



“It’s an important part of American national security to make sure that this nuclear arsenal we have actually functions properly.”

US VP JD Vance on testing US nuclear arsenal

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BB seeks legal overhaul for full autonomy

Proposes search panel, court of inquiry to shield top posts from politics

REJAU KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

Bangladesh Bank has sent a set of sweeping reform proposals to the government, seeking to align its autonomy with global standards and shield the institution from political influence.

Governor Ahsan H. Mansur outlined the draft amendments to the Bangladesh Bank Order 1972 in a Demi-Official letter dated October 9 to Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, with copies to the finance secretary and the financial institutions secretary.

The proposals, backed by detailed justifications, aim to elevate the status of the central bank's leadership, restructure its board, and overhaul the appointment and removal process for top officials.

Finance ministry officials said the central bank had placed the draft amendments before its board on September 16, where it was agreed in principle to forward them to the finance ministry to promulgate it as an ordinance.

Through these amendments, a strong legal foundation will be established to prevent the recurrence of past mistakes and irregularities in the financial sector.

Ahsan H. Mansur, BB governor



- Number of govt-nominated director in BB board will be 1 instead of 3
- Number of independent experts will be 4 to 6 instead of existing 3
- BB governor will enjoy the status of a full minister

“Through these amendments, a strong legal foundation will be established to prevent the recurrence of past mistakes and irregularities in the financial sector,” the governor wrote.

Past reform attempts, he noted, faltered “due to lack of political and administrative will”, adding that the current moment is “the most appropriate time” and would stand as a significant contribution by the government.

The nine proposed amendments draw on practices from advanced and regional economies. The letter argues that passing the Bangladesh Bank (Amendment) Ordinance 2025, in step with broader interim government reforms, would empower the central bank to act with greater independence and modern oversight.

The IMF, which has pushed for enhanced central bank autonomy under its \$5.5 billion loan programme and provided technical assistance in drafting the amendments, had set a September deadline for securing the advisory council’s approval, a deadline already missed.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Tenure ends, full consensus still elusive

MD ABBAS

The tenure of the National Consensus Commission expired yesterday, with the National Citizen Party and four leftist parties yet to sign the July charter of reforms.

Meanwhile, three major parties -- the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and NCP -- remain divided over how to implement the constitutional reforms in the charter.

The commission submitted its recommendations on implementing the July National Charter 2025 to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on October 28.

It proposed that the government issue a July Charter Implementation (Constitutional Reform) Order and hold a referendum to secure public endorsement under that order.

It also recommended giving the next parliament a dual mandate for 270 days to oversee the constitutional reforms while performing legislative duties. If it fails to complete the reforms within the timeframe, the proposals would automatically be incorporated into the constitution.

However, five parties -- the NCP, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Basod),



A battery-run rickshaw driving across the Malibagh flyover near Mouchak in Dhaka yesterday. Although such slow-moving vehicles are not allowed on flyovers or highways, these rickshaws are often seen flouting the rules, putting commuters' lives at risk.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

The Dhaka North City Corporation, entrusted with protecting public roads from encroachment, has itself occupied a portion of one of the capital's busiest thoroughfares to build a ward office. This brazen irony is all the proof city dwellers need to understand why the city's long-standing street occupation crisis never gets resolved. The photo was taken yesterday on Pragati Sarani in Baridhara.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NATIONAL CONSENSUS COMMISSION

Proposal unconstitutional

Legal experts oppose automatic incorporation of July charter reforms into the constitution

ASHUTOSH SARKAR and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Some legal experts have strongly opposed the National Consensus Commission's recommendation that constitutional reforms in the July charter be automatically incorporated into the constitution if these are not implemented within a 270-day timeframe.

Calling the proposal “illegal and unconstitutional”, they said there is no such precedent, and it might be challenged in court.

In the recommendations, submitted to the government on October 28, the consensus commission left it to the government to decide whether a proposed referendum on the July charter will be held on the same day as the general election in February or earlier.

It proposed two alternatives with a common thread -- the government will issue a July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order; a new

parliament will be formed through the general election; the parliament will also act as a constitution reform council with the authority to exercise “constituent power” on constitutional matters.

constitution.

It also left the tough question of who would issue the implementation order -- the president or the chief adviser.

When asked whether the order is

“In the history of law, there have been many new inventions. But this is something unheard of in legal history.”

Constitution expert and lawyer Shahdeen Malik



The first alternative suggests that the referendum question will include the reforms in a schedule of the order, while the second proposes a constitutional reform draft bill based on the charter's proposals, and put the bill in the order's schedule.

If the constitution reform council fails to complete its work within 270 days of its first sitting, the reforms will automatically take effect and be incorporated into the

a constitutional one, constitution expert and lawyer Shahdeen Malik said there is no such precedent in legal history.

He noted that during the Pakistan era, military dictators used to issue similar orders when the constitution remained abrogated.

Regarding the provision of automatic inclusion, he said, “In the history of law, there have been many new inventions. But this is

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

BNP caught in reform dilemma ahead of polls

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP is in a conundrum over how to respond to the National Consensus Commission's recommendations on implementing reforms.

Party leaders said the situation has become uncomfortable for the BNP, which had not anticipated such a development while focusing on its election preparations.

It is now closely monitoring the government's actions and has reiterated that it will not compromise on holding the national polls in February. Instead, it plans to proceed with greater caution in the coming days.

Senior party leaders said the interim government and the consensus commission have recently drawn greater criticism than the BNP over the July charter issue, after losing the trust of political parties by failing to uphold their commitments.

According to political analysts, BNP's most practical option is to pursue a solution through talks. In this way, the party may put strategic pressure on the government to achieve its goals.

The BNP is in a dilemma now. If it rejects the charter,



SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Islamic government needed for welfare of Hindus: Porwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar yesterday said all governments since independence have used the Hindu community merely for their own benefit.

“For the betterment of the Hindu community and infrastructural development in Dumuria, Phultala and across the country, an Islamic government is now essential. If anyone obstructs them [Hindus], the people will build resistance,” he said at a meeting in Khulna's Dumuria upazila.

In the event organised by the Hindu committee of the upazila unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, Porwar pledged that if Jamaat gets the chance to govern, it will eliminate terrorism, extortion and land grabbing from the country.

“For 54 years, those who ruled the country have exploited the Hindu community,” he said.

“The people want change, and we want to bring that change. We have seen the rule of the plough, the sheaf of paddy and the boat. Only one symbol remains -- the scale of Jamaat-e-Islami,” he said, referring to electoral symbols of Jatiya Party, BNP, and Awami League.

Reiterating his demand for holding a referendum in November to implement the July charter and then holding the national election in February, Porwar said, “Students from all universities have delivered the message of change, and the people will echo that message in the coming days.”

Babu Krishna Nandi, president of the upazila Hindu committee of Jamaat, urged everyone to vote for the scale to ensure the party's victory.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Why small-talk in Dhaka feels like a vanishing act

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

As "the melting pot" of Bangladesh, the capital city has certain characteristics that might as well be tagged as 'culture.' Some of them commendable, some are prevalent everywhere, and some on the verge of fading away. It feels like small talk is one of those cultures.

SMALL TALK FADING AWAY

It's not just Dhaka. Small talk is fading away everywhere. The whole world is facing this phenomenon where small talks are becoming a memory of the past. We are not going into the discussion of the necessity and merits of small talk culture, but rather acknowledging how something that was once so common now almost unheard of (Pun intended).

There are a number of things that took its place. Having a smartphone in everyone's hand is probably the biggest of them all. People nowadays would rather be tuned into their favourite playlist instead of small talk.

On the other hand, Dhaka is not what it used to be. Now, there are too many people, too many vehicles, too much noise, and everyone is too busy to care about anyone else. So small talk really has no place in people's schedule anymore.

RARE BUT STILL HERE

While it is indeed rare, it still can be spotted.

Most people who engage in small talk are acquaintances. In public transport, you see people who often commute



ILLUSTRATION: ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

together engage in discussion about how much traffic there is on the road. People complain about how difficult it is to get a seat on one of the public transports and the other person nods in agreement, probably adding some comment that you can't hear over the noise of the honking traffic.

The usual small talk includes asking about the family, where the kids go to school. Then pretty soon, it ends up in politics these days; even though small talk is supposed to be a casual conversation.

Sometimes, you get a glimpse of a few young adults who truly engage in small talk. Football, wrestling, TV shows are usually their topic of conversation. If it's none of the above, then it's gossip.

"Did you hear what Ashif did yesterday?" one of them begins and

soon, a chatter starts. People around them will give them an annoyed look but they don't care.

THE KING OF SMALL TALK

A middle-aged man on a public transport; this is the ultimate king of small talks.

From asking you details about how you are doing, where you are coming from, where do you study and how many siblings you have, this man will switch up faster than you can answer.

If you are on a bus, they will invite you in small talks about how terrible the roads are and curse the drivers, hoping you join in. Next thing you know, he is criticising the government, criticising the average person for their dishonesty and blaming the general public for anything he can think of.

Younger people usually refrain from

such conversations with strangers. This is an interesting factor that shows the generational gap.

ALWAYS DRAMATIC, NEVER BORING

This culture of small talk is many things but it's never boring. All you have to do is take off your earbuds for a moment and listen.

You will find how fast these small talks start, how suddenly they change topic and how abruptly they can turn sideways sparking a conflict. Raised voices are usually escalated small talks that did not remain so small.

It is ironic, somewhat entertaining, and a culture that might become scarce with time but it will never disappear. And it's not just Dhaka. As long as there are civilisations standing, small talks will remain.

Tenure ends

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist) -- did not sign the charter.

Contacted yesterday evening, NCP Joint Convener Javed Rasin told The Daily Star that his party would sign once the government issued the referendum order.

The four leftist parties said they could not sign any document, even with dissent notes, that risks altering the constitution's four fundamental principles: democracy, socialism, secularism, and nationalism.

CPB General Secretary Abdullah Al Kafi Ratan said the party opposed any move preventing future legal challenges to the charter.

When The Daily Star approached Prof Ali Riaz, vice-president of the commission, yesterday, he said that with the commission's term now over, he would return to academic work but "continue monitoring developments in a personal capacity".

Asked if the NCP could still sign, he said that since the commission no longer exists, the party could now sign directly with the government.

According to the Chief Adviser's Office, Monir Haider, special assistant (consensus) to the chief adviser, will now oversee matters related to charter signing.

Contacted for comments, Monir told The Daily Star, "I will do whatever the chief adviser advises me to do."

The government formed the seven-member commission on February 13 to build political consensus on the recommendations of six reform bodies.

Chaired by the chief adviser, it included Prof Ali Riaz, head of the Constitutional Reform Commission; Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, head of the Public Administration Reform Commission; Safar Raj Hossain, head of the Police Reform Commission; Badul Alam Majumder, head of the Election Reform Commission; Justice Emdadul Haque, head of the Judiciary Reform Commission; and Dr Iftekharuzzaman, head of the Anti Corruption Reform Commission.

Its mandate was to engage political parties and stakeholders from the 2024 uprising and forge national agreement on reforms in elections, public administration, the judiciary, anti-corruption systems, and policing.

In the July charter, the commission drafted 84 proposals after two rounds of negotiation. Half of the proposals were related to constitutional reforms, with the BNP and allies recording dissent on at least nine points.

In a rare show of unity, 24 parties signed the charter on October 17 at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. The Gonoforum added its signature two days later.

The final draft went to all parties on September 10, followed by a third round of talks on implementation.

Parties agreed that non-constitutional reforms would proceed via ordinances and executive orders, while constitutional changes would go to referendum, though no consensus was reached on the referendum's timing, procedure, or framework.

BB seeks legal overhaul for full autonomy

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to The Daily Star by phone, Mansur said he wrote to clarify the rationale for reform and "the basis of the central bank's autonomy". He had yet to hold formal talks with the government, having left for the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings on October 10; he is due back this week.

When asked if the proposals are ambitious, he replied, "I think it's not at all ambitious; it is overdue, long overdue."

Asked whether the interim government could implement the changes, he said it could if it wants.

On IMF conditions, he noted, "We will try our best to get it approved by the advisory council before November. If the government doesn't want to do it, that's on them."

APPOINTMENT, REMOVAL

In his letter, Mansur proposed forming a three-member search committee, led by a former finance or planning minister or adviser, or a former or outgoing BB governor, to appoint the governor and deputy governors, under rules defining its mandate.

The main goal of the proposal is to ensure merit-based appointments free from political interference, which is "a fundamental condition for a modern and autonomous central bank", he wrote.

He cited examples of countries like the Bank of England, Reserve Bank of India, Bank of Canada, South African Reserve Bank, and European Central Bank.

Allegations requiring removal of

top officials would be examined by a three-member Court of Inquiry headed by a justice of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, ensuring removal only through due legal process.

The letter cites global practice, including the Bank of England, where removal requires proof of misconduct or incapacity under law.

Contacted by this newspaper, Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the proposed amendments are essential for strengthening the central bank's autonomy.

However, he noted, the genuine autonomy of the central bank will ultimately depend on the governor's individuality, independent mindset, and performance -- particularly in how the officeholder independently exercises the responsibilities entrusted to them with independence and integrity.

BOARD RESTRUCTURING

The letter proposed reducing government-appointed directors from three to one, while the number of independent experts would rise from four to six, strengthening regulatory and policy independence.

Many leading central banks, including the Bank of England, operate with predominantly independent boards, the letter noted.

The Bank of England's board is formed with 12 members, including the governor, two deputy governors, and nine non-executive members.

Currently, the BB's board has eight members, including the governor, one

deputy governor, three secretaries, two economists and a leader of the business chamber.

GOVERNOR'S STATUS

The governor's rank would be elevated to that of a full cabinet minister, matching peers in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India, which helps them maintain policy independence and decision-making authority.

This will also help ensure the central bank's stature, international representation, and effective coordination with other government agencies involved in economic policymaking.

NEW OVERSIGHT POWERS

New sections proposed by Mansur would cover whistleblower protection, prevention of monopolistic practices, oversight of credit rating agencies, collateral valuation, and legal vetting.

These measures aim to enhance discipline, transparency, and accountability in the banking sector by preventing irregularities, mismanagement, and conflicts of interest.

These will also enable Bangladesh Bank to establish a modern, integrated supervisory framework, which will play an effective role in curbing unethical practices, information concealment, nepotism, and monopolistic behavior in the banking sector.

The letter cites the World Bank's 2022 Global Financial Development Report, which highlights whistleblower protections as a powerful guard against corruption and moral hazard.

He also said some proposals, including the one for establishing a bicameral parliament, are directly contradictory to the constitution.

Khurshid Alam Khan, a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court, told this newspaper that there is no provision in the constitution for the formation of a constitution reform council and passing a bill in 270 days.

"I think it is a very risky provision. It may be challenged in the higher court. Such provisions cannot be covered by our constitution," he said.

Alam said it is the president who can promulgate an ordinance in the absence of parliament. "If the ordinance is promulgated, it has to be placed within 30 days. If the parliament does not pass the ordinance in 30 days, it will be automatically cancelled," he said.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua said, "First of all, I'm not clear why they thought of keeping such an option."

He also said the move was unconstitutional.

Citing article 80 of the constitution, he said any bill other than a money bill must be sent to the president for assent. The president has 15 days to approve or return it with objections; if no action is taken within that time, the bill is deemed to have been passed.

SC lawyer Barrister Rasheda Imam said, "The consensus commission's proposals to implement the July charter through an order followed by a referendum raise serious constitutional and procedural concerns."

"Today, Bangladesh remains a

Proposal unconstitutional

FROM PAGE 1

something unheard of in legal history."

"You cannot bind a future parliament to do something. One parliament may pass a law, but it cannot say that the next three parliaments cannot amend it. That's not how the law works."

He added, "Every parliament is sovereign. The current one may pass or reject a law, but it cannot dictate what future parliaments can or cannot do. Yet now we're saying that if a decision is not made within 270 days, the bill will automatically be considered passed. Then what's the point of 270 days of discussion if the outcome is already predetermined?"

Accordingly, the consensus commission proposes a middle path: if reforms are not completed, they shall be deemed enacted. This approach serves as a deterrent while relying on the political commitment of all parties to make the penalty unnecessary."

Barrister Imran Siddiq

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"Today, Bangladesh remains a

AL leader found dead on rooftop of Sylhet home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An Awami League leader was found dead on the rooftop of his home in Sylhet's Dakshin Surma upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Abdur Razzak, 55, was vice-president of the South Surma upazila unit of the AL.

