



DHAKA SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2, 2025

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 280

KARTIK 17, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

JAMADIUL AWWAL 10, 1447 HJRI

20 PAGES: Tk 15.00

NATIONAL ELECTION BNP yet to firm up candidates, Jamaat done

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Jamaat-e-Islami has pulled a significant lead in selecting candidates for the upcoming polls while its now rival and former ally, the BNP, seemed to be bogged down with issues related to seat sharing with allies and July charter reforms.

With the Election Commission expected to announce the poll schedule within a month, the BNP has yet to finalise its candidates, causing frustration among grassroots leaders and activists, party insiders said.



The longer the party delays the announcement, the more misunderstandings will grow, and complications will be created. At some point, this may lead to disorder among party members.

SA Jinnah Kabir, ex-general secretary of Manikganj district BNP

Jamaat, by contrast, has already completed its nomination process, launched constituency-level preparations, and fielded numerous first-time candidates, gaining what many within the party call a strategic edge.

Once members of the same coalition government, the BNP and Jamaat are now mired in a deepening rift over the timing of a referendum on reforms.

Jamaat insists the referendum be held this month, while the BNP says it must be held on the same day as the election, slated for February.

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Dispute over July charter escalates

BNP says it won't endorse parts it did not agree to; Jamaat blames BNP for creating 'unexpected situation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP would take responsibility only for the sections of the July charter it signed and would not endorse any provision it did not agree to.

Jamaat-e-Islami, meanwhile, has accused the BNP of creating "an unexpected situation" around the charter's implementation.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said, "We agreed that we would sign the proposals on which all parties reached a consensus. The rest would be listed as notes of dissent."

"But we later found that the notes of dissent were completely omitted. Our words were disregarded, and new elements were added," he said at an event organised by Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

"We want a solution to this through discussions. We won't take responsibility for the parts we have not signed."

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said the July charter was signed based on consensus, and any attempt to revise or reinterpret it now would undermine that agreement.

"Consensus was reached and agreements were signed. But now new demands are being raised. [Consensus] commission members may have personal views, but they were not appointed to impose them. They should return to their duties and let the people decide," the BNP leader said while speaking at a divisional business conference in Rajshahi, organised by the Rajshahi Divisional Business Forum yesterday.

Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Abdullah Muhammad Taher said such a political uncertainty ahead of the February election could obstruct the electoral process.

He said, "We believe the chief adviser will not bow to conspiracy or to any vested quarter and retreat from legalising the July charter. Reform was his initiative; it is like his own child. The nation will not believe he would abandon it. But if he does, it will be seen as a betrayal of his promises."

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Farmer Enamul, of Chaksur village in Rajshahi's Charghat upazila, inspecting his damaged Aman paddy yesterday. The crop, battered by strong winds and subsequent rain, may yield only 10-12 maunds instead of the expected 20-22. A heavy downpour, triggered by a low-pressure system over the Bay, submerged fields and flattened vast stretches of ripe and semi-ripe Aman on Thursday night, causing extensive losses for farmers in the district. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN


Potato farmers drown in debt as price plummets

SUKANTA HALDER, S DILIP ROY and TANJIL HASAN

Encouraged by the high potato prices during last November's planting season, Khairul Islam, a farmer from Nabdigonj in Rangpur, invested Tk 10.92 lakh in potato cultivation by borrowing.

Yesterday, potatoes were selling at Tk 9 to Tk 12 per kilogram in the wholesale market. Over the past two weeks, the wholesale price has dropped by Tk 2 to Tk 3 per kilogram.

"This will likely discourage farmers from cultivating potatoes in the upcoming season," he said.



- Potato production, storage cost Tk 26-28 per kg
- Cold storage prices dropped to Tk 8-9 per kg
- Farmers earn only 52-68 paisa per kg after costs
- Bangladesh's potato production hits 1.15 crore tonnes

Like him, farmers expanded potato cultivation at an unprecedented rate, leading to record harvests and a market glut of the tuber.

Bangladesh produced a record 1.15 crore tonnes of potatoes last season, far exceeding the annual domestic demand of around 90 lakh tonnes, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

So much that farmers like Khairul are counting losses.

"The current price of potatoes is shocking -- at this rate, farmers can't even recover their production costs," said Mohammad Delwar Hossain, a wholesale trader at Karwan Bazar in the capital.

One such farmer is Lokman Hossain from Lalmonirhat, who has sworn off cultivating potatoes on a large scale.

He cultivated potatoes on three acres of land this season. His production cost came to about Tk 18 per kg and he expected to sell the crop for around Tk 25 per kg.

But during the harvest, he was forced to sell half of his produce at only Tk 15 per kg. He stashed half of his produce in cold storage, hoping to get a better price later.

"But now I'm selling them for Tk 12 to Tk 15 per kg, which doesn't even cover my costs -- potatoes have become a crop of despair," he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Free police from political grip, form independent body

Reforms otherwise incomplete, experts tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reforms in the police force will remain incomplete unless political and bureaucratic control is eliminated and a truly independent commission is established to ensure accountability and professionalism, speakers said yesterday.

At a roundtable titled "Bangladesh Police Reform: Challenges and Actions", organised by Prothom Alo at the Pragati Insurance building in the capital, they said ensuring the police's functional independence is crucial to restoring professionalism, accountability, and public confidence in the force.

Polymakers, senior police officers, human rights advocates, academics, political leaders, and members of the National Consensus Commission were present.

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam said he took charge last November amid an atmosphere of deep mistrust. "I often hear the question -- 'is he our man?'... But we must move beyond that. Functional independence in investigation and arrest is essential for public trust.

"Our aim is a service-oriented, professional force that ensures accountability and earns public confidence."

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said the police had long been used as an instrument of political power. "Some acted under orders, some out of personal interest, and some to prove loyalty. As a result, police became a tool of oppression rather than protection."

He said the government had amended sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure to strengthen accountability in arrest and remand procedures. "Now, a detainee's family must be informed within 12 hours, and magistrate

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



MV Bay One, the tourist vessel from Chattogram to Saint Martin's Island, lies anchored along with other ships in Chattogram's Patenga area despite the island reopening to tourists yesterday after a nine-month ban. Visitor turnout has remained low as ship operators temporarily suspended services following government directives that prohibit overnight stays on the island in November. Business owners hope that tourist numbers will rise once night stays are permitted in December and January. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

CJ calls all SC judges for meeting on Tuesday




STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed has called a full court meeting of all judges of both the Appellate and High Court divisions of the Supreme Court.


The meeting will be held at 3:00pm on Tuesday at the SCs conference room, according to a notification signed by Additional Registrar (Administration and Justice) Md Asif Iqbal issued yesterday.

Sources at the SC said the full court meeting is expected to discuss and decide on several key issues, including the transfer and promotion of judges in the subordinate judiciary, as well as the issuance of the SC calendar for 2026, among other administrative matters.


The full court meeting serves as an exclusive forum for the judges of the SC to deliberate and make policy decisions related to the judiciary.



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Ensure blanket security during Feb election

Yunus directs chiefs of armed forces

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has directed the chiefs of the three services to take all-out measures to ensure foolproof security and maintain peace during the upcoming 13th national election, scheduled for the first half of February.

According to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing, Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, and Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan met the chief adviser at the state guest house Jamuna around 7:00pm yesterday.

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman was also present during the meeting.

At the meeting, Yunus lauded the members of the armed forces for their dedication and hard work in maintaining law and order and ensuring national security.

He said members of the army and other forces have worked tirelessly over the past 15 months to uphold law and order across the country.

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday sat with the chiefs of the three armed services and gave them directives to ensure foolproof security during the upcoming 13th national election scheduled for February next year. National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman was also present at the meeting held at the State Guest House Jamuna.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

Trump says ready to maintain US food aid funding despite shutdown

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump appeared to issue a lifeline Friday for low-income Americans reliant on food aid, saying he does not want them to "go hungry" a day before some 42 million people could lose their monthly assistance.

In a lengthy Truth Social post, Trump said "Government lawyers do not think we have the legal authority to pay" the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits once funding expires on November 1 during the ongoing government shutdown, but added that he has instructed them to "clarify how we can legally fund SNAP as soon as possible."

A federal judge in Rhode Island gave the program a temporary reprieve earlier Friday, ordering the White House to use emergency funds to pay for food stamps during the shutdown, in a case brought by charities and other groups.

But the administration has been arguing it cannot legally tap that fund, and it was not immediately clear, despite the ruling, whether Americans would get their weekend SNAP payments.

Since partisan gridlock sent the US government into shutdown October 1, many federal workers have gone without paychecks and millions of Americans are increasingly caught in the crossfire of a lack of basic federal services.

BNP yet to firm up candidates, Jamaat done

FROM PAGE 1

The BNP wants the proportional representation system in a proposed upper house on the basis of shares of seats in the lower house.

The Jamaat, on the other hand, has launched protests demanding that shares of total vote obtained by each party, not seats, form the basis of the upper house.

FRUSTRATION GROWING IN BNP

The delay in selecting candidates has visibly slowed the BNP's campaign and stirred resentment among nomination seekers, many of whom note that Jamaat candidates have been canvassing for months.

BNP's indecision over seat-sharing with allies and its stance on the July charter are key reasons for the delay, political analysts say.

Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, a former government and politics teacher at Jahangirnagar University, said the BNP might not be announcing its candidates formally for strategic reasons.

"It is still in discussion over seat sharing with its allies. Besides, it has also been stuck with the July charter issues," he pointed out.

Interviews with more than three dozen grassroots BNP leaders suggest fears of internal rifts and rebel candidacies if the process drags further.

"The longer the party delays the announcement, the more misunderstandings will grow, and complications will be created. At some point, this may lead to disorder among party members," said SA Jinnah Kabir, a former general secretary of Manikganj district BNP.

A nomination seeker from Satkhira-2, requesting anonymity, noted Jamaat's six-month head start while in some constituencies, there are multiple BNP candidates still now. "The delay is widening the distance among these candidates," he said.

On October 24, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the party would finalise its candidates for around 200 constituencies within October. The time has passed but there has been no announcement yet.

Senior BNP leaders privately admit seat-sharing is proving difficult,

especially where allies lack strong bases. Another Standing Committee member said the party is prioritising seats where allies "have realistic chances", complicating decisions.

Internal rivalries and multiple strong contenders in nearly 100 constituencies have further slowed the process.

The party has already conducted a three-phase shortlisting, including surveys by acting chairman Tarique Rahman's team, nationwide meetings with aspirants, and collection of personal documents.

Standing Committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said, "I hope that by the middle of November, the BNP will officially announce the names. Since ours is a large political party, it is selecting its candidates by considering many equations and challenges. So, there is no reason for the leaders and activists to be disappointed."

Despite delays, sources say the BNP believes it can catch up. Some party leaders claimed Jamaat candidates are "spreading propaganda" against the BNP, prompting the party to consider counter-strategies.

Several potential nominees said Tarique has personally phoned them, encouraging quiet preparation until the names are announced.

"The process is being kept confidential, and top leaders have reportedly directed that this information must not be shared with rival nomination seekers until the official election schedule is announced," said a BNP leader who claimed to have received the call.

A BNP Standing Committee member, seeking anonymity, said the party has almost finalised the list of candidates for around 200 constituencies. A large portion of them contested the 2018 election.

"The list is now being thoroughly reviewed in line with the party's requirements. The final list will be formally published after getting the Standing Committee's approval."

Leaders said that beyond the 200 constituencies already under consideration, the BNP is struggling to finalise candidates in 60 to 70 seats due to internal conflicts and the presence of multiple strong

contenders.

Seven alliance partners have separately sought 106 seats from the BNP to contest the upcoming election.

The BNP is also considering forming a "broader alliance" with the aim of establishing a national government that would include more than 50 parties, which took part in anti-government protests with the BNP simultaneously during the Awami League's regime.

JAMAAT'S EARLY MARCH

Contacted for comments, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar told The Daily Star the party has "primarily selected candidates for all 300 constituencies" and will confirm the final slate after the schedule is unveiled.

Around 80 percent of Jamaat's picks are new faces who have never contested an election before, while about 60 have experience in running for public offices.

Many were chosen through votes of upazila- and district-level leaders and the central nomination board.

"Given the changed political context and people's expectations, the party has decided to bring forward young leadership," Porwar said.

"There are many young voters ... Our new candidates are working for Bangladesh, and the young generation will surely want such candidates," he said.

The Jamaat has also set up polling centre-level committees and recruited polling agents nationwide.

At least 16 candidates are former presidents of Islami Chhatra Shibir, including Dhaka South Secretary Shafiqul Islam Masud.

Porwar said Islamist parties are discussing an "understanding" for seat adjustments, adding, "Once the electoral understanding or alliance is finalised, candidates will be withdrawn from some constituencies."

Jamaat last saw major electoral success in the fifth (1991) and eighth (2001) parliamentary polls, winning 18 and 17 seats respectively. Ahead of the 2026 election, it is again seeking to lead an Islamist alliance with Islami Andolan Bangladesh and others.

Wishing anonymity, a central NCP leader told The Daily Star that his party's stance is that the chief adviser must issue the July charter implementation order and there must be no notes of dissent. "If these conditions are met, the party will not oppose holding the referendum alongside the election."

Samanta Sharmeen, NCP's senior joint convener, said they were not against the referendum. However, the way the consensus commission created confusion over it has made the situation between two political parties more complicated.

Speaking at an event in the Paltan area yesterday, NCP Joint Convener Sarwar Tusher said, "How can a political party that was born through a referendum now campaign against it?" He also described BNP's position as "self-destructive".

Potato farmers drown in debt as price plummets

FROM PAGE 1

Experts blame the government for the potato farmers' current predicament: the DAE failed to warn farmers about overcultivation, while the minimum cold storage gate price of Tk 22 per kg and a planned procurement of 50,000 tonnes were not implemented.

"The market collapse has left both farmers and traders in distress," said Prashanta Kumar Mondal, manager of Kadam Rasul Cold Storage in Munshiganj.

The cold storage has around 20,000 sacks of potatoes belonging to over a hundred farmers and traders.

"Barely 200 sacks are sold each day. After paying the cold storage rent of Tk 280 per sack, farmers are left with only Tk 50 to 100 in hand. There's no way to recover their losses," he said.

District DAE Deputy Director Md Habibur Rahman acknowledged the government's earlier plan to ensure sales at Tk 22 per kilogram did not materialise for various reasons.

"Prices continue to fall by the day. With new potatoes expected to arrive in the market by November, there will likely be little demand for the old stock," said Agricultural Marketing Officer ABM Mizanul Haque.

The entire issue reflects weak

Domestic demand is only around 90 lakh tonnes

Government's Tk 22 floor price was never enforced

No potato procurement has started yet

Experts blame poor management and delayed action

government management and a lack of priority for farmers, said prominent economist Jahangir Alam Khan.

Despite repeated warnings, the government did not take the farmers' distress seriously. As a result, many farmers have been severely harmed, driven into debt, and are now in deep financial trouble, he said.

"This is totally a management

failure. When prices fell, there should have been a floor price, but they did not set one for a long time."

Only after four or five months, when public outcry began, they fixed it at Tk 22, which merely covers the cost of production and not the absolute minimum.

"Even that was not properly implemented," he said, adding that the government should have procured a large quantity of potatoes.

With total production more than 1 crore tonne, the government should have purchased 12-13 lakh tonnes.

But they only bought 50,000 tonnes, he said.

Potato cultivation in the coming season will decline because farmers will cut back due to the losses they faced this year. Consequently, production will fall, prices will rise, and consumers will suffer.

This situation highlights the absence of a balanced agricultural policy, he added.

Meanwhile, in a letter to the agriculture ministry on October 13, the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association warned that without immediate intervention, many farmers might be forced to sell off the seed potatoes in storage, jeopardising next year's production.

Free police from political grip

FROM PAGE 1

approval is mandatory within 24 hours. Failure to comply will be treated as unlawful detention."

Nazrul said the proposed independent police commission would investigate complaints and recommend policy changes. "Execution will remain with the ministry to ensure stability. If we give absolute authority to the commission, a future government may repeal it altogether."

Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman said the July uprising exposed the fragile relationship between the police and the people. "Reform efforts have been discussed repeatedly, but change has remained elusive. This time, the opportunity for genuine transformation should not be lost."

Former IGP Nurul Huda said political interference had deeply damaged the institution. "When recruitment, posting, and promotion depend on political patronage, professionalism collapses. The police must be insulated from both political and administrative influence."

Former additional IGP Yeasmin Gafur, in her keynote, said the events of July 2024 were a reminder that neither an authoritarian nor an absent police force could sustain democracy. "The challenge now is to rebuild the institution through transparency and professionalism."

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, also a member of the National Consensus Commission, said, "If the ministry continues to control posting, transfer, and promotion, police independence will remain on paper."

He said politicisation of state

institutions is not new and has intensified over time. "The unhealthy competition to cling to power has pushed every institution into partisanship. Police reform requires political reform too."

Human rights activist Nur Khan Liton, also a member of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, said accountability must extend to the justice system. "We've seen detainees tortured in police lines, which have turned into secret detention centres. Magistrates often issue remand orders despite visible injuries. Judicial silence allows impunity to persist."

M Akbar Ali, president of Retired Police Officers' Welfare Association, said the colonial-era police act turned the force into an instrument of power. "For over six decades, the ministry has controlled the police but never taken responsibility for its failures. Political and administrative control must end. We want to see the police transform from a force to a service, accountable and humane."

National Citizen Party Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adeeb said non-political internal syndicates also obstruct reform. "Power circles within the force, often linked to former officials or influential families, manipulate promotions and postings. These must be dismantled."

He added that the Anti-Corruption Commission should be involved in selecting the independent police commission for transparency.

BNP acting chairman's Adviser Mahdi Amin said the proposed commission must ensure policing is free from political influence. "Over the last 16 years, police were used for disappearances, torture, and false cases. BNP was the biggest

victim, but we want this culture to end for good.... Police must protect citizens, not regimes." He stressed that investigations should rely on evidence, not confessions.

Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Ahmad Abdul Kader urged the immediate formation of the proposed police commission with a clear legal framework. "There is no time to lose. Reform must be completed before a political government returns."

He called for structural measures defining the ministry-police command, ending the "renting" of police and lawyers, and overhauling training to build a dignified, service-oriented institution.

During the open discussion, Adviser Nazrul said the draft law would empower the commission to probe complaints, including those by junior officers against superiors, and recommend actions to the ministry based on severity.

Iftekharuzzaman argued that the commission's directives should be binding, warning that leaving enforcement entirely to the ministry would weaken accountability. "If enforcement depends on the same ministry accused of interference, independence [of the force] will remain rhetorical."

In response, Nazrul said binding clauses could apply to police matters, with other institutions requiring separate mechanisms.

IGP Baharul Alam concluded the discussion expressing optimism that, under Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus's guidance, a welfare-oriented and accountable police commission would soon take shape.

Tipu Sultan, head of politics and crime at Prothom Alo, moderated the roundtable.

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Bright red mailboxes, once central to postal exchanges, now stand rusting in silence at places that once bustled with people eagerly sending or awaiting letters. With handwritten messages fading into memory amid the rise of technology, these boxes remain quiet relics of a bygone era. The photo was taken at Kulti Post Office in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Jamaat sets sights on voters beyond borders

Party ramps up outreach to Bangladeshi diaspora

MAMUNUR RASHID and AHMED DEEPTO

Despite uncertainty over how effective the Election Commission's costly initiative to bring expatriate Bangladeshis into the voting process will be, Jamaat-e-Islami has been actively working to woo this voter base.

According to party leaders, Jamaat has already held meetings, both online and in person, with expatriate Bangladeshis in at least 40 countries. They said discussions have also been held with local community leaders to mobilise expatriates to register and vote.

Jamaat leaders claimed their members and supporters were active in 11 countries – including the US, UK, and several Middle Eastern nations – during the EC's voter registration and NID card distribution drives for expatriates. Party activists are

JAMAAT ACTIVITIES
Leaders say engagement with diaspora 'political responsibility'
Party held meetings in at least 40 countries to mobilise overseas voters
Using online, in-person campaigns to boost registration
Pledges parliamentary representation for diaspora if elected
EXPAT VOTING
EC launches Tk 400 crore project to enable expatriate voting
61,119 registration applications received; 25,711 approved so far
Voting to be conducted through postal ballots

still campaigning to educate expatriates on how to register, collect ballots, and return them.

During his visit to the US, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur

Rahman urged expatriates to vote while addressing receptions in New York City and Buffalo. He pledged that Jamaat, if elected, would ensure parliamentary representation for the diaspora.

Earlier, Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher also called on Bangladeshi expatriates in the US to take part in the upcoming national polls as part of their democratic responsibility.

The EC has launched a Tk 5 crore project to develop new apps and systems for expatriate voting, with an estimated total cost of Tk 400 crore for logistics, including overseas ballot distribution and retrieval. EC officials have also travelled abroad to install equipment and train embassy staff to deliver NID services.

As of October 28, the EC's

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Taqi murder probe may end soon: Rab

UNB, Dhaka

The long-delayed investigation into the murder of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi is expected to conclude very soon, said Rab-11 Commanding Officer Lt Col HM Sajjad Hossain yesterday.

"We have already made considerable developments [on the probe]," he said at a press briefing at the Rab Media Centre in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

"Once the investigation concludes, all details will be disclosed," he said.

He said Rab maintains regular communication with Taqi's family.

Taqi, son of cultural activist and rights campaigner Rafiur Rabbi of Narayanganj city, was abducted on March 6, 2013, while heading to a local library from his Shahesta Khan Road residence.

Two days later, his body was found floating in the Shitalakkhya River.

Pledge equal inheritance, land rights for women

Speakers urge political parties to include women's rights in election manifestos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged all political parties to include clear commitments in their election manifestos to ensure women's equal rights in family inheritance, land ownership, agricultural resources, and access to natural resources.

They called for revising the current land allocation policy to remove discriminatory conditions, such as requiring widows or divorced women to have adult sons to qualify for khas (state-owned) land.

Participants also demanded priority allocation of agricultural khas land to landless women and indigenous families.

The event, titled "Women's Rights to Land, Agriculture, and All Natural Resources and Property: The Role of Government and Civil Society," was jointly organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and Stand for Her Land (S4HL) at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka.

Keynote speaker Rowshan Jahan Moni, deputy executive director of ALRD, urged political parties to reform family laws and ensure equal inheritance rights for women of all religions, ethnicities, and social groups.

She called for legal safeguards for women of diverse gender identities and the mandatory



RECOMMENDATIONS

Reform family laws to remove gender bias

Prioritise khas land for landless women, indigenous families

Recognise women as farmers with equal access to loans, training

Guarantee fair wages, welfare for tea workers

Include women in disaster management committees

Protect indigenous, Dalit women's rights, safety

inclusion of women's names in land records.

She proposed quotas for women in smart agriculture cards and local databases, climate-resilient agricultural training,

disaster compensation funds, recognition of women fishers with ID cards, and protection for women dependent on forest resources.

She also highlighted the need for fair wages and land rights for tea garden workers, welfare for their families, and support for female-headed households affected by climate change. She urged mandatory inclusion of women in local disaster management committees.

Shireen Huq, chief of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, said with elections approaching, November is a crucial time to push for inclusion of women's demands in party manifestos.

Tamanna Singh Baraik from Sreemangal highlighted inhumane wages for tea garden workers, saying women are paid less due to underreporting of plucked leaf weights and that many have been landless for over 200 years. She stressed including these issues in election manifestos.

Jayanti Rani Mandal from Satkhira said Dalit women, being the most marginalised, must have their rights guaranteed and called for their representation in the upcoming election.

Falguni Tripura, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network,

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Implement 9th wage board, ensure fair pay

Journos place 39 demands



PHOTO: UNB

UNB, Dhaka

Journalists across the country staged protest rallies yesterday to press home 39-point demand, including the immediate implementation of the ninth wage board, formulation of a journalist protection law, and introduction of two weekly holidays.

The protests were organised under the banner of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) to ensure press freedom and journalists' welfare.

At a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka, BFUJ Secretary General Kader Gani Chowdhury presented the demands.

Other demands include the formation of the tenth wage board for journalists, along with a unified wage board for print, electronic, online, and multimedia journalists; enforcement of the "No Wage Board, No Media" policy to ensure fair pay and benefits; establishment of a separate labour court for journalists; and speedy trials for all journalist murder cases, including that of Sagar and Runi.

St Martin's reopens, ships yet to set sail

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Bangladesh's only coral island, Saint Martin's, officially reopened to tourists yesterday, but not a single ship departed as operators suspended services, citing a government ban on overnight stays.

"It is not possible to operate ships at a loss," said Hossain Islam Bahadur, general secretary of the Sea Cruise Operators Owners Association of Bangladesh. "If the government allows overnight stays in November, we will resume operations within the month."

Under new government guidelines, up to 2,000 tourists will be allowed to visit daily in November, though overnight stays remain prohibited. In December and January, the same number will be permitted to stay overnight.

Authorities said ships must now depart from Cox's Bazar, as services from Inani in Ukhiya are not allowed.

Two vessels were scheduled to operate from the BIWTA jetty at Nuniachhara yesterday but later withdrew. Bahadur said with travel

time taking seven to ten hours each way, it was "impossible" to complete a round trip in one day.

Saint Martin's had been closed to tourists since February 1 to protect its ecosystem.

Shahidul Alam, additional deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, said ship owners were free to decide whether to operate but stressed that the government's 12 travel guidelines would be strictly enforced.



PHOTO: STAR

Many tourists expressed disappointment. Sadik Molla, a visitor from Gazipur, said, "Seven of us had to cancel our trip after learning we would have to return the same day. Travelling eight to ten hours and coming back the same evening is too exhausting."



A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver pushes his vehicle through a waterlogged section of Green Road in the capital around 8:00pm yesterday. A sudden downpour caught city dwellers off guard and flooded many streets in Dhaka, causing severe traffic congestion.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

November rain drenches the capital

UNB, Dhaka

A depression formed over the Bay of Bengal brought widespread rainfall across Bangladesh, including the capital, yesterday.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), Dhaka recorded 32mm of rainfall between afternoon and 6:00pm, while the highest rainfall of the day, 166mm, was recorded in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall occurred in five divisions -- Dhaka, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rajshahi and Rangpur, while light to moderate rain or thundershowers were reported in parts of Chattogram, Khulna and Barishal divisions.

Yesterday, the first day of November, Dhaka's sky remained cloudy since noon. By late afternoon, dark clouds blanketed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Over 45 hurt as BNP, BJP clash in Bhola

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

At least 45 people were injured after a clash broke out between activists of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and the BNP in Bhola yesterday.

Bhola Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Hasnain Parvez said the incident occurred around 12:30pm when a BNP procession arrived in front of the BJP district office in the Notun Bazar area.

Locals said earlier in the day, the BJP had brought out a procession around 11:00am as part of its campaign ahead of the national election. After the rally ended at the party office, the BNP procession approached the same area, and some of its participants moved toward the BJP office, triggering the clash.



Both sides engaged in chase and counter-chase for about 15 minutes, during which several vehicles were vandalised.

Bhola Superintendent of Police Tariquul Haque said, “We had permitted both parties to hold processions, but on separate routes. However, a portion of the BNP rally deviated and reached in front of the BJP office, which led to the clash. The situation is now under control.”

Monirul Islam, organising secretary of the Bhola city unit of BJP, said four motorcycles and furniture inside the party office were vandalised during the incident.

Contacted, member secretary of the BNP city unit Raisul Alam said, “It was an unexpected incident. We have brought the situation under control.”

Additional police teams have been deployed in front of both the BJP and BNP offices, as well as in key areas of the district town, to prevent further escalation.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Unchecked snail harvest threatens Khulna ecology

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Unchecked collection of snails from swamps, croplands and waterbodies in Khulna and neighbouring areas is posing a serious threat to the region's ecological balance.

Local markets in and around Khulna have been selling snail meat in large quantities, mainly for use as feed in fish farms, shrimp enclosures and hatcheries.

Snails are nature's silent allies. They act as natural water purifiers by filtering impurities and releasing cleaner water into the environment. They also boost the fertility and yield of croplands and are a vital source of food for many freshwater fish species, experts said.

They stressed the need for snail conservation and recommended promoting snail farming among farmers, reducing pesticide use in agriculture, banning snail collection during their breeding season (June-August), installing awareness signboards near waterbodies, taking measures to reduce salinity in wetlands, and raising public awareness against indiscriminate harvesting.

In Khulna district alone, nearly 5,00,000 shrimp farmers depend on snail meat as feed. A

50-kilogramme sack of snails is sold for Tk 550-700, and hundreds of such sacks change hands daily across Koyra, Paikgachha, Terokhada, Dumuria, Batiaghata and Rupsha upazilas.

During a recent visit to Dumuria and Terokhada upazilas, this correspondent found hundreds of people collecting snails from waterbodies using small boats. Each person collects 5-15 kilogrammes daily, later selling them to wholesale



buyers who transport the snails to Bagerhat, Satkhira and Jashore.

Rikta Akter from Terokhada upazila said, “I go to nearby swamps on a small boat early in the morning and return by afternoon, collecting around 30 kilogrammes of snails daily.”

“Around 300 men and women from nearby villages also collect snails. Snails with shells sell for Tk 20-30 per kilogramme, while

without shells they go for Tk 45-50. