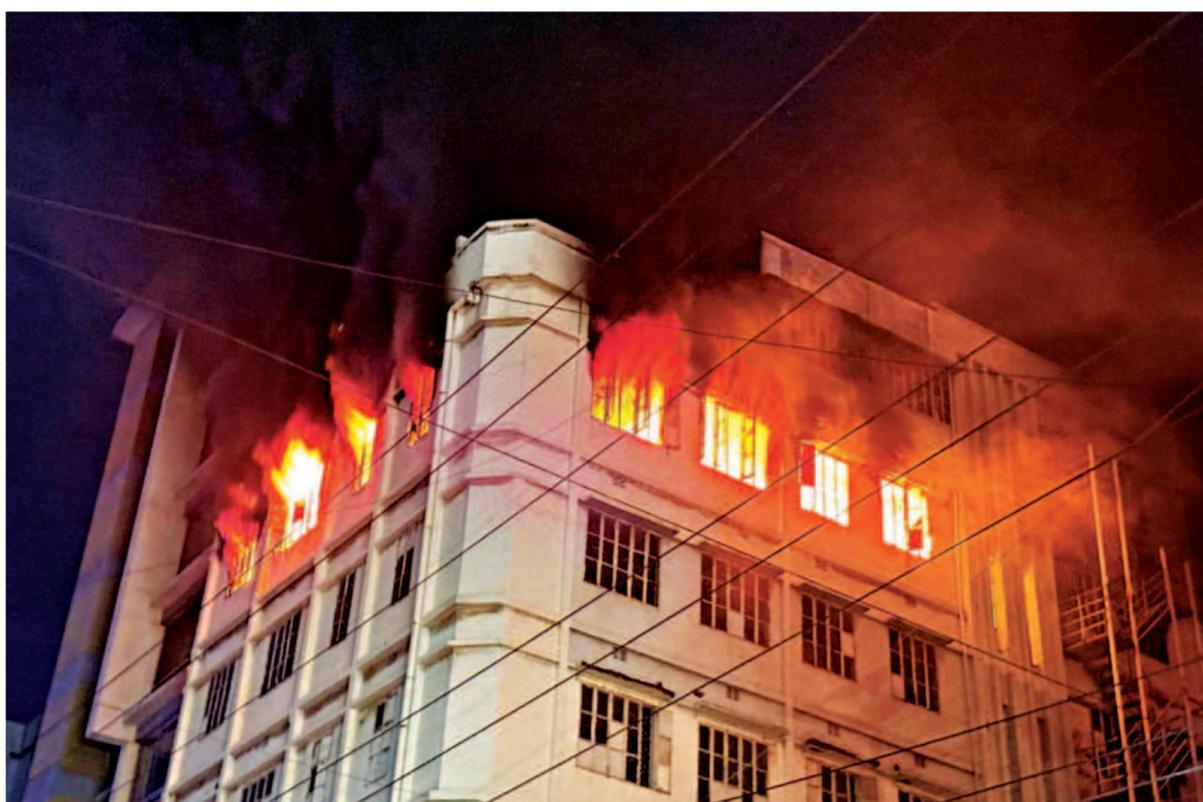
Bangladesh has strongly condemned the recent approval by the Israeli Knesset of draft laws aimed at imposing “Israeli sovereignty” over the occupied territories in the West Bank of the State of Palestine.

“Bangladesh reaffirms that Israel has no sovereignty over any part of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem,” said foreign ministry in a statement yesterday.

It said Israel continued its unlawful occupation through the expansion of illegal settlements in West Bank, in blatant violation of international law, UN Charter, and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 2334.

The foreign ministry said Dhaka also welcomed the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued on October 22, 2025, which underscores Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law.

“Bangladesh reiterates its unwavering support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”



A fire broke out at a readymade garments factory on the top floor of a five-storey commercial building on Kalshi Road in Mirpur-11 around 10:00pm last night. Seven fire engines responded to the scene and brought the blaze under control after two hours. No casualties were reported. PHOTO: PALASH DAS

Cox's Bazar airport upgrade put on hold

Civil aviation ministry instructs CAAB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has asked the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) to suspend its activities related to turning the Cox's Bazar domestic airport into an international one.

The ministry made the decision on Thursday, after the government officially declared Cox's Bazar airport an international airport on October 13.

Air Commodore Noor-e-Alam, member of air traffic management at CAAB, told The Daily Star, “On Tuesday [October 21], the CAAB chairman sent a letter to the ministry. We sought guidance on what we should do regarding Cox's Bazar [airport], since we are fully ready.”

“Yesterday [Thursday], the Civil Aviation Ministry Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin and Secretary Nasreen Jahan visited the airport. There, I asked them about the matter. The adviser told me to keep it suspended for now, saying an official decision would come on Sunday,” he added.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, in its October 13 statement,

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CHOOSING PEACE OVER PACE

How urbanites embracing beauty of slow living, finding calm and meaning amid the city's chaos

PHOTO: STAR

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

"Time is money" – this capitalist anthem has forced us, the modern world citizens, to optimise and monetise every second of our waking hours. We compute our accomplishments quantitatively, without regard for the quality of the task done.

to meet endless deadlines for a more intentional way of being, for a deeper, more meaningful life and career. There is a wave of philosophical shift in our social and cultural mindset, whereby we are opting to take the pace of our lives a notch down and do everything at the right speed.

Appreciating life's subtle

doing everything at a snail's pace'

Ishrat Jahan, the creative head of the local clothing brand Deshal, lives a fairy-tale life. Idling among her red lotuses in her pond, taking cues from nature's colour palette for her clothing line, cooking on clay stoves and ovens, and promoting local and traditional cuisine, she has turned her life into one massive immersive experience where haste has no place.

Ishrat lives a fulfilling life because, for her, finding joy and the right tempo for each task she undertakes is the core of her slow-living mindset.

"Some mornings I sit with a paintbrush, some afternoons I spend reading books, and some evenings I enjoy chatting with my friends. My work area is also in this village. It is only a ten-minute walk away. So, I am not forced to go into the hustle and bustle of the city. I live a secluded rural life, carefully avoiding urban life, where I do not have to rush around. That's why I built a wooden house amid greenery on the outskirts of Dhaka, allowing me to enjoy the best of the setting," she says.

"The city has lost its ability to inspire me. Even as a child, the romance of Dhaka was lost to me. Yet I would say that something held me back – something like the resilience of a horsetail sapling growing through the cracks of an old wall, maybe. Though I spent a large part of my life in the city for school, university, and career purposes, my objective was always to escape from the city and find my address in nature," Ishrat explains her family's choice of slow living.

To lead a mindful life, you don't have to leave the metropolis to avoid the urban chaos. "I am moving away from the circumstances that dictate my tempo; instead, I am aligning with a more purposeful and deliberate approach to life. This conscious choice to let go of the need for constant rush and stimulation in every aspect of my life is liberating," says NB Mansoor, who left her corporate job to pursue her passion

by setting up an artisanal crafts shop.

"Being stuck in traffic to keep four appointments a day, giving up weekends to prepare a presentation, compromising on me-time or family time was not exactly my idea of success. My awareness of the change in my mindset and surroundings has relieved

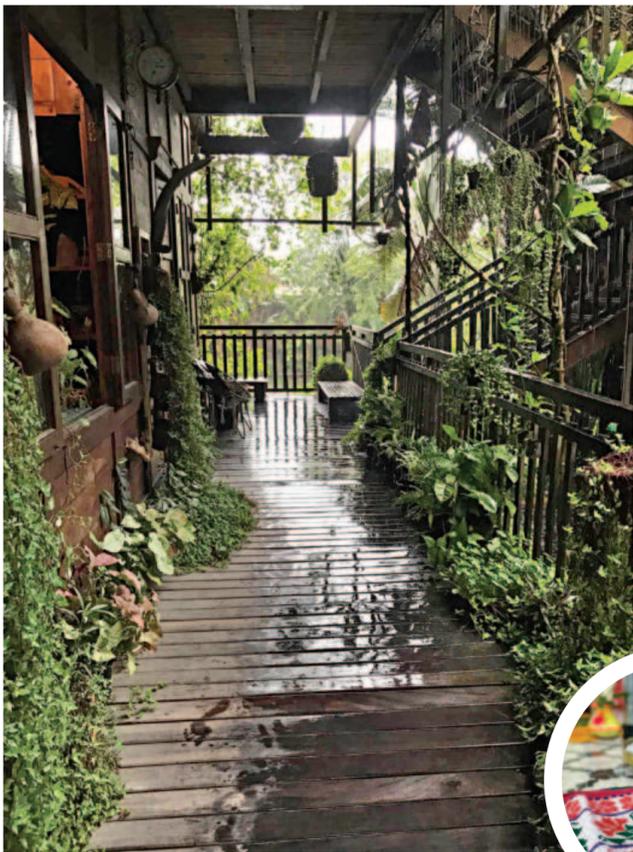
into your lifestyle.

"Nature will not betray me. I do not fancy overfed cattle or hormone-induced chicken. I do not want my vegetables to be big in size. I would rather have my pui shak leaves nibbled by insects because

her vegan restaurant, Shanchayita, promotes sustainable food and living.

As urbanites, we have an insatiable drive for recognition. It feels like we are always in a chase to outdo our peers or suffer from a sense of dissatisfaction and unfulfilment. The second best has no chance in this hustle culture or fast-paced living.

"We are in a constant adrenaline high, targeting an ambitious life. It turns our life into one big ledger



I think this mindset is all about the notion that faster is always better. Our contemporary lives are like one big checklist, and all the boxes need to be ticked off as quickly as possible, or else you fall behind in the invisible race you are in against your social circle.

However, many urbanites are giving up on the dizzying rush

nuances and cherishing our inner fulfilment, the "slow philosophy" advocates for peace over noise and quality over quantity. Slow food, slow fashion, slow travel, and ideas of slow living are part of the Slow Movement, a global trend that recalibrates our lifestyle, prioritising mindfulness.

'Slow movement is not about

me of my achievement fatigue and dissatisfaction with life," Mansoor continues.

"Practising the slow movement must come from within"

I find Faiza Ahmed's ideology, her appreciation for peace over noise, to be an earthy tribute to intentional living. She is an artist who passionately endorses the slow movement, mindful consumption, and environmental consciousness.

"My childhood in the late seventies in Dhaka was a time when the simplicity of life left us satisfied; slow-paced lifestyles, sustainable living, and organic food were not trending social media hashtags but a regular way of life," says Faiza, who is an inspirational eco-thinker.

She strongly believes that to truly follow the slow-living concept, you need to own it, accept the simplicity, and be comfortable with the choice.

"My happiness is a projection that people like, but they cannot copy it unless they own it from within. These practices cannot be copied or faked. Succumbing to peer pressure and fad hashtags will not work," she says, adding that this feeling cannot be a statement; it must be integrated



book of assets, liabilities, income, and expenses. Rather, life should be about a job well done and finding pleasure in doing it," Faiza explains.

"Dhaka's old, quaint neighbourhoods with friendly neighbours, where the afternoons were filled with laughter and the happy noise of children playing hide and seek in the narrow lanes – I want to recreate that peaceful childhood lifestyle for my son. I have decidedly chosen to continue the long-winded slow living," she says.

Being on the same page with her, Mansoor says, "I no longer stress over what I could not achieve but celebrate what I have done and how much I have learned from life's experiences. I am in competition with no one. I do one thing at a time and enjoy my achievement."

After such thoughtful and sensible examples, I have decided to take everything in easy stride, for I finally realised that valuing myself gives me the peace of mind I was always looking for.

Someone once told me to tackle one war a day, to enjoy one win a day; I now think it was sound advice. It's time to put it into practice.





SHIFTING LIVES IN THE HAOR

A wetland losing ITS FARMERS

Farmers prematurely harvesting their crops at Dubai Haor in Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila after flash floods, triggered by torrential rain upstream, inundated the fields. Photo taken in April 2022.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

KHAIRUL HASSAN JAHIN

On a humid July evening, I met Majed bhai at Chamtaghat, a small river port where boats jostle with auto-rickshaws at the gateway to the Haor wetlands. He was hurrying to catch a ride back to his home in Kurigram, some 200 kilometres north. Majed bhai drives an auto-rickshaw between Mithamoin and Austagram. But he was not always an auto-rickshaw driver. For two decades, he was a seasonal farmhand in the Haor, involved in ploughing rented plots, transplanting paddy, and harvesting in the brief, frantic window before the floods rolled in.

Floods are natural to the Haor region and a crucial part of its economic and ecological setting. However, flash floods are not. The cost of the globalised nature of development has been a complete misreading of the locals. These 'denatural' disasters have directly influenced the resilience strategies of people belonging to the Haor.

In 2022, after yet another flash flood submerged the ripening boro paddy overnight, Majed bhai left the fields for good. He still comes south each year, but now to drive a rented three-wheeler, ferrying tourists across newly paved roads that cut through the watery expanse. His passengers no longer carry sacks of rice but selfie sticks and packets of snacks.

In Dhaka, rickshaw pullers speaking northern dialects are a common sight. But Majed's story is different — a man who migrates seasonally not to the city but from one rural area to another. When I asked him why he did not seek work in Dhaka or other larger cities like other northern migrants, he laughed.

"In Dhaka, I would sleep on the pavement and pull a rickshaw among thousands. Here, at least the air is fresh, and people come to enjoy the water. I can make more in one tourist season than I did in three harvests."

Majed's trajectory encapsulates the shifting currents of life in the Haor, where seasonal migrants once tethered their livelihoods to agriculture but now

increasingly find themselves absorbed into tourism, construction, and transport.

For centuries, the Haor basin—Bangladesh's vast bowl-shaped wetlands stretching across Kishoreganj, Sunamganj, and Netrokona—has sustained a fragile agrarian economy. During the dry months (November–April), the wetlands recede, exposing fertile land where villagers rush to plant a single crop of boro rice. But come May, torrential rains and upstream flows from Meghalaya refill the basin, turning villages into islands and fields into inland seas.

Landless labourers—once hired en masse for harvesting—find their services less in demand as mechanised harvesters spread. What was once a "hungry season" between crops has become, for many, a year-round state of uncertainty.

One elderly farmer in Austagram told me: "In my father's time, we feared storms, but we trusted the land. Now, we fear both the sky and the market. A single sack of fertiliser costs as much as a month's food. How can the poor survive on this land?"

Environmental degradation has accelerated this collapse. Roads and

Majed who trade in sickles for steering wheels.

If floods and market forces are the push, government policy has been the pull—redirecting the Haor's workforce into new, informal livelihoods.

The emblem of this transformation is the 29.7-kilometre all-weather road inaugurated in 2020 between Austagram, Mithamoin, and Itna. At a cost of over BDT 874 crore, the road was presented as a vital link for connectivity and development. It quickly became a tourist magnet, with families from Dhaka driving four hours just to cruise through "Bangladesh's Venice."

One tea seller in Mithamoin explained the change vividly: "Before, my husband worked as a day labourer in harvesting. We would wait for the season. Now, every Friday, people come with cars and boats. I set up a stall by the road. I sell tea, fried hilsa, and snacks. In two days, I earn what we once made in a whole week of farming."

For peasants, the road has created an alternative to farming. Men who once harvested rice now drive auto-rickshaws along the asphalt. Young men act as tour guides or rent boats. Tourism has, in short, formalised the rural economy, spawning jobs that are seasonal, precarious, but immediate.

Yet the same road has exacerbated flooding. Constructed without adequate drainage, it blocks natural water flows, leading to waterlogging that destroys crops and fish. Although environmentalists warned of such consequences, their concerns were largely ignored.

A fisherman in Tanguar Haor told me with frustration: "The road brings people with cameras, but it stops the fish from moving. Our nets come back empty, but the tourists eat fried fish by the roadside. Who benefits?"

This paradox—of infrastructure simultaneously enabling livelihoods and undermining them—is emblematic of what scholars call neoliberal development: policies that prioritise growth, connectivity,

and capital accumulation while externalising ecological and social costs. In the Haor, the state's investments have been less about securing farming futures than about integrating the wetlands into a wider tourism economy.

The tourism boom is not an accident; it is policy. Bangladesh's Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has explicitly targeted Haor wetlands like Tanguar Haor as eco-tourism hubs. Local administrations promote festivals, boat races, and scenic "Haor drives." The government frames tourism as diversification—yet for many peasants, it is less a choice than a necessity, forced upon them by the collapse of farming.

Construction work provides another pull. Government contracts for embankments, schools, and rural housing schemes generate short-term jobs for migrant peasants. These projects, often tied to election cycles, are labour-intensive but temporary, feeding the churn of seasonal migration.

The irony is stark: government policy, designed to "secure" agrarian livelihoods, has in practice accelerated informalisation—a shift to insecure, non-farm labour with little protection. The Haor Master Plan of 2012 envisioned "sustainable livelihoods" and "climate resilience." But in practice, infrastructure has commodified the landscape, attracting capital and tourists while eroding the ecological foundations of farming.

Economic growth has been achieved, but unevenly. Those with access to tourist hotspots benefit, while interior villages see their fields waterlogged and their youth depart. As development theorist David Harvey reminds us, capitalism thrives through "uneven geographical development"—creating prosperity in one place by displacing costs elsewhere. The Haor exemplifies this: asphalted prosperity for some, flooded despair for others.

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A digital rendering of a section of the Haor road in Kishoreganj — built to lift livelihoods but leaving many underwater. For locals, progress has meant fewer fields, more floods, and a new struggle for survival.

It was always a risky cycle, but it used to work. Now, it is unravelling. Flash floods arrive earlier and with greater force, sweeping away crops before harvest. In 2017, one such flood destroyed over 850,000 tonnes of rice, triggering local food shortages. Farmers speak of "the water coming two weeks early"—a small shift with devastating consequences.

The rising costs of agricultural inputs compound the problem. Fertiliser and diesel prices eat into razor-thin margins, while middlemen capture much of the profit.

embankments built to protect fields often obstruct natural water flows, intensifying floods rather than preventing them. The Haor's hydrology—once a delicately balanced rhythm of inflow and outflow—has been disrupted by infrastructural interventions that privilege connectivity over ecology.

Economic theory calls this process de-peasantisation—the gradual erosion of smallholder farming as a viable way of life. In Haor villages, it is visible in abandoned paddies, pawned ploughs, and men like

they even reach the gate.

For visually impaired voters, the Representation of the People Order (RPO) requires them to take a companion of their choice to the booth. That is the only provision. And even that comes with risk.

"For the visually impaired people you have to take a companion with you to vote," Bashair said.

"Sometimes the political party members take advantage of this situation and act as their companion. Whether the vote went according to the participant's wish is not clear."

Anonymity—a basic right of voting—is not guaranteed. "What the EC needs to ensure is that persons with disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired, can cast their vote in secret. Because you know how the political parties in our country operate, if anonymity is not ensured, they will live in fear," he said.

Talukdar Rifat Pasha, a policy officer at the Institute of Wellbeing Bangladesh, echoes this fear. "I became eligible to vote in 2009. Nobody came to me and I didn't have any

information about my voter number and how I, as a visually impaired person, was going to vote," he said. "2014, 2018 and 2024 were also the same."

"As a citizen of a country, you have the right to vote. But we don't feel like a citizen, because we are not ensured of our right."

Bashair and others have been telling the Election Commission the same message for years. "We have always talked about accessibility rights of persons with disabilities to the Election Commission, we have sent them countless messages, memoranda, but they didn't really think of it as an important issue."

None of the solutions are beyond reach. Both Rifat and Bashair believe Bangladesh needs stronger political will, sustained advocacy, and practical tools such as EVMs equipped with tactile or Braille systems. They also suggest simple yet effective measures—SMS alerts before election day, dedicated transport, trained polling officials, public announcements, and a helpline for voter assistance.

Bangladesh already issues disability identity cards and sends disability allowances through mobile banking. The state knows where many of these citizens live. What is missing is intent.

Election expert Badiul Alam Majumder said, "The visually impaired or the people with disabilities are also a citizen of this country and they have the right to vote." He believes responsibility begins with the Election Commission, and collaboration with disability rights groups can help mitigate this problem.

Some NGOs like BPKS and ADD International have tried to work on disability-inclusive elections, but most ended when funding dried up. Like Litan's project in 2008, they appeared for one election and disappeared before the next.

There is talk within the Constitution Reform Commission of recognising voting as a fundamental right. If that happens, citizens could take legal action when that right is denied. But should it take a courtroom to remind us that democracy does not belong only to the able-bodied?

Rifat's words stay with you: "We talk about participatory election; political parties only talk about inclusive voting but they don't mean it. It may be inclusive from the perspective of the political parties but we don't feel inclusive, we feel left out."

The upcoming national election is expected to usher in a new chapter for Bangladesh, yet it appears poised to repeat the same old mistakes. Decades of neglect by policymakers and the Election Commission have left a deep flaw in the voting system—one that continues to exclude large numbers of citizens by making it difficult for them to exercise their rights. What the nation truly needs now is commitment and effective implementation of accessibility measures for voters with disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired.

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Will visually impaired voters be able to cast their vote?

YSTIAQUE AHMED

The excitement in the recent Chittagong University Central Students' Union (CUCSU) polls faded quickly for a group of students who had come to vote for the first time. Although there were 60 to 70 visually impaired students, there was no Braille ballot, no tactile guide, and no arrangement that allowed them to vote on their own. They were told to bring someone along—a friend, a teacher, anyone who could help them. Their enthusiasm turned into silence.

Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (RUCSU) was no different. No arrangement, no discussion, and no accountability. That silence echoes the problem. We often champion disability rights through speeches and seminars, yet they seldom take shape in real, functioning systems.

This raises a serious concern for the upcoming national election. Bangladesh has nearly one million citizens who are completely blind and over six million with some degree of vision loss, according to the Vision Atlas of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness report. If things

remain the same, most of them will quietly sit out another election—not by choice, but because the system isn't built for them.

Litan Baruri, currently a movement liaison at ADD International, told TDS that in 2008 he worked as a project coordinator with the Election Commission to monitor accessibility for disabled voters. "The problems I faced then still persist today," he said. There were no accessibility systems—only companions assisting voters with disabilities. The project didn't continue due to funding issues.

Bashair Al Hossain, a programme manager at the National Grassroot Disability Organisation (NGDO), told TDS, "I was involved in almost every aspect in a couple of elections. I was a member of the National Election Monitoring team in 2001 and 2008 under UNDP and some international organisations as their representative."

He described the recurring problems: "The ballot boxes are sometimes on the second or third floor of a building, which makes it difficult for voters with disabilities to reach. The entry to the election centres is not very accessible. Most of the transportation systems are shut down during election time," leaving most voters with disabilities stranded before



A visually impaired student casts her ballot with assistance during the CUCSU election, where many others left without voting due to the absence of Braille or tactile facilities allowing them to vote independently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



CHOOSING PEACE OVER PACE

How urbanites embracing beauty of slow living, finding calm and meaning amid the city's chaos

PHOTO: STAR

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

"Time is money" – this capitalist anthem has forced us, the modern world citizens, to optimise and monetise every second of our waking hours. We compute our accomplishments quantitatively, without regard for the quality of the task done.

to meet endless deadlines for a more intentional way of being, for a deeper, more meaningful life and career. There is a wave of philosophical shift in our social and cultural mindset, whereby we are opting to take the pace of our lives a notch down and do everything at the right speed.

Appreciating life's subtle

doing everything at a snail's pace'

Ishrat Jahan, the creative head of the local clothing brand Deshal, lives a fairy-tale life. Idling among her red lotuses in her pond, taking cues from nature's colour palette for her clothing line, cooking on clay stoves and ovens, and promoting local and traditional cuisine, she has turned her life into one massive immersive experience where haste has no place.

Ishrat lives a fulfilling life because, for her, finding joy and the right tempo for each task she undertakes is the core of her slow-living mindset.

"Some mornings I sit with a paintbrush, some afternoons I spend reading books, and some evenings I enjoy chatting with my friends. My work area is also in this village. It is only a ten-minute walk away. So, I am not forced to go into the hustle and bustle of the city. I live a secluded rural life, carefully avoiding urban life, where I do not have to rush around. That's why I built a wooden house amid greenery on the outskirts of Dhaka, allowing me to enjoy the best of the setting," she says.

"The city has lost its ability to inspire me. Even as a child, the romance of Dhaka was lost to me. Yet I would say that something held me back – something like the resilience of a horsetail sapling growing through the cracks of an old wall, maybe. Though I spent a large part of my life in the city for school, university, and career purposes, my objective was always to escape from the city and find my address in nature," Ishrat explains her family's choice of slow living.

To lead a mindful life, you don't have to leave the metropolis to avoid the urban chaos. "I am moving away from the circumstances that dictate my tempo; instead, I am aligning with a more purposeful and deliberate approach to life. This conscious choice to let go of the need for constant rush and stimulation in every aspect of my life is liberating," says NB Mansoor, who left her corporate job to pursue her

passion by setting up an artisanal crafts shop.

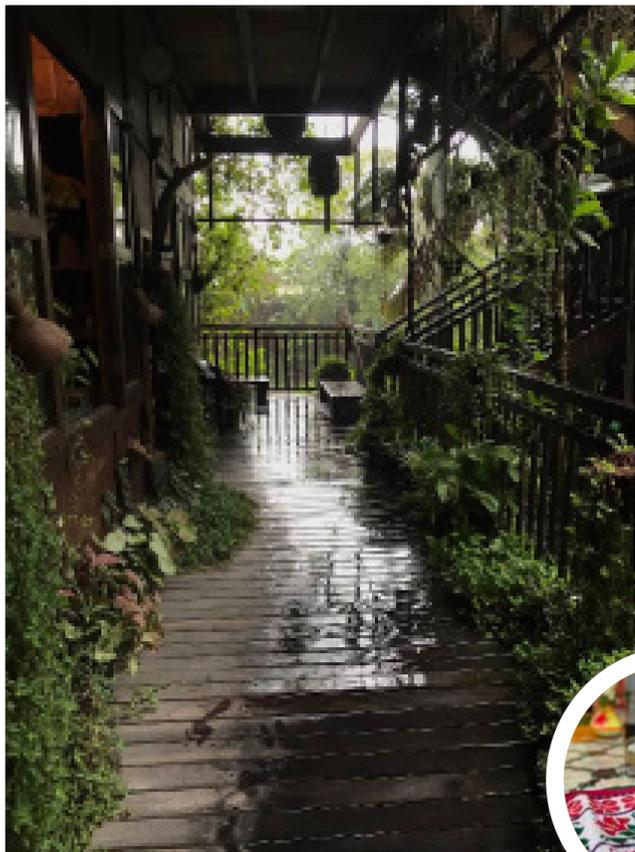
"Being stuck in traffic to keep four appointments a day, giving up weekends to prepare a presentation, compromising on me-time or family time was not exactly my idea of success. My awareness of the change in my mindset

be a statement; it must be integrated into your lifestyle.

"Nature will not betray me. I do not fancy overfed cattle or hormone-induced chicken. I do not want my vegetables to be big in size. I would rather have my pui shak

She promotes slow fashion through her venture, Manas, and her vegan restaurant, Shanchayita, promotes sustainable food and living.

As urbanites, we have an insatiable drive for recognition. It feels like we are always in a chase to outdo our peers or suffer from a sense of dissatisfaction and unfulfillment. The second best has no chance in this hustle culture or fast-paced living.



I think this mindset is all about the notion that faster is always better. Our contemporary lives are like one big checklist, and all the boxes need to be ticked off as quickly as possible, or else you fall behind in the invisible race you are in against your social circle.

However, many urbanites are giving up on the dizzying rush

nuances and cherishing our inner fulfilment, the "slow philosophy" advocates for peace over noise and quality over quantity. Slow food, slow fashion, slow travel, and ideas of slow living are part of the Slow Movement, a global trend that recalibrates our lifestyle, prioritising mindfulness.

'Slow movement is not about

and surroundings has relieved me of my achievement fatigue and dissatisfaction with life," Mansoor continues.

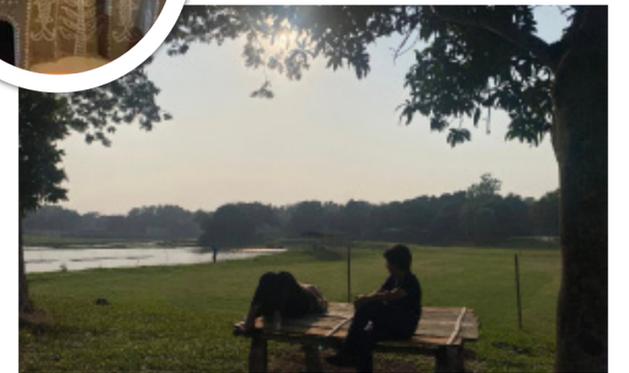
'Practising the slow movement must come from within'

I find Faiza Ahmed's ideology, her appreciation for peace over noise, to be an earthy tribute to intentional living. She is an artist who passionately endorses the slow movement, mindful consumption, and environmental consciousness.

"My childhood in the late seventies in Dhaka was a time when the simplicity of life left us satisfied; slow-paced lifestyles, sustainable living, and organic food were not trending social media hashtags but a regular way of life," says Faiza, who is an inspirational eco-thinker.

She strongly believes that to truly follow the slow living concept, you need to own it, accept the simplicity, and be comfortable with the choice.

"My happiness is a projection that people like, but they cannot copy it unless they own it from within. These practices cannot be copied or faked. Succumbing to peer pressure and fad hashtags will not work," she says, adding that this feeling cannot



"We are in a constant adrenaline high, targeting an ambitious life. It turns our life into one big ledger book of assets, liabilities, income, and expenses. Rather, life should be about a job well done and finding pleasure in doing it," Faiza explains.

"Dhaka's old, quaint neighbourhoods with friendly neighbours, where the afternoons were filled with laughter and the happy noise of children playing hide and seek in the narrow lanes – I want to recreate that peaceful childhood lifestyle for my son. I have decidedly chosen to continue the long-winded slow living," she says.

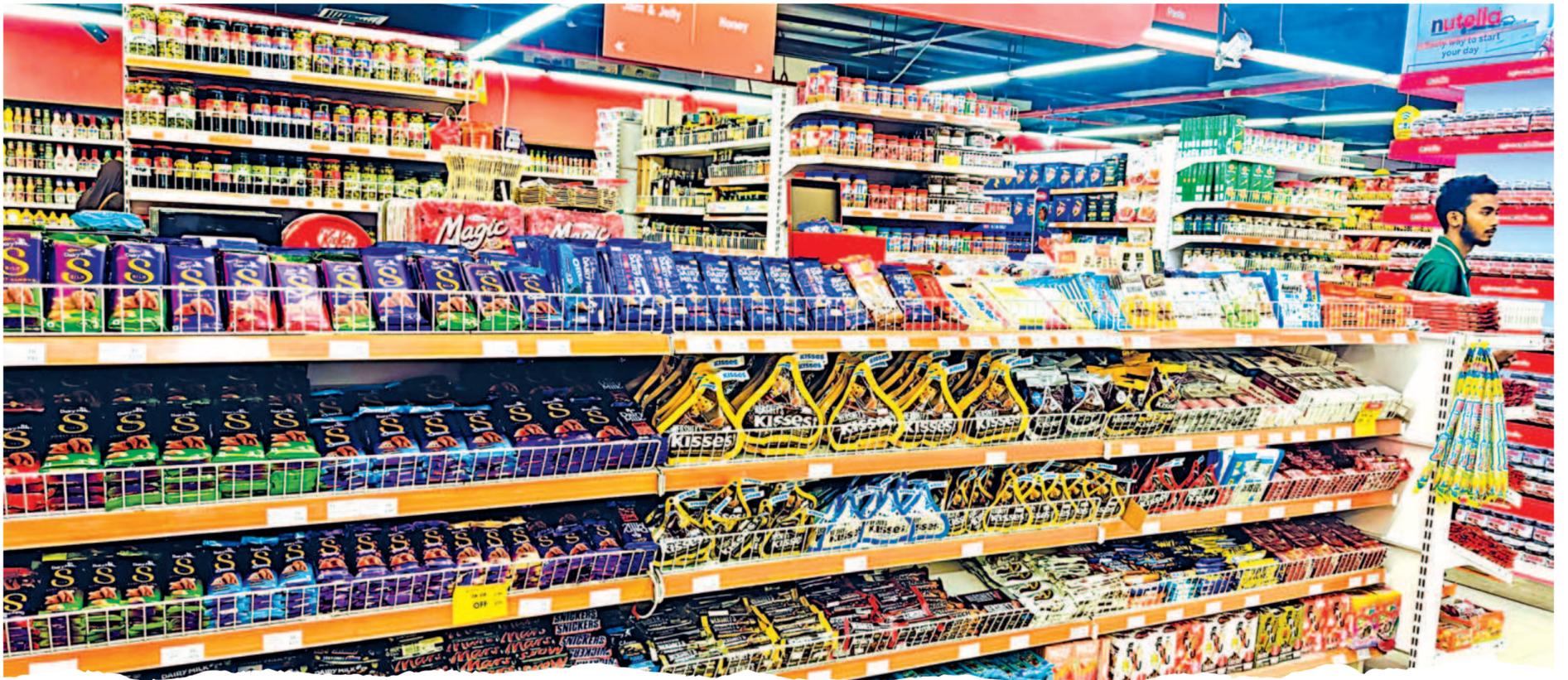
Being on the same page with her, Mansoor says, "I no longer stress over what I could not achieve but celebrate what I have done and how much I have learned from life's experiences. I am in competition with no one. I do one thing at a time and enjoy my achievement."

After such thoughtful and sensible examples, I have decided to take everything in easy stride, for I finally realised that valuing myself gives me the peace of mind I was always looking for.

Someone once told me to tackle

leaves nibbled by insects because that means the ecosystem and food chain are in order. I use alloy kasha pots and pans and bamboo blinds as curtains. I save energy by not opting for electronics. It saves me money and helps me promote my sustainable living style," Faiza continues.





PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Mimi, nostalgia and new bites

The local chocolate market has come a long way, from simple childhood favourites to exciting new flavours. Local and global brands now offer the treat for all budgets, and young people are driving the demand

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Children from the 1980s and 1990s share one clear memory: Mimi chocolate.

Back then, Mimi came wrapped in simple black paper, printed with the pictures of a cow or orange slices. Chocolate was a rare treat, often arriving only when relatives abroad brought some home.

Cherished by people of all ages, Mimi marked both the beginning and the peak of their local chocolate experience for many.

With Bangladesh Television (BTV) as the only channel then, Mimi commercials captured the imagination of youngsters across the country. A bar might arrive on special occasions, during visits from relatives, or when grandparents treated them on shopping trips.

It was found mostly in large city

segment, while local producers meet the rest of the market. Pran-RFL Group, Olympic Industries, and Well Food dominate, carrying forward the legacy Mimi began.

"As a Millennial, I remember a time when chocolates were hard to get in Bangladesh. One had to ask friends and family abroad to bring a bar or two — or make do with Mimi or Aziz Milk Chocolate, which left a layer of fat on your palate," said Zina Tasreen, a private service holder.

"Now, chocolates from all over the world are available in supermarkets at fair prices. I am happy I can satisfy my cravings for dark chocolate whenever I want," she added.

A BITTER BEGINNING

In "The True History of Chocolate", anthropologists Sophie D Coe and Michael D Coe trace chocolate back to ancient Mesoamerica. The Olmec, Maya, and Aztec civilisations

consumed cacao not as a sweet, but as a sacred, bitter drink used in royal ceremonies and even warfare. The Maya called it kakaw, a divine gift.

European colonists encountered cacao in the 16th century and changed it forever. Sweetened with sugar and cinnamon, it transformed from a ritual beverage into a luxury indulgence.

Chocolate arrived in the Indian subcontinent during the British colonial period as a European import, initially reserved for the colonial elite. After independence, access widened. While India began cultivating cacao in the south, Bangladesh became a consumer market, relying on imported supplies.

Bangladesh's chocolate and wafer market grows at 6 to 8 percent annually, according to Ashraf Bin Taj, managing director of International Distribution Company Bangladesh PLC (IDC).

IDC distributes major brands like Cadbury, Snickers, M&M's and BitLit. The local company offers premium quality at accessible prices.

Taj said that imported chocolates and candy account for around 30 percent of the market, while local producers dominate the low and mid-price segments.



Kamal said high import duties on raw materials like sugar and cocoa limit their export potential. "To compete globally, we need policy support with lower tariffs and incentives for importing advanced machinery," he added.

Another promising local market player is Well Food and Beverage Company Limited. It offers big size chocolates ranging from Tk 25 to Tk 775 — a mixed segment.

"We have been in this market for five to six years," said Sabbir Shahabuddin, general manager. "Our aim is to offer a

health-conscious consumers. "People are now looking for high-quality chocolates made with natural ingredients, innovative flavours, and multi-sensory experiences that go beyond just taste," he said.

Chowdhury said chocolate distribution channels are expanding through supermarkets, convenience stores, and e-commerce platforms. However, several challenges, including high import duties and maintaining a reliable cold chain, continue to affect the segment.

"High import duties on essential ingredients raise overall costs, impacting pricing strategies, particularly for imported and premium chocolates," he said. "Maintaining an uninterrupted cold chain also remains a significant hurdle."

In response, Nestlé has adapted with a mix of classic and premium offerings. "KitKat, Classic, and Milkybar continue to delight consumers. We are also introducing premium and artisanal options to meet demand for quality and variety," Chowdhury said.

THE NEXT BITE

Beyond traditional bars and candies, new trends are shaping the local chocolate market. The demand for healthier options, portion-controlled snacks, and premium packaging is rising.

Brands are responding with sugar-free and dark chocolate lines, along with recyclable packaging.

E-commerce is expanding reach, with platforms like Pran's Othoba or PriyoShop improving distribution in remote areas. Predictive analytics now help brands manage inventory more efficiently during peak seasons.

According to industry insiders, the mid-tier chocolate segment presents the biggest untapped opportunity. Urban and semi-urban consumers are willing to trade up but remain price conscious. Smaller packs, combo deals, and single-serve formats are proving effective in winning this crowd.

Yet the local chocolate market is moderately fragmented, offering scope for consolidation while supporting innovation. Local brands benefit from reach and affordability, while global players bring R&D expertise and sophisticated marketing.

Multinationals like Nestlé, Mars Wrigley, and Perfection Van Melle are investing more in brand visibility, while domestic giants are doubling down on affordability and scale. The mix is creating a dynamic market with room for both established names and ambitious newcomers.



Chocolates are no longer rare, and the treats are not only reserved for children these days. Those are now part of everyday life, thanks to industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, and rising incomes that have driven the growth of the local chocolate market

confectioneries, never taken for granted.

Even today, many shoppers still scan shelves hoping to spot the familiar black wrapper and the two beloved flavours of their youth in vain. Mimi slowly vanished from the market, being unable to survive the flood of imported brands and colourful new wrappers that reshaped the market.

But chocolates are no longer rare, and the treats are not only reserved for children these days. Those are now part of everyday life, thanks to industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, and rising incomes that have driven the growth of the local chocolate market.

Supermarkets now stock treats for all ages, from Pran's Treat Bars to imported Ferrero Rocher and Lindt. Nestlé's KitKat, Classic, and Milkybar are widely available.

While Mimi used to earn a few lakhs of taka a year, the local chocolate and wafer market is now valued between Tk 3,000 crore and Tk 3,500 crore.

Imported brands target the premium



Nearly 40 percent of the country's population is under 24. This youthful consumer base is fuelling demand for indulgent and trendy snacks. Festivals such as birthdays, Eid, Pahela Baishakh, and Valentine's Day also increase seasonal sales.

According to Taj, their challenges include a sharp rise in global cocoa and dairy prices. The spikes have pushed retail prices up by 30 to 60 percent over the past year.

He said that new import valuation thresholds and limited cold-chain infrastructure also affect the distribution of temperature-sensitive premium chocolates.

"Our aim is to bridge the gap between high-end imports and local affordability," Taj said. "Innovation and accessibility will shape the future of Bangladesh's chocolate market."

MADE TO MELT HERE

Local chocolate manufacturers dominate most of the domestic market, with Pran-RFL Group, Olympic Industries, and Abul Khair accounting for about 80 percent of this confectionery segment.

Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director at Pran RFL, said they have been producing chocolates since 1999 using European machinery. Pran's plants in Narsingdi, Habiganj, and Natore can churn out 36,000 tonnes annually.

"Our portfolio ranges from Tk 1 candies to Tk 60 bars, making chocolate accessible across different income levels," Kamal said. Divino, Mango Candy, and Treat Bars are quite popular across the country.

Pran also exports chocolates to over 80 countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Those export items are usually pricier than the products for the local market. At big superstores in major cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, some of those premium products are also available.