Police said there were several stab wounds on his body. "The incident likely took place between 6:30am and 9:00am," said Mohammad Saiful Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

Family members said Razzak went to the rooftop for his usual morning walk but did not return. Around 9:00am, relatives went upstairs and found his blood-stained body lying in a corner, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Dakshin Surma Police Station.

They also said CCTV footage from the house showed no sign of anyone entering the premises before the incident.

Sylhet Metropolitan Police Commissioner Abdul Quddus Chowdhury said both the Police Bureau of Investigation and the Criminal Investigation Department have visited the scene and are investigating the incident.

Trump sets refugee ceiling at record-low 7,500

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump set the refugee admissions ceiling at 7,500 for fiscal year 2026, the lowest cap on record, a White House document published on Thursday said, part of a broader effort to reshape refugee policies in the US and worldwide.

Trump said in an annual refugee determination dated September 30 that admissions would be focused largely on South Africans from the country's white Afrikaner ethnic minority.

Trump has claimed Afrikaners face persecution based on their race in the Black-majority country, allegations the South African government has denied.

Trump paused all US refugee admissions when he took office in January, saying they could only be restarted if they were established to be in the best interests of the US.

Weeks later, he launched an effort to bring in Afrikaners, sparking criticism from refugee supporters. Only 138 South Africans had entered the US by early September, Reuters reported at the time.

Islamic government

FROM PAGE 1

constitutional democracy, however imperfect, and any mechanism that overlooks this fundamental reality risks eroding the legitimacy of our constitutional order."

"While referendums can serve as tools of direct democracy, they require clear, singular issues and broad public participation. The July charter, however, contains multiple complex matters on which political parties themselves remain divided, and, more critically, the process has thus far excluded meaningful participation of the broader public."

"Equally concerning is the reported exclusion of notes of dissent submitted by various political parties on different reform proposals. This omission erodes the credibility of the commission's proceedings".

"The commission's current trajectory threatens to erode public trust and whatever constitutional stability we have today. For the July charter to serve as a genuine instrument of national renewal, its implementation must be grounded in broad-based political consensus, transparent procedures, and constitutional continuity, not expedient shortcuts or imposed mechanisms."

Contacted, Barrister Imran Siddiq, one of the legal experts consulted by the consensus commission, told The Daily Star that several countries provide that

MAZED SARDAR ROAD IN OLD DHAKA

When waterlogging becomes a daily ordeal

HELEMUL ALAM

Mazed Sardar Road in Old Dhaka remains submerged under dirty water almost throughout the year.

Over a thousand people live in the area. Locals said the condition of the road is so poor that vehicles must move extremely carefully to avoid accidents.

"One of my hands was broken last Saturday while walking along the road. I slipped while trying to give way to a rickshaw van," said Mohammad Sohel, a local resident.

According to Mohammad Sentu Miah, another local, the road has been in a severe state of disrepair for the last three years due to the city corporation's negligence.

"The drainage lines are completely blocked because the authorities have failed to clean them. Sewage overflows from the drains, and residents have to wade through it every day," he said.

"The situation worsens during the rainy season when the road is submerged under knee-deep water."

Residents said they often suffer from skin diseases caused by prolonged exposure to the dirty water.

Fifty-year-old Shahzadi, a resident of the area, said, "Our tenants do not stay for more than two or three months because of this terrible situation. We have to face

dirty water right outside our doors -- it has become a permanent problem."

Kohinoor Begum, 40, who supplies homemade lunch boxes to factory workers, said, "It's very risky to walk here with the food boxes -- there's always a chance of falling into the dirty water due to the road's condition."

Kohinoor added that about a month ago, a woman fell into an open manhole hidden under the dirty water. Locals put a wooden cover on it to prevent any further accidents.

A nurse from Dhaka Medical College Hospital shared a similar experience. "I often have to wade through this water to reach the hospital after rain, as it's nearly impossible to find a rickshaw here after the rain," she said, requesting anonymity.

Sadia Akter, a ninth-grade student of Agrani Girls School and College, said, "After the rain, the dirty water rises, and we are forced to wade through it. Many times, I have reached school with my clothes completely wet."

Contacted, Dhaka South City Corporation Chief Engineer Nur Azizur Rahman said a contractor has already been appointed to repair the road.

"However, the contractor is working very slowly. I have asked the concerned officials to serve a notice, and we'll hold a meeting on Monday to find an immediate solution."



Motorcyclists and pedestrians struggle through the dirty water on Mazed Sardar Road in Old Dhaka, which remains waterlogged almost year-round due to poor drainage and lack of maintenance. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Karwan Bazar's Mughal-era mosque echoes Dhaka's rich past

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Nestled within the chaos of Karwan Bazar, one of Dhaka's oldest and busiest commercial hubs, stands the Khawaja Am Barsha Jame Mosque, a relic of Mughal splendour that has quietly endured the city's rapid transformation.

The three-domed mosque, built on a raised platform about 12 feet above the ground, is believed to have been constructed during the reign of Subedar Shaista Khan by his close aide, Khawaja Am Barsha, in the latter half of the 17th century.

The intricate Mughal craftsmanship of the mosque, from its domes and arches to its sturdy octagonal corner towers, still draws admiration from those who step inside. Each of the mosque's four corners features a towering minaret-like structure capped with miniature domes, and access to the main prayer hall is through a flight of stairs on the eastern side.

When this correspondent visited the site recently, Mufti Tayeb Ahmed, a teacher at the adjoining madrasa, shared his experience of serving there for several years. Inside the main prayer hall, a stone inscription bearing a verse from the Holy Quran can be seen above the mihrab. Another inscription, positioned above the mosque's central entrance, bears the name of Shaista Khan and mentions the construction period.

"The script is in old Persian, and parts of it have faded over time," said Tayeb. "Only a few lines are legible now -- Shaista Khan's name can be read clearly on the second line."

He said the mosque is believed to have been constructed between 1664 and 1668, during Shaista Khan's first tenure as Subedar of Bengal. The structure itself is remarkably solid, with thick walls and domes that have withstood centuries of weathering.

Over the years, the mosque has undergone several renovations. The current five-storey

complex behind the original prayer hall features modern additions, including marble flooring, mosaic pillars, air-conditioned rooms and decorative lighting. Beneath the three-domed mosque lies a basement that once served multiple purposes -- as a storeroom, sleeping quarters and even a cooking space for madrasa students.



The three-domed mosque, built on a raised platform about 12 feet above the ground, is believed to have been constructed during the reign of Subedar Shaista Khan by his close aide, Khawaja Am Barsha, in the latter half of the 17th century.

Local traders said the mosque was built at a time when Karwan Bazar stood on the outskirts of old Dhaka, near the waterways of present-day Hatirjheel.

Travellers from distant regions would anchor their boats nearby and rest at the mosque before continuing their journey.

Over time, the settlement around

it evolved into one of the city's largest commercial markets.

Abdus Salam, a long-time trader who began his business beside the mosque in 1967, recalled seeing the tomb of Khawaja Am Barsha on the northern side, enclosed by walls. "There was also a well next to the mosque, built at the same time, from which worshippers performed ablution," he said.

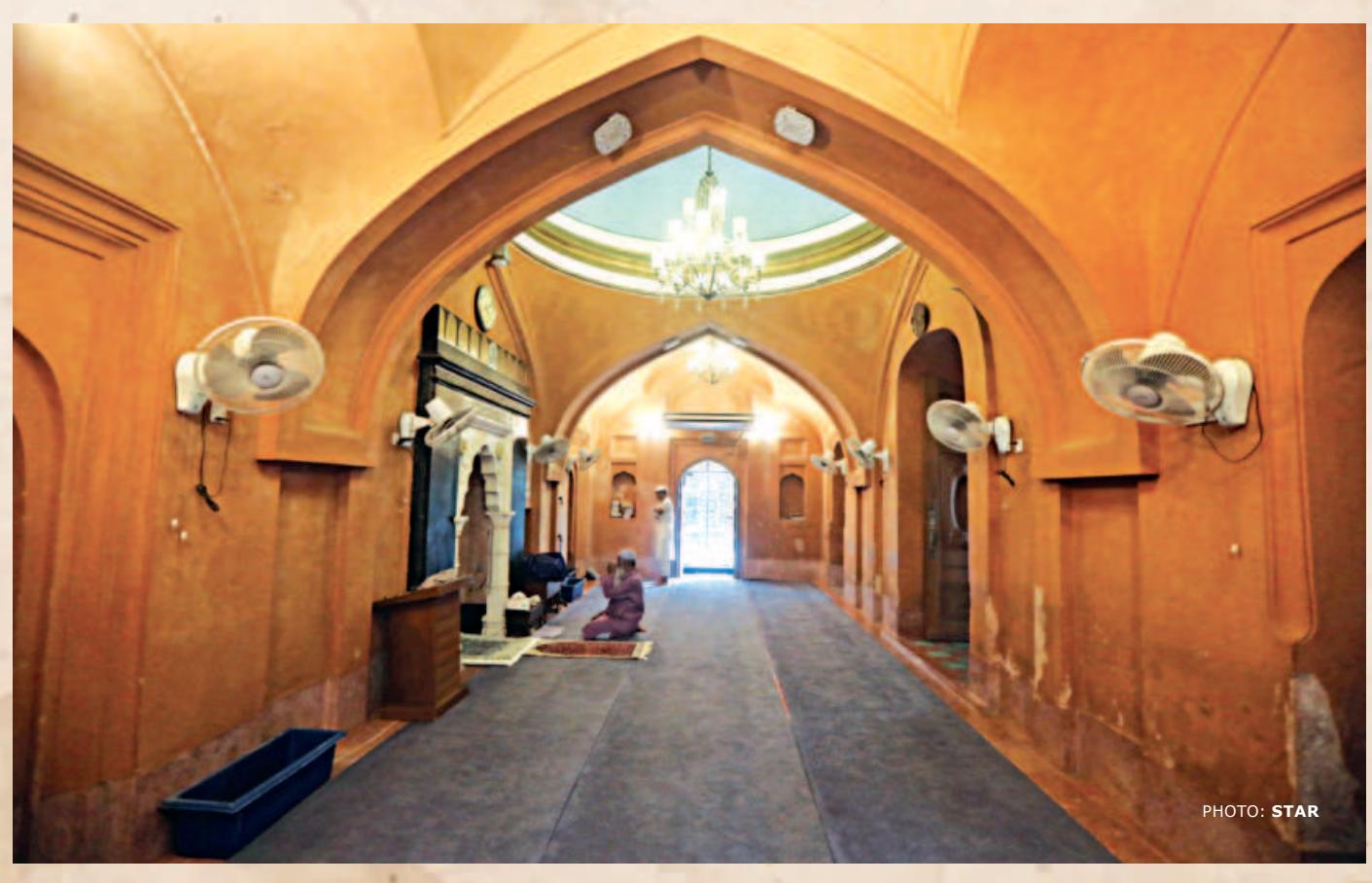
He reminisced about the open prayer shed that once stood on the mosque's eastern side along Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue -- later demolished during the Ershad administration to create a garden area, which still remains.

As the market expanded in the 1990s and commercial high rises sprang up around Karwan Bazar, the number of worshippers increased sharply. To accommodate the growing congregation, the mosque committee initiated a multi-storey expansion project. The plan was later endorsed by then president HM Ershad, transforming the earlier market design into a five-storey mosque building.

On the southern side of the mosque, a seven-storey madrasa building now serves hundreds of students, while the ground floor hosts several small shops and a restaurant. According to madrasa authorities, these rental spaces help maintain the mosque and fund its educational activities.

Former madrasa student Shahidul Islam said the mosque's capacity has grown immensely over the years. "Now, more than 4,000 worshippers can pray here at once," he said with pride.

Although the modern extension now towers above the original Mughal structure, the three-domed section still retains its historical essence -- its terracotta ornamentation, arched entrances and ancient inscriptions standing as witnesses to Dhaka's rich past.



3,000 AL men held in 10 months over flash processions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has arrested nearly 3,000 leaders and activists of the Awami League (AL) and its affiliated organisations over the past ten months for participating in flash processions across the capital.

DMP Deputy Commissioner (Media and Public Relations) Talebur Rahman disclosed the information at a press conference at the DMP Media Centre on Minto Road yesterday.

The briefing followed the arrest of 46 AL leaders and activists from several flash processions held in different parts of Dhaka earlier in the day.

Talebur Rahman said those detained during flash processions were later formally arrested after verification. "Many of them come from outside Dhaka and join these processions in exchange for money," he said, adding that police are working to identify and take legal action against the financiers behind these activities.

He said such processions were aimed at creating public panic and asserting political presence in the capital.

40 extrajudicial killings in last 14 months Reports Odhikar; MSF raises concern over rise in custodial deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 40 people were victims of extrajudicial killings during the 14 months of the interim government formed after the July uprising, according to rights organisation Odhikar.

The highest number of such incidents -- nine -- occurred in September last year, while 11 were reported in the past three months, said the organisation in its latest quarterly report published on its website yesterday.

The report summarised data covering the entire 14 month period, based on information from Odhikar's human rights defenders and various media outlets.

153 people killed in mob violence

7,979 incidents of political violence, killing 281 people

242 attacks on journalists

Odhikar began counting from August 9, 2024 -- four days after the fall of the Awami League government following the July uprising.

No extrajudicial killings were recorded between August 9 and the end of that month. Nine incidents were reported in September 2024, followed by one each in October, November, and December.

Five people were killed in January this year, three in February, and two each in March and April. The figures for May to September 2025 were four, three, six, three, and two, respectively.

Among the 40 victims, 19 were shot dead, 14 died from torture, and seven were beaten to death.

Between July and September this year, 11 people were reportedly killed in such incidents. During the same period, 153 people were killed in mob violence, the report said. The highest number -- 18 -- occurred in September this year, compared

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Oct logs highest dengue toll of year

80 deaths, 22,014 cases reported

HELEMUL ALAM

With the continuous rise in dengue-related deaths and infections, the country recorded 80 deaths and 22,520 cases in October alone -- the highest in any month this year -- highlighting an alarming trend.

According to experts, both dengue cases and deaths may show a slight downward trend from November as temperatures begin to drop. However, the decline is expected to be minimal.

Data from the Directorate General of Health Services shows that in October 2024, there were 134 dengue-related deaths and 30,879 cases, compared to 173 deaths and 29,652 cases in November.

The DGHS further reported that a total of 278 dengue patients had died and 69,862 were hospitalised this year, as of yesterday morning.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said a slight downward trend is currently being observed.

"Naturally, this rate is expected to decrease further, as the cyclone and adverse weather conditions that were anticipated



KEY ISSUES

- Experts warn decline in cases may be minimal
- Culex threat rises as Aedes still active
- Mosquito breeding continues despite cooler weather
- Health experts fear prolonged outbreak

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote regular cleanup drives
- Strengthen local govt involvement
- Implement targeted hotspot management
- Launch community awareness campaigns

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

INTERNATIONAL

ICRC warns of violence against aid workers in Gaza, Sudan

AFP, Manama

The International Committee of the Red Cross's director-general told AFP yesterday that humanitarian workers were being increasingly targeted in Gaza and in Sudan, where five Red Crescent volunteers were killed this week.

"It is now becoming a pattern of violence against humanitarian workers in Sudan, in Gaza, and others, that we find very dramatic," Pierre Krahenbuhl told AFP in the Bahraini capital Manama.

There have also been reports that 460 people were killed at the last partially functional hospital in El-Fasher -- which recently fell to Sudanese paramilitaries, sparking fears of a return to the ethnically motivated atrocities of 20 years ago.

Krahenbuhl also told AFP that Israeli allegations that ICRC visits to Palestinian detainees posed a security threat were untrue.

On Wednesday, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz issued an order banning the ICRC from visiting Palestinians jailed under a law that allows their indefinite detention.

Katz had said the visits, which had been halted since the Gaza war began, would "seriously harm the state's security".

But Krahenbuhl said there was "no way in which our visits can pose a security threat or a national security threat" to Israel.

Two years of conflict in Gaza have killed over 68,000 Palestinians, according to Gazan health authorities and left the enclave in ruins.

The ceasefire in Gaza has eased the trauma of Israel's air strikes and blockade but a shortage of cash has left Palestinians unable to spend what little money they have without falling victim to wartime profiteers. Israel launched the war after Hamas-led fighters attacked southern Israel in October 2023, killing 1,200 people.

Burnt stations hinder probes

FROM PAGE 12

The scale of destruction was so severe that the station's operations remained fully suspended for two months.

"Everything was gone -- our vehicles, case files, and computers. We were left with almost nothing," said Inspector Ramzan Haq of Jatrabari Police Station.

He also underscored the challenges of recovering medical reports and forensic documents that are critical to investigations in sensitive cases.

"Hospitals were hesitant to provide duplicate reports, citing procedural issues. But we had no choice but to push forward."

Mirpur Police Station also lost all its case records and crucial documents. Around 200 motorbikes and 15 vehicles parked inside the station went up in flames.

"...The fire completely gutted case records, vehicles, and furniture. It took eight months to make the station fully functional, starting with just a few tables and chairs," Sajjad Rumon, the OC of the station, told The Daily Star.

"We are still working on retrieving vital documents... The loss of critical evidence such as forensic reports has delayed many investigations, particularly in cases of sexual assault and child abuse."

Some pieces of evidence, such as

blood stained clothes and weapons used in murders, have been lost forever, he noted.

"We have informed courts that evidence in many cases has been destroyed. As an alternative, we are taking statements from the witnesses," added Sajjad.

Contacted, Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruqi, said there should not be any problems in proceeding with trials in the cases whose documents are with courts.

For other cases, police will have to come up with explanations, he added.

460 ESTABLISHMENTS DAMAGED

According to PHQ data, 460 police stations, outposts, and other establishments across the country were damaged between August 1 and 6 last year during the mass uprising.

At least 526 police vehicles, including 241 pickups, 217 motorcycles, 13 four-wheel drive vehicles and 55 cars, were also damaged in fires.

Over the last 14 months, 200 pickup trucks, 20 four-wheel drive vehicles, 46 cars, and 152 motorcycles were bought for the force, said the data.

When asked, AHM Sahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general at the PHQ, said, "Various units have already been provided with some new vehicles to strengthen patrol and crime prevention activities.

The police headquarters is working to enhance the operational capabilities of every police station and unit," he added.

MORE SUPPORT NEEDED

Many police officials have expressed frustration over the delay in receiving sufficient support even 14 months after the uprising.

"We are doing everything we can to rebuild the station... We have received some support but that is not enough," said a sub-inspector at Mirpur Police Station on the condition of anonymity.

Giving an example, the officer said there were eight pickups at Mirpur Police Station before the fire, but it has so far received five.

"We need at least 10 patrol vehicles to properly cover the Mirpur area. Now, we are struggling to patrol only the key points under our jurisdiction as we don't have enough vehicles," said Sajjad, the OC of the station.

A sub-inspector at the station said, "We may be able to recover evidence in most cases, but we are yet to regain the confidence to carry out our duties properly. Many of us are still hesitant to deal with any incident involving mobs... The images of charred police stations are still fresh in our minds.

"If any major incident is reported, we still need to send two to three patrol teams at the scene," added the officer.

Some pieces of evidence, such as

Man sent to jail for assaulting woman

FROM PAGE 12

the past few days as she was "deeply traumatised".

She added that administrative officials had been trying to contact her and that she had already spoken with them. "They informed me that the accused is being held at Mohammadpur Police Station. I'm going there now," she said.

Explaining why she decided to make the video public, Tibro said, "I'm making this video so that if anything happens to me, you all will know."

When this newspaper called the number used by Tibro, a man answered and declined to speak to the media about the incident. "We want justice, and that is all we want to say," he said without revealing his identity.

According to the investigation report submitted by Sub-Inspector Akkel Ali of Mohammadpur Police

Station at a Dhaka court, the complainant is a university student who frequently travels by bus. On October 27, around 1:40pm, she boarded a Ramzan Paribahan bus from Dhanmondi 15, heading towards Basila.

Around 2:20pm, as the bus reached Basila Metro Housing, the accused made an offensive remark about her attire, asking, "What are you wearing?" When she confronted him, he responded with vulgar comments.

As she protested, the accused grabbed her and began hitting her. In self-defence, she struck him with her shoe.

The accused then punched her and forced her off the bus. On information, her friends went to the spot and rescued her, the report says.

The investigation officer said the accused admitted to his involvement during preliminary interrogation.

Malaysia cops looking into extradition

FROM PAGE 12

reported Malaysian news portal, Malaymail yesterday.

He said he had the opportunity to discuss the matter with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus when he visited Malaysia recently.

"Both sides agreed that the matter will be handled or managed on a P2P. I will leave it at that for now; I do not want to go beyond that," he told reporters at an event in Kuala Lumpur.

However, Saifuddin did not specify whether Dhaka had clarified the purpose of the extradition.

Last November, Saifuddin said

his ministry confirmed receiving an application from Bangladesh requesting Malaysia to detain Aminul and Ruhul, following allegations that both were involved in money laundering, extortion, and foreign worker trafficking activities.

He, however, had said the Malaysian government requested further clarification from Dhaka regarding the application, specifically whether their detention was for the purpose of extradition or for conducting further investigation.

Malaymail reported that it understands Aminul is no longer the chairman of Bestinet but still holds a

stake in the company.

Malaysia froze the recruitment of workers from Bangladesh, alongside other countries, in May last year.

Between 2022 and 2024, under the syndication of 101 recruiting agencies led by Aminul and Ruhul, over 450,000 Bangladeshi workers were recruited by Malaysia. They were charged between \$4,500 and \$6,000 each.

On October 24 last year, Bangladesh police sent a letter to Putrajaya, seeking the arrest and extradition of the duo to assist in their investigation into suspected money laundering, extortion, and the trafficking of migrant workers.



Defense ministers and top officials from ASEAN member countries, along with Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn, pose for a group photo during the opening session of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1, 2025
KARTIK 16, 1432 BS
The Daily Star 5

LINKS TO EPSTEIN SCANDAL King Charles strips brother Andrew of titles, his mansion

REUTERS, London

Britain's King Charles has stripped his younger brother Andrew of his title and forced him out of his Windsor home, Buckingham Palace

said on Thursday, seeking to distance the royals from him over his links to the Jeffrey Epstein scandal.

Andrew, 65, the younger brother of Charles and second son of the late Queen Elizabeth, has come

under mounting pressure in recent years over his behaviour and his ties to late sex offender Epstein.

Stop strikes on alleged drug boats in Caribbean UN rights chief asks US

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday urged the United States to halt strikes on vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific allegedly carrying drug traffickers, and to prevent "extra-judicial killings".

UN rights chief Volker Turk said these people had been killed "in circumstances that find no justification in international law".

"These attacks -- and their mounting human cost -- are unacceptable," he said in a statement.

Israel launches more strikes on Gaza Strip

FROM PAGE 12

Israel has returned the bodies of 30 more Palestinians to Gaza, a hospital told AFP yesterday. The Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis told AFP that "the bodies of 30 Palestinian prisoners were received from the Israeli side as part of the exchange deal".

Meanwhile, an Israeli army drone attack targeted a motorcycle in the town

of Kounine in the Nabatiah governorate of south Lebanon. According to Lebanon's official National News Agency, initial reports indicate that there were injuries due to the strike.

Britain on Thursday announced that it will provide £4 million (\$5 million) towards international efforts to clear an estimated 7,500 tonnes of unexploded munitions in Gaza that is

preventing aid reaching Palestinians.

The funding for the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) will help "surge in" experts to clear land mines, cluster bombs and munitions dropped during the war. Removing the unexploded ordinance to allow more aid into Gaza is "a vital component" of the recently US brokered ceasefire agreement, the UK foreign ministry said.

“উন্মুক্ত পুনঃ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (OTM)

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
অধিনায়ক (অ্যাডিশনাল ডিআইজি) এর কার্যালয়
৯ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন
মৌলিশহর, চট্টগ্রাম

তারিখ-৩০/১০/২০২৫খ্রি।

এতোকাল "The Public Procurement Act-2006 and Regulation-2008" (সম্পোর্ত-২০০৯, ২০১৬ এবং ২০১৮) এর বিধান মোতাবেক ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থবছরের ২য় কোর্টারের ২০২৫-২০২৬ পর্যন্ত ৯ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মৌলিশহর, চট্টগ্রাম সম্বরাহ কর্তৃতে তিকাতেল মোতাবেক শৈল্প পুনঃ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি দেওয়া হচ্ছে।

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Alarming decline in SME lending

Govt must take immediate steps to reverse it

The dip in bank lending to SMEs to a four-year low is another concerning indicator of the current state of the economy. During FY2024-25, banks disbursed Tk 2.05 lakh crore in loans to SMEs, a nine percent drop year-on-year, according to data from Bangladesh Bank. This marks a reversal of the upward trend in SME lending seen since 2021, following the slowdown caused by the Covid pandemic in 2020.

Unfortunately, SMEs have had little respite since the pandemic, as the war in Ukraine, political unrest, and last year's mass uprising have acted as one external shock after another. Given that small businesses are particularly vulnerable to such disruptions, these successive shocks have taken a serious toll, with nearly one-quarter of SMEs shutting down since the pandemic.

SMEs are often described as the backbone of the industrial sector. Bangladesh has around 78 lakh cottage, micro, small, and medium enterprises, which contribute about one-quarter of the country's GDP and provide employment to over 2.4 crore people across the country. With SMEs struggling to sustain operations—and many being forced to close—the job market has undoubtedly worsened, and economic growth has taken a significant hit. Investment is also likely to suffer, as reflected in the World Bank's recently lowered growth forecast for Bangladesh.

In addition to external shocks, the fragility of nearly a dozen banks has also constrained credit availability for small and micro businesses. Some 10-12 banks, including several sharia-based ones that were once very active in SME financing, are no longer participating in this sector. Many banks struggling with capital shortages and rising bad loans have become increasingly risk-averse. With private sector confidence remaining low for a prolonged period, and ongoing uncertainty delaying new business plans and expansion, it is difficult to see a reversal of this trend without effective policy interventions.

Unfortunately, despite the finance adviser acknowledging back in early July that funding challenges are preventing SMEs from realising their vast potential, the interim government has so far failed to turn things around, as evidenced by recent data. This is particularly disappointing, given that the adviser himself also admitted that the country's economic growth still largely depends on the SME sector, which generates the highest employment. Given this reality, we must ask: why has the government not prioritised this matter more urgently? Is it unaware of the struggles of millions of jobseekers and the state of the overall economy at large?

To revive SME lending, the government must act on several fronts at once. It must take steps to ensure that banks feel secure in lending to SMEs. And refinancing windows with lower interest rates should be made readily available to banks and non-bank lenders specifically for SME loans. Most importantly, restoring confidence in the banking sector through stronger oversight and transparent restructuring of weak banks is essential—as without financial sector stability, no SME support programme will achieve its intended impact.

Fix the chaos around Mayor Hanif Flyover

Flawed design, poor management keep traffic snarled

It is disappointing that people still have to endure severe traffic gridlock at one of Dhaka's key entry points—Jatrabari—despite improved inter-district communication which significantly reduced travel time. Reportedly, every day, vehicles from around 40 districts enter Dhaka through the Mayor Hanif Flyover and the roads beneath. Since the opening of the Padma Bridge, traffic on this route has further increased. However, due to poor design, weak management, and widespread violation of traffic rules, severe congestion occurs both on the flyover and the roads below. Sadly, the time saved on the highway is thus lost at the city's entrance.

The Mayor Hanif Flyover, stretching 11.5 km from Shonir Akhra to Chankharpul, was built to speed up entry into the capital. Instead, it has become one of Dhaka's worst traffic choke points. Commuters often spend hours stuck in gridlock here. According to one driver, it takes just three and a half hours to bring his bus from Khulna to Dhaka, but hours more to cross the Gulistan toll plaza. Another driver, who travels daily from Narayanganj, said it can take over an hour just to descend from the flyover at Gulistan, with the toll counter adding further delay. Beneath the structure, the situation is equally dire. The road connecting Jatrabari and Sayedabad is riddled with potholes, regularly waterlogged during the rainy season, and covered in dust during dry months. The situation has worsened, as the Sayedabad Bus Terminal, meant to hold around 800 buses, now accommodates nearly 3,000, with illegal transport counters and encroachments spilling onto the streets.

Urban planners have long warned that flyovers are not a sustainable solution to Dhaka's traffic woes, yet the authorities keep building them without proper planning. Many, including the Mayor Hanif Flyover, now experience chronic congestion. A recent study by Brac University's Centre for Inclusive Architecture and Urbanism also found that Dhaka's 10 flyovers, covering 105 km, have 207 acres of poorly used space underneath, causing major public health, environmental, and economic losses of about Tk 21,000 crore annually, a concerning finding. The authorities must therefore act urgently to fix this situation. Since the flyover itself offers little scope for improvement, the focus should shift to repairing and maintaining the roads below to ease pressure from above. Relocating transport counters from roadside areas to inside the Sayedabad Terminal could help. At the same time, traffic monitoring and enforcement must be strengthened. Most importantly, better planning and coordination among the responsible agencies are essential to reduce the daily suffering of commuters entering Dhaka.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

United States tests first thermonuclear bomb

On this day in 1952 on an atoll of the Marshall Islands, Edward Teller and other American scientists tested the first thermonuclear bomb, its power resulting from an uncontrolled, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction.

EDITORIAL

How reducing dwell time can improve our port's efficiency



Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury is adjunct faculty at Bangladesh Maritime University, and former head of inland container depot at Kamalapur and Pangaon Inland Container Terminal under Chittagong Port Authority.

AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

In 2003, I had the privilege of spending 55 days in Japan under a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-sponsored Group Training Course on Container Terminal Development in Tokyo and Yokohama. We visited several container terminals and logistics hubs, including the Nippon Express Bonded Warehouse, where I first encountered Japan's remarkable Hozei Area System. It was an eye opener. Importers could immediately move cargo from full-container load (FCL) units—where all the goods belong to one sender—into bonded warehouses under customs supervision. Inside those warehouses, they could unpack, repack, or store goods duty-free until clearance. This system freed up containers almost instantly and kept Japan's ports moving.

That single mechanism—reducing container dwell time—was at the heart of Japan's logistics miracle. Through this, ports achieved faster vessel turnaround, higher yard capacity, and far lower storage costs, proving that efficient container flow is the most powerful multiplier of port productivity and trade competitiveness.

Bangladesh, however, faces the opposite reality. At Chittagong Port, our nation's busiest maritime gateway, FCL imports sit idle for an average of more than 11 days before clearance. Each of those days comes at a painful cost: demurrage to shipping lines, port storage fees, and detention charges that drain foreign exchange. Industry estimates suggest importers lose billions of dollars annually, which could otherwise be fuelling growth, investment, and jobs.

The issue is not one of capacity but of efficiency. Terminals are designed for throughput, not storage. Yet in Bangladesh, containers linger for weeks, turning our terminals into parking lots. Yard space that should hold transit containers instead holds uncleared imports. As a result, vessels queue offshore, berth schedules slip,

and shipping lines grow increasingly frustrated with the port's sluggish turnaround. Their vessels lose time and money waiting for berths, their containers remain trapped beyond free days, and their operational schedules fall into disarray. Many carriers now consider Bangladesh



FILE PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN
Terminal cranes stand idle not for lack of cargo but for lack of space inside Chittagong Port, as most imports still clear inside the port, clogging its arteries.

a "slow port"—a costly label that discourages service expansion and investment. Every day of delay reverberates through freight rates and supply chains, hurting importers, exporters, and ultimately consumers.

Reducing dwell time, therefore, should be a national economic strategy. Every day saved increases a port's effective capacity without adding a single square metre of land. If the average dwell time at Chittagong Port could be reduced from 11 days to 4, my estimation shows that total container handling capacity could rise by more than 60 percent, instantly easing congestion and accelerating trade.

Japan's Hozei system offers a tested

blueprint. Private operators such as Nippon Express and Kintetsu World Express manage bonded warehouses licensed by customs, where containers move out of terminals within hours of unloading. Goods can stay duty-free for up to three years, and importers pay taxes only upon release. Customs retains full digital oversight—control without congestion.

Other nations have embraced similar reforms with remarkable success. Indonesia's Bonded Logistics Centers (PLB) cut port dwell time from 6.4 to 2.9 days within two years. India's 2019 bonded warehousing framework transformed throughput at Jawaharlal Nehru Port. Vietnam and Malaysia have integrated

statements. Bonded warehouse development must become a cornerstone policy priority, supported by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and customs, not resisted by them. These agencies must modernise their supervision tools to enable off-dock clearance, rather than monopolising clearance within the port fence.

To drive this transformation, the Chief Adviser's Office, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, and the Public-Private Partnership Authority should jointly champion bonded logistics zones around Chattogram, Dhaka, and Mongla. NGOs such as Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) and the private sector can partner under PPP models to develop modern warehouses integrated with digital customs interfaces. Such collaboration would free up container yards, speed up vessel operations, and dramatically improve Bangladesh's trade ranking.

Port management efficiency is not just about equipment or infrastructure—it is about flow. When containers sit for weeks, the entire system slows, regardless of investment. That is why dwell time is the single most accurate metric of port health. The shorter it is, the stronger the economy.

Bangladesh cannot attract world-class terminal operators or shipping alliances unless it ensures smooth cargo flow. Long idling containers are a nightmare for carriers; they lose box rotations, revenue, and schedule integrity. The current system imposes invisible penalties that damage our reputation. To restore confidence, Chittagong Port must transition from a storage-based model to a movement-based one—where bonded warehouses take the pressure off the terminals and customs supervises through data, not detention.

It is time for policymakers, think tanks, and business leaders to unite. Research organisations and think tanks must elevate this issue to the top of the reform agenda. The Chief Adviser's Office should ensure that NBR and customs align with national interests—not institutional inertia.

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads. If we act now, embracing bonded logistics as Japan did with its Hozei system, we can unlock our ports and transform our economy. But if we delay, our growth will remain trapped behind port gates. The choice is ours—to remain boxed in bureaucracy or to free the boxes and free the economy.

Rare earth elements are the new drivers of global power



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SYED RAIYAN AMIR

The recent back-and-forth between Washington and Beijing over rare earth minerals looks technical on the surface, but it points to a deeper shift in global leverage. The 17 metallic elements—vital for everything from electric motors to precision guidance systems—have quietly become strategic tools. Whoever controls them gains not only industrial advantage but diplomatic and economic influence.

For years China has quietly built a full rare earth chain—from mining to magnet production—while others lagged. By 2024, it processed most of the roughly 44 million metric tonnes produced globally. But behind China's dominance lies a knot of politics. Myanmar's output comes from Kachin and Shan, where conflict economies feed militias and shadow contractors. In Africa, Namibia, Malawi and South Africa hold reserves but struggle with weak oversight, foreign rent capture and local anger over pollution. These states aren't passive; their politics decide whether resources become leverage or instability.

While rare earths' magnetic and conductive traits make them indispensable in green technologies and advanced weaponry, their extraction and refinement are dirty, technically hard and capital intensive. That creates an asymmetry: countries with refining capacity can weaponise access; those with only raw ore become junior partners, often trading

sovereignty for investment. The control of strategic materials translates directly into bargaining power.

The politics of supply shape alliances, industrial strategy and regulatory choices across Asia, Europe and Africa. The modern push for net zero and digitisation makes demand for rare earths structural. That creates incentives for states to pursue long-term industrial policy, secure recycling streams and sponsor substitution research. Yet democracies and centralised economies do this differently. China's state-directed approach achieved rapid vertical integration; liberal economies, wary of environmental backlash and private-sector caution, are still catching up. The result is strategic divergence in how societies accept risk, finance infrastructure and permit environmental disruption.

Economic statecraft such as export limits and subsidies now act as political signals, reshaping competitors' industrial plans, defence timelines, and negotiation strategies. On a very different note, China's refining dominance brings pollution backlash and strategic pushback through stockpiling, diversification, and recycling. Transitions open space for recyclers, substitutes, and new refiners, especially for developing states seeking to escape raw-export dependence. The control of rare earths is not

just about mines; it is about the whole value chain—geological surveying, separation chemistry, magnet fabrication, component design and end-of-life recovery. Whoever controls these nodes captures most of the value and most of the leverage. That explains why some Western firms still send semi-processed ores to Chinese plants: the cost calculus favours outsourcing until domestic capability is rebuilt. But rebuilding is expensive, slow and politically contested, especially where public opinion opposes mining's environmental footprint. That creates a paradox: the green transition that relies on rare earths can become politically toxic if communities face pollution and displacement.

Therefore, while states are funding recycling research, subsidising domestic refineries, and investing in partner countries' governance, they are also testing new trade rules and looking for substitutes. None of these moves is a silver bullet. Recycling reduces dependence but cannot meet immediate demand; substitutes can be resource or performance limited. Meanwhile, donor-driven governance reforms in resource-exporting countries often run up against local power structures that benefit from opacity.

A sober conclusion follows: rare earths sharpen rather than simplify geopolitics. They create new interdependences that mix economics, security and ecology. The most dangerous scenario is not merely a single supplier cutting off exports, but a slow, systemic sclerosis where strategic mistrust multiplies transaction costs, fragments supply chains and makes technological diffusion uneven. Conversely, the best outcome requires pragmatic cooperation: shared standards for environmental performance,

transparent contracts, joint recycling ventures, and investments that build local capacity rather than hollow it out.

It is worth mentioning that, global supply lines for rare earths run from Chinese inland hubs to coastal ports through the South China Sea and Strait of Malacca, and from overland corridors hauling ore from Myanmar's Kachin fields into Yunnan. They also include corridors from Mongolia and Central Asia to Chinese refineries, maritime routes carrying African consignments to Chinese and European ports, and transpacific lanes to Japan, South Korea and the United States. Each of these arteries is being secured. The South China Sea and Malacca straits have seen stepped-up naval patrols and freedom-of-navigation assertions as states protect chokepoints; Myanmar's routes are militarised by junta forces and armed groups that control extraction; Chinese state firms and coast guard units fortify export nodes; Western navies and the US are expanding escorts and stockpiles; and private security. They are also investing in ports and securing diplomatic-military ties in the African corridors, and using export licensing and sanctions layer to legalise restraints on shipments.

In short, rare earths have become a litmus test for 21st-century power—an issue where industrial policy, domestic politics in resource states, environmental limits and international strategy intersect. They reveal a new fact of statecraft: influence now arises from mastering invisible materials as much as from controlling territory. Which states adapt, by building clean, resilient supply chains and by addressing political and environmental grievances where ores are mined, will determine how advantage shifts in the decades ahead.

SUAVE SUDIP

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

The ever-charming Sudip Biswas Deep first won hearts with his powerful performance in the globally acclaimed series *Invisible Stories*. From the stage to the small and big screens, he has explored every medium with passion and depth. Now, he's ready to surprise audiences once again with his Chorki debut, the flash fiction romantic comedy *Perfect Wife*.

Talking about the project, Sudip smiled, "It's my third time working with Gias Uddin Selim. Earlier, I worked with him in Hoichoi's *Paanch Phoron* Season 2 back in 2020, in the episode *Three Kisses*. After that, we did a tele-fiction together, and now comes *Perfect Wife*. Working with Selim bhai has always been a joy. He's such a friendly person and never brings any director's ego to the set, it's so easy and comfortable to work with him."

When asked about his character, Sudip shared, "In this film, I play Pritom. His father is very rich and was once a lawyer. Pritom is the spoiled son of this wealthy man, someone who went through with a love marriage but still wastes his time playing games. His wife, who's a lawyer, ends up taking charge of everything after his father realises his son is good for nothing. That's where their love-hate dynamic begins. Then one day, a friend of Pritom's visits from the USA with his wife, and that's when things start getting really interesting. You'll see parallels in both couples' relationships, which are full of humour, tension, and deep emotion."

These days, Sudip is a familiar face on television and YouTube, where he often appears in romantic comedies. When asked if he ever feels creatively restricted by the small screen, he paused for a moment before sharing his thoughts. "Right now, there are three major mediums for actors – film, OTT, and dramas. In dramas, only a few genres tend to work, like romcoms, pure romance, family drama, or comedy. The moment you try something different, the problems start," he said with a thoughtful smile.

Although many of his recent projects are romantic comedies, Sudip has still managed to shine through unique and memorable characters in productions like *Muazzin*, *Closeup Didhahin Kache Ashar Golpo 2022*, *Fagun Theke Fagun*, *Sales Girl*, and *Noro Sundor*. Each of these roles carried something different, even within a familiar romantic setup.

Playing the role of Muazzin was one of the most challenging experiences for Sudip, as it pushed him as an actor. "For this character, I was really scared at first," he admitted softly. "I knew that if I couldn't portray him properly, it might create controversy. My co-artistes, the director, and my assistant director helped me immensely to understand the body language and emotions. The character is very innocent and deeply spiritual. When people watch him, I want them to feel a sense of peace. Creating that feeling was the hardest part for me."

In *Fagun Theke Fagun*, directed by Amitabh Reza Chowdhury, Sudip stepped into a completely different world again, this time as a local barber. "When Amitabh bhai first told me about the role, he asked if I would be able to do it. I said yes right away and decided to take it seriously," Sudip recalled with a smile. "I went to a salon to observe how barbers work. I asked them about their tools, where they get their

brushes and scissors, and I even recorded videos of them cutting hair. For three days straight, I kept holding the scissors in my hand just to get used to them, to understand how to move them naturally. I wanted to embody that flexibility and authenticity completely."

After his powerful performance in the critically acclaimed HBO series *Invisible Stories*, I asked Sudip why we haven't seen him in more international projects since then. He thought for a moment before replying, "The HBO series came out in early 2020. At that time, I was in talks for two or three other projects. I was even locked to work again with the director of *Invisible Stories* for another project. There were also Malaysian and Indian projects lined up for me," he added. "But then, on March 28, the lockdown was imposed across the country. I ended up losing almost two years. After that, I lost the momentum. I just couldn't continue working the way I had planned. Interestingly, Pooja Bhatt had seen my performance in *Invisible Stories* and wanted to collaborate with me. But unfortunately, that too didn't work out."

After *Moyurakkhi*, Sudip hasn't been seen much on the silver screen either. Reflecting on that period, he shared, "It's really unfortunate that after *Moyurakkhi*, I worked on an anthology film with Dighi, and our part was titled *Priyo Prakton*. But due to internal clashes between producers, the film was released on Bongo instead of in theatres. I also had a few projects lined up, but after August 5, because of the situation in our country, most of the work has been put on hold."

When asked if he ever thought about directing one day, he smiled and said, "I think filmmaking is one of the hardest crafts to master. Being a director takes a completely different kind of strength and patience. Right now, I'm in love with acting. So, for now, I just want to focus on that and give it my all."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

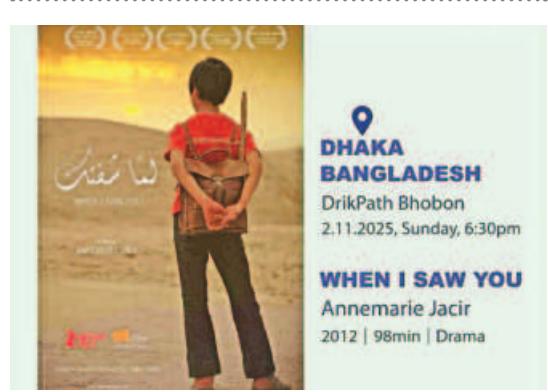
OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



'Cartoons for Equality'
Oct 31-Nov 7 | 3 pm-8 pm
National Art Gallery, BSA



'Ekanto Golap'
Nov 1 | 5 pm-9 pm
Anushor Ground Floor, Mirpur 1



'Palestine Cinema Days'
Nov 2 | 6:30 pm onwards
Drikpath Bhabon, Panthapath

THE ASSET

TV TALKIES

Netflix's Danish thriller *The Asset* presents a compelling examination of manipulation and moral compromise within Denmark's Security and Intelligence Service (PET). Over six gripping episodes, the series chronicles Tea (Clara Dessau), a police trainee transformed into an undercover agent. *The Asset* is a remarkable instance of spy work. All the six episodes of *The Asset* premiered on October 27 and is now trending in Netflix Bangladesh's Top 10.



STYLE STATEMENT

ANNE HATHAWAY

Anne Hathaway lit up the WWD Honors 2025 red carpet in a bold scarlet gown that perfectly married classic glamour with playful charm. The tiered chiffon dress, tied delicately at the shoulders, flowed with effortless movement.

The rich crimson hue radiated confidence and power, while the airy layers softened the look, creating an ethereal, almost romantic silhouette. With sleek pulled-back hair, dewy skin, and a touch of coral lip, Hathaway let the colour do the talking. This was Anne in her element – elegant and unafraid to command attention.



'OPALITE'

by Taylor Swift

Released on October 3, 2025, as part of *The Life of a Showgirl*, *Opalite* sees Taylor Swift return to her glossy pop rock roots, blending pulsating drums, glistening synths, and electric guitar riffs with her signature storytelling. Co-written and produced with Max Martin and Shellback, the track uses the man-made gemstone opalite as a metaphor for self-forged happiness and healing after



heartbreak – an ode to creating joy rather than waiting for it. Lyrically referencing renewal and newfound love, the song has resonated deeply with listeners, debuting at No 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 and amassing over 160 million Spotify streams. Its empowering message makes *Opalite* one of Swift's most magnetic pop anthems in years.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
The Witcher



Prime Video
Hedda



HBO Max
IT: Welcome to Derry



Paramount+
Mayor of Kingstown



Hoichoi
Nishir Daak



Govt to blame

FROM PAGE 12
"The people of this country never forgive betrayal. Step away from that path. Participate in the election and let the people's right be restored through their votes — that's what we all want," he added.

Fakhrul said there is no scope to hold a referendum before the national election.

Confirming that the BNP will take part in the scheduled February elections, he said, "A certain quarter is trying to derail and delay the election by spreading confusion in various ways."

Recalling the final charter signed amid rain on October 17, he said the document later presented to the chief adviser did not reflect all their opinions.

"The notes of dissent we submitted were not mentioned. That is why the bridge of trust has been broken. Instead of honouring the trust, they have betrayed it and deceived the people. It was unexpected," he said.

He added, "We all want the people's mandate to be established through elections, and a government formed by the people. We need to move in a direction that allows us to overcome this crisis, and we must do so."

Vendors take over Rajshahi footpaths

Pedestrians suffer amid lack of monitoring, drives

SHOHANUR RAHMAN RAFI, Rajshahi

Footpaths across Rajshahi city have largely become unusable due to illegal occupation by street vendors, makeshift stalls and workshops, causing immense hassle to pedestrians during their daily commute.

From the city centre to its outskirts, sidewalks meant for pedestrians are being used for roadside businesses, forcing people to walk along busy streets amid the risk of accidents.

City authorities are yet to take visible action through mobile courts as the post of executive magistrate remains vacant.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the entire footpath from Sonadighi Intersection towards Rajshahi City College occupied by food carts, wooden tables and portable stalls, leaving no room for movement. Long queues of rickshaws stood motionless, while pedestrians struggled to cross the street or find a clear path.

Similar scenes were observed in Shaheb Bazar, RDA Market, Lakshimpur, Ranibazar and New Market areas.

"How can I even walk? The footpath is unusable. People have occupied it as if it's their own property," said pedestrian Ansar Ali.

Md Shohel Rana, a student of

Rajshahi City College, echoed his frustration.

According to Rajshahi City Corporation sources, the city has 448.76 kilometres of paved roads, including 45 kilometres with sidewalks.

However, much of these have been taken over by vendors and workshops, severely inconveniencing pedestrians.

Eviction drives, we move everything inside, but once it ends, we bring it back again."

Eviction drives, we move everything inside, but once it ends, we bring it back again."

Contacted, RCC Chief Executive Officer Md Rezaul Karim said, "The executive magistrate's post at the city corporation is still vacant, which limits our capacity. We are planning eviction drives with support from district administration magistrates soon."



From Bhadra to the Railway Station, over one kilometre of footpath remains occupied by scrap dealers and mechanics conducting business in the open.

Additional District Magistrate Umme Kulsum Shompa said a temporary magistrate has been appointed to carry out the responsibilities.

Senior Assistant Commissioner Debashish Bosak, assigned on October 21, said, "I will personally inspect the sites to ensure action."

একই স্মারক ও তারিখের স্থানান্তরিত

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

স্থানীয় সরকার, পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়

পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় বিভাগ

প্রশাসন শাখা-১

www.rdcdb.gov.bd

নং-৮৭,০০,০০০০,০০১,১১,০১৮,২৫-৯০৩

তারিখ: ১০ কার্তিক ১৪৩২

২৬ অক্টোবর ২০২৫

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় বিভাগের রাজস্ব খাতভুক্ত পদসমূহে অস্থায়ীভাবে সরাসরি নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে পদের পার্শ্বে বর্ণিত শর্তে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে অনলাইনে (<http://rdcd.teletalk.com.bd>) আবেদন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম ও বেতনক্ষেত্র (জাতীয় বেতনক্ষেত্রে ২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	শূন্য পদের সংখ্যা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
০১.	ক্যাম্পিটার টাকা: ১১,০০০-২৬,৫৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৩)	০১ (এক)টি	(ক) কোনো স্থানীয় বিদ্যুবিদ্যালয় হতে বাণিজ্য বিভাগে স্থানীয় ডিপ্রি; (খ) কম্পিউটার চালনায় দক্ষতা থাকতে হবে; এবং (গ) কম্পিউটারে Word processing সহ কম্পিউটার চালনায় দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
০২.	কম্পিউটার অপারেটর টাকা: ১১,০০০-২৬,৫৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৩)	০১ (এক)টি	(ক) কোনো স্থানীয় বিদ্যুবিদ্যালয় হতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে স্থানীয় বিভাগে স্থানীয় ক্ষেত্রে দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
০৩.	সৌ. মুদ্রাকরিক কাম- কম্পিউটার অপারেটর টাকা: ১১,০০০-২৬,৫৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৩)	০১ (এক)টি	(ক) কোনো স্থানীয় বিদ্যুবিদ্যালয় হতে স্থানীয় ক্ষেত্রে দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
০৪.	অফিস সহায়ক টাকা: ৮,২৫০-২০,০১০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০২ (দুই)টি	(ক) কোনো স্থানীয় বোর্ড হতে উক মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা স্থানীয় পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার প্রশিক্ষণ প্রাপ্ত; (গ) কম্পিউটারে স্বীকৃত প্রতি প্রতি মিনিটে ইংরেজিতে ৩০ শব্দ এবং বাংলায় ২৫ শব্দের পত্রিক সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে Standard Aptitude Test-এ উত্তীর্ণ হতে হবে।
০৫.	অফিস সহায়ক টাকা: ৮,২৫০-২০,০১০/- (গ্রেড-১০)	০১ (এক)টি	কোনো স্থানীয় বোর্ড হতে মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট (এসএসসি) বা স্থানীয় পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ।

২। নিয়োগৰ ক্ষেত্রে আবেদন ফরম পূরণ এবং পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে অবশ্যই অনুসরণ করতে হবে:

ক. সকল জেলার প্রার্থীদের অবসরী ক্ষেত্রে পারবেন।

খ. ১০ নভেম্বর ২০২৫ তারিখে ১১ বছর পূর্বে আবেদন করতে পারবেন। এছাড়া, শুধু সৌ. মুদ্রাকরিক কাম-কম্পিউটার অপারেটর ও অফিস সহায়ক কাম-কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাকরিক পদে বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের (একই নিয়োগ বিভিন্ন আওতায় নিয়োগপ্রাপ্ত বা নিয়োজিত কর্মচারী) ক্ষেত্রে বয়স সীমা সুরোচিত ৪০ বছর পর্যন্ত পিলখলযোগ্য।

গ. বয়স প্রামাণের ক্ষেত্রে একিফেটি প্রশংসন্যোগ্য।

ঘ. এই নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাস্তবে ক্রমিক নং-০২ এর শূন্য পদ পূরণে কম্পিউটার প্রার্থীদের নিয়োগ বিভাগ-২০১৫, ক্রমিক নং-০৩, ০৪ এবং ০৫ নং-এর শূন্য পদ পূরণে "বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় কর্মকর্তা" এবং নন-গ্রেডেটেড কর্মচারী নিয়োগ বিভাগ-২০১৪ (সংশ্লিষ্ট ২০২০) অনুসরণ করা হবে। এত্তের্বাটি নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত দিসামান সরকারি যাবান্তীয় বিধি-বিধান/আবেদন/নিয়ন্ত্রণ এবং পরবর্তীতে এসে একিফেটি প্রশংসন্যোগ্য।

ঙ. সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি ও স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকরির প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতিক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে।

খ. চাকরির সকল শর্ত পূরণ সাপেক্ষে আবেদনপত্র পূরণের সময় Departmental Candidate-এর ঘরে টিক চিহ্ন দিতে হবে। অনাদের ক্ষেত্রে এই শর্ত প্রযোজ্য নয়। তবে সকল চাকরির প্রার্থীকে মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় সময় নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রত্যক্ষ প্রদত্ত অনুসরণ কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রদত্ত প্রদত্ত অন্যান্য ক্ষেত্রে এই শর্ত প্রযোজ্য নয়।

গ. সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি ও স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকরির প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতিক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে।

ঘ. নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের বিদ্যমান কোটা পক্ষত অনুসরণ করা হবে।

ঙ. পিছিত, বাবহারিক ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোন প্রকার টিএডি প্রদান করা হবে না।

ঁ. মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় সকল সনদপত্রের মূলকপি প্রদর্শন করতে হবে এবং পূর্ণপুর একটি Application Form সহ সত্যায়িত একসেট ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে। এছাড়া, জেলার স্থানীয় বাসিন্দার প্রমাণক হিসেবে ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ/পৌরসভা/সিটি কর্পোরেশন কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত প্রমাণক হিসেবে নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রদত্ত সনদ শারীরিক প্রতিবেক্ষণ ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য।

ঁ. প্রমাণক প্রদত্ত প্রতিবেক্ষণ ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য প্রমাণক হিসেবে নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রদত্ত প্রদত্ত সনদ এবং অন্যান্য ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের পর্যবেক্ষণ ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য।

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ALT-LIT

Paper dragons, haunted theaters, one very large cicada: An introduction to SCPs



DESIGN: ARWIN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

ARWIN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

One of the weirder relics of my early days on the internet—one that I’m certain many if not most of my fellow netizens around my age are quite familiar with—is Creepypasta: a type of horror story born in and propagated through internet forums and social media, originally in the form of blocks of copied and pasted text, then through memes and references, and eventually through other forms of media such as videogames, video essays, and more. Back in the early-to-mid 2010s, creepypastas were everywhere on the internet. In “Backrooms” memes, *Slenderman* games, random ‘Jeff The Killer’ jumpscare, and more, creepypastas became a pillar of modern internet-based media as a whole. Despite their sheer cultural

impact, most creepypastas were neither particularly well-written nor much more than simple scary stories, and their general tone and content were not all that diverse.

Then, sometime in 2019, I found something that fit that “internet-based text story that branches into other stuff” niche for me in a way creepypastas were never able to: SCPs. SCP is the term used to refer to anomalous entities, objects, and phenomena within the shared fictional universe of The SCP Foundation—a universe populated with a staggering number of incredibly diverse stories written by people from all over the world. These stories are written in the format of classified reports as part of this fictional Foundation’s enormous database of anomalies to be contained, studied, and hidden from the public and range from

standard horror pieces to fantasy fics to sci fi jaunts of multivarious scope, and so much more.

The SCP Foundation (or simply “The Foundation” as it is generally referred to in-universe) itself is a clandestine global organisation working to contain anomalous entities and phenomena. Within the universe’s branching canon(s), the Foundation is responsible for protecting the public from said anomalies by containing and studying them, and preventing people from learning about their existence. Their ‘About’ page on the wiki opens with a message from the in-universe character, The Administrator, stating “While the rest of mankind dwells in the light, we must stand in the darkness to fight it, contain it, and shield it from the eyes of the public, so that others may live in a sane and normal world.”

Each anomaly within the universe is assigned a number and filed as an SCP (if you’re wondering: there’s no single official full form for the abbreviation, but in a number of SCP entries, the term stands of Secure Containment Protocol), and these reports become what we readers—researchers digging through Foundation databases—get to see.

If you’ve read this far and are interested in experiencing it all for yourself, here’s a few tips on where to go and how you might start. If you’d like to go directly to the wiki and just start reading (which I honestly recommend! Part of why SCPs and this style of online media are so compelling and accessible is how easy and fun it is to just dive in headfirst and see how that goes), I suggest checking out their guide for newcomers on the site first so you don’t feel immediately lost or overwhelmed.

Additionally, if you’re unsure which SCP to start with—especially because the entries are listed as numbers rather than names—the wiki has a very helpful ‘Guide For Reading’ that also links to several curated recommendation lists. For the more visually inclined, there are also several SCP YouTube creators who make content based on SCPs and the universe ranging from readings with accompanying graphics and voice

a lot more to offer in terms of diversity of concept and content. Some of my favorite horror pieces from these later entries are SCPs 3199, 3456, 6373, 3935, 5999, (content warning for all of the following ones—they are all quite disturbing and/or disgusting) 3288, and 3084.

Ones that are not strictly horror but personal favourites: SCP 3004 is a very conceptually cool anomaly with a lot of religious symbolism; SCP 507 is a normal guy with an unfortunate “superpower”; SCP 093 is a mysterious red disc that transports people to alternate dimensions, seemingly based on regrets carried by whoever holds it; SCP 049 is a plague doctor trying to cure a mysterious disease he calls The Pestilence; SCP 426 is a sentient toaster (I told you the topics were diverse); SCP 1762 is a box of paper dragons (and it’s an emotionally devastating read); SCP 1461 is an anomaly similar to and inspired by Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, SCP 3426, is a fantastically-written sci fi anomaly that causes the end of sufficiently developed planetary civilisations, and, last but not the least, SCP 7034 is an endless highway and the harrowing account of one man trying to get back home to his family.

All in all, if you like collective fictional

“While the rest of mankind dwells in the light, we must stand in the darkness to fight it, contain it, and shield it from the eyes of the public, so that others may live in a sane and normal world.”

acting to deep dive video essays.

Last but not least, here are some recommendations from me:

To cite some that are mostly horror based: While, unlike Creepypasta, SCPs are not all horror stories, there are still a massive number of them on the site. Some of the best and most popular classic SCPs are horror-themed—SCPs 096, 682, and 106 are all classic “monsters”, SCPs 140, 354, 087, and 701 are all scary objects or places, and SCPs 610 and 231 are more on the disturbing/disgusting side. More modern entries from after “Series I” (the first 1000) have

universes, interesting and compelling concepts, and reading a wide range of contemporary writers’ work, SCPs are absolutely for you. So jump on in, have fun, and if you like any ones not mentioned here: tell me about them, I’m always looking for more.

Arwin Shams Siddiquee is a person-in-progress whose interests include art in all its forms and trying to understand the world and its people better. Tell them about your own journey towards personhood at arwin.shams@outlook.com.

FICTION

Writer's block

HAROONUZZAMAN

Asif stares at the blank page, his chest tightening with that all-too-familiar dread. The cursor blinks back at him, steady and unbothered. “Another night,” he mutters, the words stale on his tongue, “another blank slate.” He bites the end of his pen. The plastic tastes gritty—like failure, like the dust of old attempts. The digital clock on the nightstand glows cold: 11:47 PM.

Soon.

Beside him, Shefali sleeps soundly, a deep symphony of snores rising and falling in rhythm. Usually, her presence pulls him under too. Tonight, her sleep is just another reminder of what he can’t reach—peace, quiet, rest.

“How does she do it?” he wonders, eyes tracing the gentle rise and fall of her chest. “One minute she’s talking, the next she’s gone, like diving into another world.” He envies her ease, her escape.

He’s tried everything—every tired first line, every desperate opening: “A lone wolf howled at the moon.”, “The old woman’s eyes held a secret as ancient as time.”, even absurdities like “The pigeon blinked.”

“There’s nothing there, Asif,” he told himself then, though his voice sounded hollow in the silence. But deep down, he knew. He tried everything—locked it, wedged a chair under the handle, stacked books against it like a barricade. Still, the sound came as if mocking him.

None of them work. Each phrase feels borrowed, like wearing someone else’s shoes. Tight. Wrong.

His gaze shifts to the bedroom door. It’s old—solid wood, painted in a once-cream color that has faded to something more like tired bones. Its surface is chipped, scarred with time. Unremarkable to anyone else. But Asif knows better.

That door holds something. A secret. A



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

ritual.

11:58 PM.

The air thickens. There’s a buzz to it now, subtle but unmistakable. His pulse starts to race—a drumbeat in his ears.

“Just listen, Asif,” he murmurs, adjusting against the headboard. Notebook balanced on his knees.

“Just listen.” He tightens his grip on the pen. Knuckles go pale.

Midnight.

Prick... prick... prick...

It begins. Soft. Delicate. Almost like a whisper made of needles. It slices through Shefali’s snores, sharp and clear, yet impossible to pin down.

He holds his breath.

“Where is it?” he whispers. “Top of the door? Near the handle?”

But the sound shifts, like it doesn’t want to be found. It doesn’t come from the surface of the wood, but within it—like something alive, trapped, tapping from inside.

The rhythm doesn’t stay steady. Sometimes, it’s a quick flurry. Sometimes, they’re long pauses that stretch like a long, deep breath. It’s maddening.

He remembers the night he flung the

door open, convinced he’d find the source. Just the hallway. Empty. Still.

“There’s nothing there, Asif,” he told himself then, though his voice sounded hollow in the silence. But deep down, he knew. He tried everything—locked it, wedged a chair under the handle, stacked books against it like a barricade. Still, the sound came as if mocking him.

Now, he listens with a strange, quiet reverence: “Is it Morse code?” he wonders. “A message? A warning?” His starved imagination starts spinning wild theories: a ghost, a spirit in limbo, a sentient piece of the building remembering something ancient. The sound crawls into his brain, itching at the base of his skull. His pen slips from his hand, forgotten. His focus narrows to the door—just the door—and the persistent, taunting rhythm.

Then—an urge. Sudden. Bold.

He picks up the pen again.

“No,” he says aloud. “I won’t let it win. I won’t wait for the perfect line. I’ll write what’s real.” Eyes closed, he lets the sound wash over him, lets it fill the quiet spaces in his mind. And then, he writes.

The first line doesn’t come like thunder

or prophecy. It comes like the noise. Quiet. Honest.

“The first line didn’t come. What came is the intermittent prickling noise from the door.”

He pauses. A smile tugs at one corner of his mouth. It’s not profound. But it’s true. And for the first time in what feels like forever, it feels like a beginning.

The prickling continues—steady, strange—and Asif, finally, begins to write. That moment of triumph doesn’t last.

The next night, the prickling returns. And the one after that. Always at midnight. Always that same quiet knock from within. What was once a puzzle becomes a torment—A tick. A drip. A slow erosion of sanity. He wakes up every morning with a headache nesting behind his eyes. Sweat clings to his skin. Not from heat—but from anxiety. Even during the day, the sound follows him. He hears it in his bones, in his imagination. He stares at doors—his office, the bathroom, even the fridge—half-expecting that same sound to begin again.

One morning, Shefali touches his cheek, softening her voice: “Asif, you look exhausted,” she says. Her palm is cool

against the fever of his skin. “Are you okay? You’ve been... quiet. You’re scaring me.”

He flinches: “Just writer’s block,” he mumbles. “It’s... a beast.”

But it’s more than that. And he knows it. She deserves the truth, but how does he explain it? How do you tell someone you’re haunted by a door? He sees it—the pity in her eyes.

Poor Asif is a ghost in his own world again. He hates that look. His writing withers. That once promising line now taunts him: “The first line didn’t come...” It just sits there. A dead end.

He tries to write more, to shape the sound into a story. But the words twist away from him. His thoughts feel tangled, frayed. The narrative won’t come. Just like the door won’t open.

Then, one night, it starts early.

11:03 PM.

Faster. Louder. Like tiny fists beating on the inside of his skull. He slaps his hands over his ears. It doesn’t help. The sound intensifies.

“Stop it!” he hisses, voice cracking. Tears sting his eyes.

“What do you want from me?” His breath comes ragged. Heart hammering.

And then—

Silence.

Deafening.

Too wide. Too heavy.

He turns to Shefali—sleeping, untroubled. She doesn’t hear it. She never does.

He is alone. Alone with a door that only whispers to him.

“Am I going mad?” he whispers to the empty room. No answer.

“Is it me? Is it my mind prickling at itself? Is it making shadows on the inside of my skull?”

A shiver runs through him. Colder than any breeze. The door watches. Waits. Not just a door anymore—but a presence. A patient adversary.

And with each midnight tap, it chips away at what remains of his grip on reality.

Haroonuzzaman is a translator, novelist, poet, researcher, and essayist. Besides teaching English in Libya and Qatar for about 12 years, he has had 20 years of teaching experience in English Language and Literature at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).



TIGERS HUMBLED

Having come into the series against West Indies on the back of four series wins on the trot, the Tigers could not even salvage some pride in the final T20I in Chattogram yesterday. The Tigers' recurring theme of failing to perform as a unit continued, with opener Tanzid Tamim once again standing out through a crucial knock while others failed to provide meaningful support. The West Indies, however, were different in this regard, as Roston Chase and Ackeem Auguste struck fifties to guide the visitors past the modest 152-run target, rendering Tanzid's 62-ball 89 in vain. Fittingly, the West Indies completed a clean sweep with a convincing five-wicket win in the final game -- their first whitewash away from home in a three-match series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Busy schedule ahead for Tigresses

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team face a packed schedule ahead, beginning with a tour of India in December under the ICC Women's Future Tours Programme (FTP), Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials have confirmed.

"We have been asked by the host board to be prepared for departure on either December 14 or 15. The itinerary is yet to be finalised, but as per the FTP calendar, the tour will feature three ODIs and three T20Is," a BCB official told The Daily Star.

"Preparation for the India tour will begin very soon," a player said.

According to BCB officials, the new women's FTP cycle will also commence with Bangladesh's tour of India, and the ODI leg of the series will mark the start of the ICC Women's ODI Championship campaign for the Tigresses.

Following the India tour, Bangladesh will shift focus to the Women's T20 World Cup Qualifiers, scheduled for January-February. Sri Lanka are then expected to tour Bangladesh in April next year.

As per the FTP, the Tigresses will also tour Australia and New Zealand in October and December 2026, respectively, making for a hectic and crucial year ahead for the national side.

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

It took two new batters, a reshuffling of the batting line-up, a career-best T20I score from Tanzid Tamim, and Taskin Ahmed hitting a six without walking into his stumps for Bangladesh to finally cross the 150-run mark against the West Indies in their third attempt in the three-match T20I series in Chattogram on Friday.

The hosts crossed the 150-run threshold only just, getting bundled out for 151 in 20 overs -- a total the visitors chased down in 16.5 overs to take the series 3-0.

In the previous two matches, both of which ended in defeats, the Tigers made 149 all out and 135-8 respectively.

To change their batting fortunes, the management dropped middle-order batters Tawhid Hridoy and Shamim Sohan to bolster the middle order.

But even after such wholesale changes, Bangladesh found themselves at nine down for 144 with just four deliveries left in the innings and No.11 Taskin on strike.

Thankfully for the hosts, Taskin dispatched a short delivery from Romario Shepherd -- who had completed a hattrick the same over -- for a six, and that too without knocking the stumps with his boot as he had done in the series opener.

Tanzid, who was dropped twice, was the lone warrior for Bangladesh, making 89 off 62 balls -- nearly 59 percent of the total. He had hit a half-century in the second match as well -- 61 off 48 -- but found no support

When they batted, there was dew. They were lucky to bat second, you can't control and judge before the game.... Before the series we wanted a tough time and they gave us a tough time.

Bangladesh captain LITTON DAS

from the others in that game as well.

Depending on one batter to rescue the side is in no way a sustainable model for a team to do well; more batters have to put their hands up and execute their roles.

Bangladesh came into the West Indies series having won four T20I series on the trot, creating a sense that the Tigers will find the right balance in the format.

But even during this period, Bangladesh's batting frailties were getting exposed. The side was getting rescued by individual performances like Tanzid's and by the bowling unit, which has displayed adaptability and depth in recent times.

With around three months left before the ICC T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, and just one T20I series on the horizon -- against Ireland at home this month -- there is simply no time left to try out other options in the batting department.

The management might bring in players like Soumya Sarkar and Mohammad Saifuddin, who are part of the white-ball setup but not in the T20 squad right now, but other than that, the majority of the squad that is facing the Caribbean side will most likely represent Bangladesh in the mega event.

If nothing else, the West Indies series showed that one big innings is not enough to put up big totals. For a team like Bangladesh, every batter has to play their role efficiently. If not, sporadic success is the best the Tigers can hope for in the long run.

Test team to start training on Nov 8

SPORTS REPORTER FROM CTG

Bangladesh's Test players are set to begin preparations for the upcoming two match series against Ireland on November 8 in Sylhet, confirmed Bangladesh Cricket Board's cricket operations in charge, Shahriar Nafees.

"The dedicated Test players will take part in the second round of the National Cricket League (NCL), which starts tomorrow [Saturday]. They will then get two rest days before travelling to Sylhet on November 7," Nafees told The Daily Star. He added that members of the white-ball squad, who are also part of the Test setup, will join the group on the same day.

"The white-ball players will have a few rest days after the West Indies series, as they have been playing continuous cricket over the past few months," he added.

It was learnt that among the Test specialists who were not part of the three-match T20I series against West Indies, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam will not feature for Rajshahi Division in their second-round NCL match against Khulna Division in Mirpur on Saturday.

The two-match Test series against Ireland will begin on November 8 in Sylhet, while the second Test will start on November 19 in Mirpur.

The announcement of the squad and the new Test captain is expected to follow a board of directors' meeting scheduled for November 3.

Arsenal look to extend stay at top

REUTERS

Arsenal will look to extend their remarkable run of form when they travel to Burnley tomorrow but manager Mikel Arteta.

The Gunners have been in impressive form, becoming the first English top-flight team to play at least six times in a month without conceding a goal.

Their flawless October included Premier League wins over West Ham United, Fulham and Crystal Palace, alongside triumphs against Olympiacos and Atletico Madrid in the Champions League, and a League Cup win against Brighton.

Arteta's men currently sit atop the Premier League standings with 22 points from nine matches, four clear of second-placed Bournemouth.

"Yes (keep the foot on the gas) and maintain the level of urgency," Arteta said. "The concentration, the focus, the ambition we are showing in every game, and every game brings different challenges."

"Sometimes we have to be very patient and some of the time we have to have a different approach."

"The game against Burnley is going to be really tough. They are extremely well coached and Scott (Parker) has done really well with the club."

In-form Brazil international Gabriel Martinelli and centre-back William Saliba are out for the trip to Burnley. Martinelli limped off the pitch following Arsenal's 1-0 Premier League victory over Crystal Palace on Sunday, while Frenchman Saliba was substituted at halftime at the Emirates. Martin Odegaard, Kai Havertz and Noni Madueke also remain sidelined.

Plenty changed, LITTLE GAINED

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 151 all out in 20 overs (Tanzid 89; Shepherd 3-36, Holder 2-32)

West Indies: 152 for 5 in 16.5 overs (Chase 50, Auguste 50; Rishad 3-43)

Result: West Indies won by five wickets, taking series 3-0

Player of the match: Roston Chase

Player of the series: Romario Shepherd

Hossain, sent down opener Saif Hassan to No.4, and brought in Parvez Hossain Emon to open the innings and Nurul Hasan Sohan to bolster the middle order.

But even after such wholesale changes, Bangladesh found themselves at nine down for 144 with just four deliveries left in the innings and No.11 Taskin on strike.

Thankfully for the hosts, Taskin dispatched a short delivery from Romario Shepherd -- who had completed a hattrick the same over -- for a six, and that too without knocking the stumps with his boot as he had done in the series opener.

Tanzid, who was dropped twice, was the lone warrior for Bangladesh, making 89 off 62 balls -- nearly 59 percent of the total. He had hit a half-century in the second match as well -- 61 off 48 -- but found no support

Alo might lose points in the remaining rounds, so I should keep fighting," said Noshin. Regaining focus, she took the solo lead after the seventh round and never looked back, achieving the rare feat.

"I won't take long to reach the level of players like Liza and Shirin, but becoming the country's first Woman Grandmaster (WGM) will take time because it's quite difficult to improve rating points nowadays," said Noshin, who studies in the Department of Food and Nutrition at the University of Dhaka.

Noshin also noted that the standard of the national women's championship has risen significantly in recent years. "When I first played in the national championship in 2016, there were only a few experienced players. Now there are many young and competitive participants, which makes the tournament much tougher. Anyone can beat anyone," she said.

The young champion appealed for sponsorship support to pursue her dream of becoming Bangladesh's first WGM. "I don't have enough support to play overseas tournaments regularly. My single mother looks after me, and I try to help her financially as a contractual player for Bangladesh Navy. Without individual sponsors, it's difficult to compete abroad and earn the rating points I need to reach my goal," Noshin added.



to become a Grandmaster by competing in the Open section. She is close to earning the WIM title, having already secured two WIM norms. She now needs one more norm and a 2200 rating to complete the requirements.

This year, Noshin set her sights on completing the hattrick but faced an early setback when she lost to Nusrat Jahan Alo in the third round. It was her mother's encouragement that motivated her to continue. "My mother told me that

India face South Africa in the final at the same venue on Sunday as both teams attempt to win the one-day tournament for the first time in its 52-year history.

India savours 'greatest day' in WOMEN'S CRICKET

AFP, Mumbai

India's stunning World Cup semifinal win over Australia was described Friday as the greatest day in the history of women's cricket in the country, with Jemimah Rodrigues hailed for her "innings of a lifetime".

Batter Rodrigues hit an unbeaten 127 as the hosts chased down a record 339 in Mumbai on Thursday to oust reigning seven-time champions Australia in Mumbai.

India face South Africa in the final at the same venue on Sunday as both teams attempt to win the one-day tournament for the first time in its 52-year history.

"This is the greatest day in the history of Indian women's cricket," veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle said on X.

Virat Kohli, the star batsman from the men's team, called Rodrigues's display the "standout performance", while former men's captain Sunil Gavaskar called the victory "exhilarating" and "absolutely thrilling", especially because they were clear underdogs.

"You can say that the Indian women's team has definitely come of age," Gavaskar said.

India lost three successive matches in the league phase before clinching the last



semifinal spot, in contrast to Australia's unbeaten run into the final four.

India were in trouble at 59-2 in reply to Australia's massive 338 when Rodrigues turned the game on its head in a 167-run third-wicket partnership with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who hit 89.

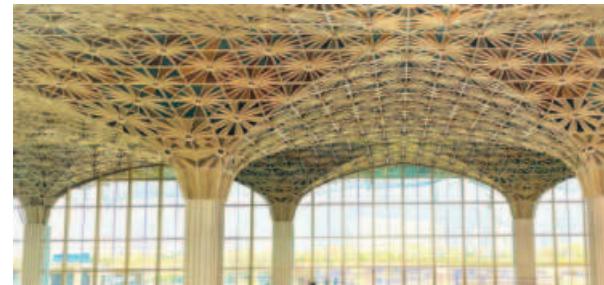
Rodrigues, a middle-order batter who had a modest start in the tournament and was dropped in the league game against England, was promoted to number three and delivered when it mattered.

"When you are left and then come back into the team the pressure is way too high... today's innings was a marvellous innings," added Gavaskar.

That was echoed by former national cricketer Mohammad Kaif, who called it an "innings of a lifetime".



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Man sent to jail for assaulting woman on Dhaka bus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The man seen in a recently-viral video assaulting a woman on a Dhaka bus – reportedly over the clothes she was wearing – has been arrested and subsequently sent to jail.

A team from Rab-4 detained Md Nizam Uddin, 45, from the Mohammadpur Bus Stand area on Thursday night, said Major Md Abrar Foysal Sadi, operations officer at Rab-4.

"The suspect is a bus [driver's] helper of Ramzan Paribahan," Sadi told The Daily Star.

Rab later handed Nizam over to Mohammadpur Police Station, where he was shown arrested in a case filed by the victim yesterday.

Kazi Rafiq, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, said the arrestee was produced before a court which sent him to jail.

The assault of the young woman sparked outrage after the footage went viral on social media. The video shows the man arguing with the

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Govt to blame for ongoing political crisis

Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday blamed the interim government for the country's ongoing political crisis, accusing it of deepening divisions instead of resolving them.

"The crisis we are facing today has been created by the present interim government," he said at a programme organised by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rob) to mark its 53rd founding anniversary at the Jatiya Press Club.

Later, at a programme organised by Ganashonghati

In 1971, you opposed our Liberation War. Please don't oppose the election the people want.



Andolan, Fakhrul urged the government to end the debate over the July National Charter and its implementation recommendations and focus on holding parliamentary elections.

"What has happened, has happened. Please resolve these issues so that together we can move towards the elections, and by solving these problems, work for the welfare of the people. Move forward on that path," he said.

At the JSD-Rob programme, Fakhrul, without naming any party, urged those demanding a referendum to stop their agitation and refrain from creating chaos.

"In the past, you opposed the independence of Pakistan's provinces, and in 1971, you opposed our Liberation War. Please don't oppose the election the people want," he said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Hornless rhino roamed Canadian Arctic 23m yrs ago



REUTERS

About 23 million years ago, a species of rhinoceros – similar in size to the modern Indian rhino but lacking a horn – made its home in the challenging environment of the Canadian High Arctic, which at the time was warmer than it is now but still experienced snow and months of wintertime darkness.

Fossils of the polar rhino, named *Epiatheracerium itijilik*, were found on Devon Island, a landscape underlain by permafrost, in Canada's Arctic archipelago. With about 75 percent of its skeleton intact, scientists gained a good understanding of the animal. Its remains were discovered in Haughton Crater, one of Earth's northernmost impact craters, about 14 miles (23 km) wide.

The polar rhino lived early in the Miocene epoch, a time of diversification of many mammalian groups. Until this discovery, no rhinoceros was known to have lived in such a high latitude. The fossil site is in Nunavut, Canada's northernmost territory.

CHALLENGES IN POLICING 4 FINAL PART

Burnt stations hinder probes



Khilgaon Police Station

FILE PHOTO



Jatrabari Police Station

FILE PHOTO

Station.

"We are trying to gather all related documents, but it's proving to be a difficult task," he added.

Not only Adabor, 12 other stations under Dhaka Metropolitan Police were set alight between August 5 and 6 last year, resulting in the destruction of 1,200 case documents and 1,100 pieces of evidence, including forensic and DNA reports.

These stations are located in Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Badda, Jatrabari, Khilgaon, Paltan, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Shyampur, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Bhatara, Wari, and Khilkhet areas.

REELING FROM DAMAGES

Among the affected stations, the worst-hit was Jatrabari, where a devastating fire not only destroyed vehicles, case records, and evidence but also claimed the lives of at least six law enforcers.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

If police fail to recover a piece of evidence in a case, the investigation team has to file a general diary and then submit its copy to the court concerned," he added.

The police faced intense public backlash for its role in the violent crackdown including indiscriminate firing and excessive use of force against protesters during the uprising. Many police officers have been accused of suppressing dissent through arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearance during the tenure of the Awami League government.

REELING FROM DAMAGES

Among the affected stations, the worst-hit was Jatrabari, where a devastating fire not only destroyed vehicles, case records, and evidence but also claimed the lives of at least six law enforcers.

When asked, SN Nazrul Islam, additional commissioner at the DMP headquarters, said, "We have managed to collect copies of almost all case documents lost in the fires. But we are facing problems in retrieving the pieces of evidence."

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As part of this year's Kathina Robe Offering Ceremony, Buddhist devotees carry robes they had woven overnight to be formally presented to the monks, marking the end of their three-month rains retreat, known as Vassa. The ceremony, which began on Thursday, included a series of religious rituals, with monks offering prayers for global peace and harmony. The photo was taken yesterday at Rajbana Vihara in Rangamati.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

US signs 10-yr defence pact with India

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

The United States has signed a 10-year defence framework agreement with India, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said yesterday.

The framework is considered a cornerstone for regional stability and deterrence, enhancing coordination, information sharing and technological cooperation between the two nations, Hegseth posted on X after a meeting with his Indian counterpart, Rajnath Singh.

Hegseth yesterday spoke with counterparts from China and India, beginning a series of face-to-face meetings at an Asean defence summit in Malaysia, as Washington seeks to boost regional security ties.

"It's a significant step for our two militaries, a roadmap for deeper and even more meaningful collaboration ahead," Hegseth told reporters after the signing.

Hegseth and Singh were meeting for the first time since the United States imposed tariffs of 50 percent on Indian goods in August as punishment for New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil.

The tariffs prompted India to pause purchases of US defence equipment, with the two sides expected to discuss yesterday a review of India's plans to buy the military hardware.

Hegseth said on X he told China's Dong Jun the United States would "stoutly defend its interests" and maintain the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, while voicing concern about Chinese activities in the disputed South China Sea and around Taiwan.

BESTINET'S AMINUL Malaysia cops looking into extradition request

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Royal Malaysia Police Headquarters, in collaboration with the authorities of Bangladesh, is handling Dhaka's request to extradite Bestinet founder Aminul Islam Abdul Nor and his associate, Ruhul Amin, both linked to money laundering activities.

Bestinet is an IT company that operates the centralised management system used by the Malaysian government to process the entry of foreign workers into the country.

Aminul is a Bangladeshi-born Malaysian citizen, while Ruhul is the owner of Dhaka-based recruitment firm Catharsis International.

Malaysian Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the matter is being managed on a government-to-government (G2G) as well as a police-to-police (P2P) basis, predicated on bilateral cooperation,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



TAXIDERMY

Preserving life through art, science

How Jewel Rana's dedication brings rare specimens back to existence



SHAIKH ISLAM NIRAB

Inside the Jamuna Bridge Regional Museum in Tangail's Bhauapur, a child was staring at a stuffed owl, mesmerised, as he wondered if it was a real bird.

"Ma, is it real? Why doesn't it move?" the child asked his mother.

"It is real, but it's not alive anymore. It's been preserved, much like a mummy you read about in books, remember?" his mother replied.

"But it looks so... alive..." the child murmured, still in awe.

At this museum, a unique world of quiet unfolds, as if frozen in time, with numerous specimens of wildlife, including some species that have already become extinct in the country, preserved through the art of taxidermy.

These stuffed animals are no wax figurines or artificial replicas, but real creatures, long deceased. Yet, they appear strikingly vivid, as if they still harbour life within them.

Jewel Rana, the museum's curator and one of Bangladesh's very few trained taxidermists, is the man behind nearly every preserved specimen at the museum.

WHAT IS TAXIDERMY?

The term "Taxidermy" is derived from the Greek words *taxis* (arrangement) and *derma* (skin), referring to the scientific process of preserving an animal's skin and stuffing it to resemble a lifelike figure.

According to Jewel, taxidermy is as much an art as it is a science. It requires anatomical knowledge, surgical precision, and a deep artistic sense.

"Every animal has its own language of posture and presence. It takes an artist's eyes and a scientist's knowledge of anatomy to sculpt an animal's face based on its actual

skull, preserve its body, replicate the expression in their eyes, and align each feather or strand of hair meticulously," he said.

Talking to this correspondent, Jewel explained that the process of preserving an animal specimen through taxidermy begins with identifying the animal's cause of death and analysing its age, anatomy, and bone structure.

"The skin is then carefully removed, disinfected, and preserved using salt and chemicals. A body frame is built using cotton, foam, resin, glue, clay,

instruments to work on each project. "I always begin work after taking a rabies vaccine and using proper disinfectants. Once the animal's skin is removed, the remaining carcass is buried to prevent any environmental harm," he added.

BUILDING A BIODIVERSITY ARCHIVE FROM SCRATCH

After Jewel Rana joined the museum in 2010 as an assistant curator, he embarked on his journey as a

preserver both a nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), the largest species of Asian antelope that has become extinct in Bangladesh since the 1940s, and a saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) through taxidermy.

The nilgai, believed to have crossed the Indian border and entered Bangladesh in 2019, was found dead in Panchagarh. It took Jewel four days and around Tk 1 lakh to complete the preservation of this rare specimen.

In a country where the practice remains

sunbird, and tailorbird. The nests are collected after falling from trees, either naturally or during storms, and are then treated with chemicals to prevent decay.

Working with such fragile specimens requires extreme caution. Jewel often posts a handwritten sign near his workstation that reads: "If you pull, the rope breaks; if you don't pull, the thread holds," – in a poetic reminder of how delicate the job really is.

Delicate items like butterfly wings and insect exoskeletons are handled with tweezers, under magnifying lenses, and worked on with scientific precision.

"Even a sneeze can ruin hours of work," Jewel noted.

The museum also displays preserved bird nests, insects, animal skeletons, cultural artefacts, and over 800 photographs related to biodiversity, as well as those depicting the history of the construction of the Jamuna Bridge.

Jewel is affiliated with the Bangladesh Biodiversity Conservation Federation, which consists of over 200 environment-focused volunteer groups across the country. This network plays a vital role in locating and transporting dead animals – often victims of road accidents, electrocution, or natural disasters.

Thanks to these volunteers, the museum has collected and preserved an array of rare species, including jungle cats, fishing cats, pangolins, numerous snakes, owls, and migratory birds. The volunteers often transport the animals themselves or send word to the museum, ensuring timely preservation.

UNEXPLORED REALM WITH POSSIBILITIES

Despite the importance of taxidermy in research and education, there are only three formally trained taxidermists in Bangladesh at present.

In contrast, countries like Germany and the Netherlands hold international taxidermy competitions, offer university courses, and have stores selling stuffed specimens.

Some people even preserve their deceased pets as mementos – a practice that may seem somewhat odd here but reflects a broader cultural acceptance of taxidermy abroad.

Jewel believes taxidermy deserves institutional recognition in Bangladesh. "If we can develop training programmes and offer professional support, this could become a new vocational field," he opined.

"These preserved animals are not mere showpieces. They serve as educational tools for students, researchers, and nature lovers. Many of the specimens here are used in school demonstrations, college-level zoology classes, and biodiversity research work," Jewel noted.

Jewel frequently collaborates with the Forest Department, the National Zoo, and academic institutions.

He is also mentoring young students, especially those from zoology departments of different universities, to carry forward this knowledge.

Jewel aspires to establish a full-fledged taxidermy training centre in Bangladesh someday.

"Each animal preserved through taxidermy tells a story – not just of death, but of life, loss, and learning. Through a taxidermist's hands, the dead seem to speak again – educating the living about the beauty and fragility of the natural world," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

and colouring agents, in such a way that it replicates the animal's natural features and posture as closely as possible," he said.

For larger animals, the process can cost anywhere from Tk 80,000 to Tk 1 lakh.

In each taxidermy project, extreme precision, care, and attention to detail are necessary. Jewel uses an array of tools including pliers, brushes, hammers, scalpels, and other surgical

taxidermist under the guidance of then curator Ananda Kumar Das.

In 2013, he completed a short course in taxidermy at Dhaka University's Department of Zoology, where he trained under experts including Prof Bidhan Chandra Das, Dr Shawkat Imam Khan, and Md Delwar Hossain. A year later, he was promoted to curator of the museum.

Jewel is credited as the first person in the country to successfully

largely unknown and undervalued, Jewel has single-handedly preserved over 500 animal specimens for educational and research purposes at the museum.

The collection includes 138 species of birds, nine amphibians, 33 mammals, 32 reptiles, and 275 freshwater and marine fish species.

Among the museum's most delicate items are the 66 specimens of bird nests, including those of munia,

HEARING THE TIGER

Survival lessons from the Sundarbans

The tiger is a *kancha kheko jontu* (a raw flesh-eating animal). Therefore, if deer, wild boar, jungle fowl, monkeys, or other birds and animals sense the presence of a tiger in any mal (forest creek), they all leave that place immediately. When the other wildlife and birds leave, the regular forest sounds also disappear. The rhythm of sound is actually disrupted there. That silence makes us understand that a tiger is around, and we should find a different place to work in the forest.

MD RAIHAN RAJU

The Sundarbans is often described as the "home" of tigers. But that is not the whole truth. Undoubtedly, it is a habitat and a home for multispecies, including humans, whose lives are entangled, sustained, and mutually accredited. How do the prey—humans—and the predator—the tiger—share forest space and survive together? Can the prey and predator truly live together?

The lived experiences of the Bonojibis, as a repository of generational knowledge, reveal a world in which prey and predator coexist—though with constant risk and collaboration. A physical encounter with a tiger can be fatal; therefore, to avoid direct contact, the Bonojibis maintain a tangible distance by attuning themselves to the forest's eco-soundscape, particularly to the sonic image of the tiger.

If anyone enters the forest, it does not necessarily mean entering a different place, but rather entering a world of distinctive soundscape produced by multiple agents, including living and other-than-living organisms in the marshy forest landscape. Every agent, be it human or other-than-human, marks its presence through distinctive tones, echoes, and rhythms, while simultaneously attuning with the forest's embedded eco-soundscape. When the Bonojibis step into a forest creek, they can distinctly perceive a different threshold and ambience of the mal (forest creek) through diverse modes of sonic images or representations.

Malek Mandal from Mirganj shared insights about the sonic image of the tiger, its representations, and how it foretells or signifies potential danger. He stated, "The tiger is a *kancha kheko jontu* (a raw flesh-eating animal). Therefore, if deer, wild boar, jungle fowl, monkeys, or other birds and animals sense the presence of a tiger in any mal, they all leave that place immediately.

When the other

wildlife and

birds leave, the regular forest sounds also disappear. The rhythm of sound is actually disrupted there. That silence makes us understand that a tiger is around, and we should find a different place to work in the forest."

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If there is a tiger in the mal, the forest ambience turns silent (*nirob*), quiet (*nistobdo*), and deep (*gombhir*). The regular rhythm, tone, and overall threshold of the place are disrupted—the usual forest ambience and embedded sounds are absent. Sometimes, such absence of soundscape, or in other words, the presence of silence, often amplifies the physical body of the tiger, as it seems the tiger mediates its presence by disrupting the known chaotic sounds and guiding

Tiger pugmarks spotted on the alluvial terrain of the Sundarbans.

PHOTO: MD RAIHAN RAJU

through these unique calls, often identifying them as alarming signals (*bipod samket*).

Like the calls of monkeys, Bonojibis who spend long periods in the jungle and have accumulated vast experience can differentiate between the regular vocalisations of deer and their alarm calls (*bipod samket*). Deer emit this alert sound—*Taa-Taa*, *Taa-Taa*—which is distinct from their normal calls. Upon detecting this signal, both humans and other deer in the mal become vigilant, track the tiger's movements, and retreat to save their lives. The Bonojibis interpret this sound as a definitive warning of tiger presence.

Jungle fowl in the forest naturally fear foxes. When they encounter a tiger, they mistake it for a large fox and fearfully take flight. Unlike domestic hens, jungle fowl can cover long distances in flight, like other forest birds. When they emit loud, frantic calls and move chaotically, Bonojibis interpret it as an indicator of tiger presence. The usual call of the jungle fowl, locally called *bon morog*, is *Kot-Kot*, but these alarm calls—distinct from their normal vocalisations—are filled with fear, signifying the presence of a predator.

Joydev reminded, "After laying eggs, a jungle fowl may produce prolonged, harsh alarm calls, such as *Kot-kot-kotash*, *Kot-kot-kotash*. Similarly, a jungle fowl restlessly produces such sounds when a tiger is nearby. Hearing this, Bonojibis in the mal become vigilant, recognising that a tiger is in the vicinity, and retreat from the area to avoid danger."

The sonic image of the tiger emerges through the acoustic soundscape produced by other-than-human agents within the forest. It signifies a nodal point between prey and predator—one that both connects and demarcates them. This connection arises as the tiger's sonic presence signals its physical proximity from a distance, while simultaneously establishing a boundary: humans respond to this acoustic image by maintaining a cautious distance, thus ensuring safety while co-inhabiting the forest space.

Md Raihan Raju is a journalist at The Daily Star and can be contacted at raihanraju29@gmail.com



PHOTO: MD RAHAT RAJA

THE HIDDEN WORKFORCE

Inside Dhaka's domestic work economy

SELM JAHAN

these domestic workers are Christians and come from indigenous backgrounds. Letters of reference from previous employers play a major role in their employment and job changes as well.

In the second market, since most ladies of the house are service holders working outside the home, the responsibilities of running the household, including taking care of children, are entrusted to domestic help. In this market, the domestic workers sometimes have better bargaining power, as a result of which the lady of the house becomes a hostage to them. In recent times, the salaries of workers in this market and their benefits have improved.

The third market for domestic workers is in a more disadvantageous position.

Domestic workers in this market have low salaries, and their other benefits are rather limited. Therefore, children and teenagers are dominantly present in this market as domestic workers. Since the lady of the house carries out most of the household chores, the role of the domestic worker becomes that of a 'helper'. Naturally, the skill levels of domestic workers in this market are rather low, and the chances of their job mobility are also limited.

At present, many households in the city treat their domestic help with care and kindness and provide many comforts, quite unlike the feudal treatment of domestic workers in the past. On the negative side, some employers do not pay the domestic workers on time and withhold a part of their salary as a means to prevent them from leaving the current job.

Domestic workers sometimes become victims of persecution and violence, which stretches from physical to emotional abuse. Physical abuse, denial of food, and extreme physical torture are parts of the punishment inflicted by employers on domestic workers. One particular form of violence that domestic workers face is sexual violence. Sometimes such violence is reflected in sexual harassment; sometimes it becomes extreme in the form of rape. Between 2008 and 2013, 300 domestic workers were reported in newspapers to have been victims of persecution and violence. Most of



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

In order to provide protection to domestic workers and to ensure their interests, Bangladesh formulated policies for the protection and welfare of domestic workers in 2015. These policies focused on the working conditions of domestic workers, their well-being and welfare, employer-employee relations, etc. Those policies also emphasised the rights of domestic workers, proper wages and salaries for them, as well as their other benefits, including leave, rest, and protection from child labour. Bangladesh has recently passed the Labour Law (Amendment) Ordinance 2025, which includes domestic workers under formal legal protection for the first time. Domestic workers are now included under the definition of 'labour' in the law, giving them the same legal rights and protections as other workers.

The fundamental question is what can be done for the well-being of domestic workers in Bangladesh. Some of these measures would be legal, some economic, and others social. It is heartening to see that the new labour law covers domestic workers as part of the formal labour law framework of the country. But the issue would be the implementation of that

and the International Labour Office (ILO). With the opportunity to form their own unions under the new labour law, these workers will become a strong collective body to fight for their rights and protect their interests.

From the economic perspective, three issues are important. One, rules and laws must be enacted for proper and equitable salary structures for domestic workers; there should be similar rules and regulations for other benefits for them. Two, the contributions of domestic workers must be integrated into the country's gross national product (GDP). This will not only recognise the contributions of domestic workers to the Bangladesh economy, but it will also strengthen their demands for better economic and social benefits. Three, more robust and credible data must be collected on domestic work and workers.

In the social arena, the human and labour rights of domestic workers must be integrated into the policy and legal framework for domestic work. Along with this, the living arrangements of domestic workers at employers' houses must be improved to acceptable conditions. In addition, various social rights of domestic workers should be ensured. It goes without saying that the legal framework for domestic work must contain provisions to stop and redress all kinds of persecution and violence against domestic workers. Along with such a legal framework and policies, a social movement must be strengthened to enhance social awareness and human empathy.

In the global arena, a United Nations convention on domestic work and workers exists. The 189th ILO Domestic Workers Convention is quite a significant charter on domestic work. Till 2024, only 35 countries have ratified the ILO convention. Bangladesh has signed the convention but has not ratified it yet. Prompt measures must be undertaken in this respect.

Selim Jahan is former director of the Human Development Report Office under the United Nations Development Programme and lead author of the Human Development Report.

SAVING TO DEATH

How not to rescue wild animals

Towards a National Policy for the Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Release of Wild Animals in Bangladesh



REZA KHAN

An eight-foot-long python recovered from the Asambasti Coconut Garden area of Rangamati town on September 30, 2025. The python was rescued by the Forest Department and later released in Kaptai National Park.

PHOTO: FOREST DEPARTMENT

and rehabilitation of wild animals have gained visibility – becoming a symbol of both progress and the problems that accompany it.

Shrinking forests, rising encounters
The boom in development has devoured landscapes that once sheltered wildlife. Bushes, reed beds, and grasslands have been replaced by concrete, shrimp farms, and monoculture plantations. Forests have fragmented under the combined pressures of land grabbing and commercial exploitation.

As a result, wild animals, desperate for food and space, have begun venturing into human territories, while humans continue to encroach deeper into animal habitats. This has led to more frequent human-animal conflicts, injuries, deaths, and emergency rescues.

A WAVE OF RESCUE – BUT AT WHAT COST?

Rescuing wild animals has become a public spectacle, fuelled by social media and viral content. Young people, NGOs, and government agencies compete to be seen as good samaritans. However, many rescues end in premature deaths or renewed suffering.

Animals are sometimes confiscated from illegal smugglers or private collectors, while others are retrieved from the homes of wealthy individuals who treat exotic creatures as status symbols. Yet, after the photo opportunities, most rescued animals are hastily released – often into unsuitable habitats, at the wrong time, and without medical checks or proper rehabilitation.

WHY A POLICY IS NEEDED

Animal welfare
Many rescued animals are physically injured, stressed, or diseased. Immediate release without treatment violates ethical standards of animal care.

Birds kept in tiny cages by illegal bird vendors are being released almost instantly, causing serious threats to wild populations of birds and other animals, as such malnourished and untreated birds are traditionally known to carry diseases.

Ecological integrity

Releasing species into the wrong habitat (e.g., plains species in hilly forests and vice versa, or country-side animals into the Sundarbans) disrupts the local ecology and genetic integrity of wild populations. Ecologically and behaviourally, animals released into alien habitats will always remain physically weak and psychologically inferior to those already living and occupying established territories. Moreover, resident animals know where to find food and how to hide in the event of approaching danger.

Disease prevention
Without quarantine periods ranging from one to three months, zoonotic and epizootic diseases can spread to wild or domestic animals – and even to humans.

Accountability and data

Currently, there is no record of the number of animals rescued, their release locations, or their survival rates. Additionally, there is no system in place to track animals after release or to monitor their post-release conditions. This issue arises because current forest cadre service employees are primarily recruited to manage forests from a forestry perspective. Furthermore, even wildlife officers, who are employed for this purpose, cannot enter a forest without prior permission from a cadre service officer or a non-cadre service ranger. This is a significant flaw in national wildlife management and

forests lacking suitable fruit trees.

Rhesus Macaque – Captured from urban temples and released in random reserves, they often clash with native troops or spread disease.

Birds without nests

Oriental Pied Hornbill – Confiscated and released into tiny forest fragments without fruit trees.

Hill Myna – Released in urban parks with no nesting cavities.

Barn Owl – Set free in daylight, leaving them vulnerable to predators.

Parakeets – Released far from their natural range, near rice fields.

Black Kite – Freed from police stations before regaining flight ability.

Reptiles released to wrong realms

Indian Rock Python – Released too close to human settlements, causing panic.

Monocled Cobra – Handled by untrained personnel and released near highways.

Monitor Lizards and Turtles – Dumped into ponds or canals without assessing water quality.

Star Tortoises – Released in humid areas instead of dry scrublands, leading to fatal infections.

Hundreds of foreign and exotic species are being smuggled into the

conservation efforts.

Alignment with international standards

The IUCN and many neighbouring countries (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand) have established clear reintroduction and release protocols. Bangladesh can adopt and localise these successfully.

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND INSTITUTIONAL GAPS

Bangladesh lacks a dedicated wildlife department responsible for managing land, water, air, and all biodiversity within a forested area. Currently, all land, water, and natural resources are managed by personnel recruited under the Forest Department's Wildlife Wing, where wildlife biologists have no role. These biologists are often regarded as 'imposters' within forestry operations.

There exists no central policy or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for rescue, rehabilitation, and release. Inadequate facilities: There are no designated rescue and rehabilitation centres in most divisions. A few that have been declared by the Forest Department exist in name only – established for formality, not established for formality, or the utilisation of funds – without adequate workforce or facilities.

Lack of trained staff: Forestry staff and NGO volunteers often act without prior wildlife-handling knowledge, training, or veterinary guidance. Limited veterinary support: Only a few veterinarians are skilled in wildlife treatment.

Overlapping roles: NGOs, local administrations, and the Forest Department's Wildlife Wing often perform overlapping or conflicting functions.

In 2024, a group of macaques rescued from a construction site in Dhaka was released near a residential park, where they began raiding households and were later re-captured – a cycle of suffering that proper rehabilitation could have avoided.

PROPOSED POLICY FRAMEWORK

A National Policy on the Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Release of Wild Animals should be adopted under the MoEFCC, with the following components:

1. National coordination mechanism

Establish a wildlife rescue and

preparation, and serving, equipped with proper vehicles.

At least one wild animal rescue ambulance, created by converting a large pick-up truck, with first aid and emergency treatment and care facilities. The government might request donor agencies to provide one or two such wild animal rescue ambulances.

Veterinary treatment units and isolation cages to be built following international benchmarking standards.

Soft-release enclosures for adaptation to be built in suitable locations.

All rescued animals must be recorded in a database capable of storing species name, sex, age, and condition, as well as their history in the facilities and eventual fate.

Record keeping and SIM and satellite-based tagging systems are necessary.

All rescued animals must have a microchip inserted into their bodies.

4. Authorised release sites

Designate species-specific, ecologically appropriate release areas.

Prohibit release into urban, village homesteads, or agricultural landscapes.

Conduct pre-release habitat assessments and post-release monitoring.

5. Capacity building and training

Develop and conduct regular training modules for Wildlife Wing staff, NGOs, zookeepers, and veterinarians. Include safe capture, handling, species identification, and welfare assessment. Partner with universities and veterinary schools for technical expertise.

6. Data management and reporting

Create a national wildlife database accessible to the MoEFCC, Forest Department, universities with wildlife departments, and registered NGOs.

Track each case with GPS coordinates, photos, treatment details, and survival outcomes.

7. Public awareness and engagement

Educate the public on responsible rescue practices through posters, television, and social media. Disseminate guidelines on what to do when encountering injured or displaced wildlife. Promote citizen reporting via



A deer found trapped in a poacher's snare, rescued by forest officials.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUNDARBAN EAST FOREST, BANGLADESH / FACEBOOK

country, and the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department is actively confiscating them.

THE WAY FORWARD

While the intent behind wildlife rescue is often noble, its execution reveals a lack of scientific planning. True rehabilitation requires trained personnel, health screenings, species-specific release protocols, and long-term monitoring – not viral videos or rushed releases.

WHY A POLICY IS NEEDED

Animal welfare
Many rescued animals are physically injured, stressed, or diseased. Immediate release without treatment violates ethical standards of animal care.

Birds kept in tiny cages by illegal bird vendors are being released almost instantly, causing serious threats to wild populations of birds and other animals, as such malnourished and untreated birds are traditionally known to carry diseases.

Ecological integrity

Releasing species into the wrong habitat (e.g., plains species in hilly forests and vice versa, or country-side animals into the Sundarbans) disrupts the local ecology and genetic integrity of wild populations. Ecologically and behaviourally, animals released into alien habitats will always remain physically weak and psychologically inferior to those already living and occupying established territories. Moreover, resident animals know where to find food and how to hide in the event of approaching danger.

Disease prevention

Without quarantine periods ranging from one to three months, zoonotic and epizootic diseases can spread to wild or domestic animals – and even to humans.

Accountability and data

Currently, there is no record of the number of animals rescued, their release locations, or their survival rates. Additionally, there is no system in place to track animals after release or to monitor their post-release conditions. This issue arises because current forest cadre service employees are primarily recruited to manage forests from a forestry perspective. Furthermore, even wildlife officers, who are employed for this purpose, cannot enter a forest without prior permission from a cadre service officer or a non-cadre service ranger. This is a significant flaw in national wildlife management and

rehabilitation council (WRRC) under the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department, with support from wildlife biologists working with national and internationally recognised organisations.

Include representatives from the MoEFCC, Forest Department Wildlife Wing, universities, NGOs, veterinarians, and law enforcement.

The council should oversee implementation, data collection, and inter-agency coordination.

2. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Drawing on IUCN guidelines and regional experience, with adaptations for Bangladesh's native species. Cover every stage: rescue → transport → food and feeding → housing care → veterinary care → quarantine → rehabilitation → release → post-release monitoring.

3. Regional rescue and rehabilitation centres

Establish at least one centre per division, linked to major protected areas.

Facilities should include:

A wildlife rescue manager with a degree and experience in wildlife management.

Proper housing facilities for rescued megafauna, birds, and reptiles to be built under the guidance of wildlife, zoo, or safari management experts. These must have a continuous supply of water and electricity and be connected by road networks.

Facilities for food storage,

mobile apps or hotline numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The MoEFCC should initiate the drafting and adoption of a national wildlife rescue and release policy.

Pilot rehabilitation centres should begin in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Sylhet regions.

Mandatory veterinary oversight must be required before any release.

Database and transparency mechanisms should be instituted for accountability.

Encourage cross-border learning with India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Integrate the initiative within the broader Wildlife Conservation Master Plan under the Forest Department's Wildlife Wing.

Bangladesh has the expertise and dedication – what is needed now is an organised, ethical, and scientifically guided policy framework to protect its wildlife from good intentions that go wrong.

Dr Reza Khan is a wildlife biologist and conservationist with over four decades of experience in wildlife research, zoo management, and biodiversity conservation in Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates. He has worked extensively in wildlife rescue, sanctuary management, and community-based conservation initiatives.



The Forest Department's Wildlife Crime Control Unit and the Social Forestry Division of Dinajpur rescued 74 wild animals from Swapnopur Park and Mini Zoo in Nawabganj upazila, Dinajpur, on January 24, 2025.

led to severe deforestation, fragmented forests, and the genetic isolation of wildlife populations as monocultures of timber trees and crops replace natural habitats, depriving a wide array of species of their homes and livelihoods. Historically, affection for animals in Bangladesh was largely limited to domesticated cats and dogs. Respect for wildlife, common in neighbouring countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India, did not take strong root here. However, in recent years, the rescue

acclimatisation. Many die from stress or starvation.

Common Palm Civet – Rescued from urban areas and released in broad daylight, these animals often become easy prey or roadkill.

Fishing Cat – Found near shrimp farms in Khulna, Satkhira, and elsewhere, these cats are captured and released without consideration of territorial needs or prey availability.

Binturong – Rare animals seized by law enforcers and released into



Sundarbans faces a new test as ECO-TOURISM SURGES

DIPANKAR ROY

Before dawn breaks over the braided channels that carve through the Sundarbans, a small crowd gathers on the riverbank in Khulna. The air tastes of brackish water and diesel; the sky is bruise-coloured, and the horizon already hums with the low throb of boat engines.

Among the travellers is Abir Abdullah, a Dhaka-based businessman who has waited years to step into this mangrove labyrinth.

"It used to take eight to twelve hours to reach Khulna by road," he says, folding his shawl against the pre-dawn chill. "Now I board a midnight bus, get off in the morning and go straight to the launch within three to four hours. Three days of forest cruising, I want to see Dublar Char and join the Rash Puja."

crabs and golpata. Tourism, once marginal, is now emerging as a major alternative source of income.

Tour operators and local entrepreneurs have moved quickly to capture the opportunity.

The Tour Operators Association of Sundarbans (TOAS) reports around 65 registered launches operating out of Khulna, with another five to seven boats plying similar routes outside the association.

The operators maintain about 200 trained tour guides, while a separate cluster of smaller operators in Mongla runs day trips to Karamjal and Harbaria.

Luxury cruises are no longer rare.

In the past two years, several high-end



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Kailashganj and Dhangmari. Names such as Jangalbari, Iriboti, Golkano, Bonlata and Mangrove Haven have become familiar to weekenders and out-of-town families.

Most cottages represent capital commitments of Tk 1.5 to Tk 2.5 crore. Resort owners say their businesses have produced steady alternative incomes for hundreds of families, including hotel staff, boatmen, guides, food suppliers and handicraft vendors.

Local entrepreneurs also report contributing to community needs by supplying potable water, supporting remote health outreach and partnering on education initiatives.

"We wanted to create an economy around the forest without destroying it," says Zakaria Hossain Shawon, general secretary of the Resort Owners Association of Sundarbans.

"If we can show that the forest can generate sustainable livelihoods through careful tourism, then fewer people will risk illegal extraction," he said.

THREAT TO A FRAGILE ECOSYSTEM?

The ecosystem of the Sundarbans is a complex and fragile one. As tourism flourishes at a remarkable pace, there are concerns regarding the impacts on the forest.

According to Forest Department records, Sundarbans visitor numbers have climbed sharply in recent years, from 128,175 in fiscal year (FY) 2015-16 to 216,143 in FY 2022-23.

In FY 2023-24, 211,057 tourists visited, generating roughly Tk 3.6 crore in revenue.

Operators note a 45 percent rise in domestic visitors after the Padma Bridge opened, with foreign arrivals also doubling.

"The forest has finite carrying capacity," says Imran Ahmed, conservator of Forests for Khulna. "Mass tourism, uncollected waste and extractive pressures can damage the ecology. Our priority is to keep tourism controlled, with strict zoning and trained eco-guides."

A 20-year Sundarbans Ecotourism Masterplan (2025-2045), developed by the Forest Department with USAID and Solimar International, aims to balance the conservation and community benefit.

It calls for regulated visitor flows, community-based tourism and a broader spread of tourist sites so that visitors do not congregate in a few vulnerable sites.

Professor Wasiul Islam of Khulna University, who led parts of the plan, says, "The objective was not conventional infrastructure expansion. We wanted a roadmap for sustainable tourism that protects biodiversity while creating meaningful livelihoods. When locals benefit, they become the forest's guardians."

The plan proposes new entry points and information centres at Mongla, Munshiganj, Shorokhola and other gateways; improved waste management; limits on boats and promotion of homestays and cultural tourism. Some 200 eco-guides have already been trained.

But conservation is easier said than done. As the numbers of visitors grow, so do unregulated activities.

"Some activities inside the forest, such as crab collection, unregulated visits deep into sensitive habitats, and uncollected plastics, are not compatible with long-term conservation," said Professor Anwarul Kadir, executive director of the Sundarbans Academy.

"If we want to keep the tiger, deer and migratory birds thriving, we must enforce no-take zones and strictly regulate where and how tourists enter," he added.

The Forest Department has added four new tourist zones -- Alibanda

in Shorokhola, Andharmanik in Chandpali Range, Shekhertek and Kailashganj within Khulna range -- to ease pressure on seven core sites in Kotka, Kachikhal, Dublar Char, Hiron Point, Harbaria, Kalagachhia and Karamjal.

Yet environmental fragility and human dependency complicate management.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

On the ground, perspectives are pragmatic. Nilufa Khatun, who once collected golpata and honey to supplement family income, says her life changed when a nearby eco-cottage began hiring local women for housekeeping and food preparation.

"Now I earn regular money, my children go to school," she says. "We still go into the forest sometimes, but less often."

But operators like Nazmul Azam David, general secretary of the Tour Operators Association of Sundarbans, stress safety and regulation.

"Many small operators are offering one-day trips from Mongla and Munshiganj. We have 57 registered vessels, 25 of them luxury, but need proper safety checks, crew training and coordination among government agencies so tourists are protected and the forest is not overused," he said.

The private sector is responding with mixed incentives.

Sea Pearl's Khulna Manager SM Musfiqur Hasan says their cruises regularly charge Tk 12,000-Tk 22,000 per person and draw well in peak season.

"The Padma Bridge has changed travel patterns," he says. "We now run two or more tours every week during the season. Investment is flowing in, but investors expect good governance and long-term planning."

If the masterplan and community initiatives succeed, the Sundarbans could become a model of eco-centred tourism that sustains both people and nature. But whether it keeps its wild heart depends on choices made today.



More Bangladeshis, and gradually more foreign visitors, are heading into the world's largest mangrove forest. Since the Padma Bridge opened to traffic in June 2022, the Sundarbans has transformed from a remote, arduous journey into an accessible two- or three-day escape

Abdullah's eagerness reflects a recent wave.

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The upgrade has opened the path for a rapidly expanding tourism economy that promises livelihoods and local investment. At the same time, it also raises critical questions about conservation of one of the most important forests in the whole world.

NEW TOURISM FRONTIER

The Sundarbans, Bangladesh's 6,017-square-kilometre share of the global mangrove, contains a dizzying range of biodiversity: 334 species of plants, 315 bird species, 210 fish species, six species of dolphin and a threatened population of the Royal Bengal tiger.

For decades, the forest sustained a complex human ecology. Roughly 35 lakh people live around the Sundarbans, of whom about 6 lakh depend directly on it for honey, fish,

launches and cruise ships have entered the market, and companies such as Sea Pearl Beach Resort & Spa have introduced two lavish tour vessels.

Package prices vary widely. Budget travellers can join two-night, three-day wooden trawler trips for as low as Tk 4,500 to 7,500 per person.

Popular three-day packages for mainstream tourists range from Tk 7,500 to Tk 10,000. For a more comfortable cruise on air-conditioned launches or luxury vessels, prices rise to Tk 14,500 to Tk 22,000 per person.

Entry fees to the forest remain nominal for local visitors, set at Tk 1,050, but steep for foreigners at Tk 10,500 -- a strategy to attract foreign exchange while keeping domestic access affordable.

Along the riverfronts that border the Sundarbans, the landscape of livelihoods is changing fast. An eco-cottage boom has transformed coastal settlements.

A recent survey documents at least 23 eco-resorts and cottages across Mongla, Banishanta (Khulna), Kailashganj and Shyamnagar (Satkhira), and local owners claim around 120 such facilities in the wider Khulna district, including Dacope's

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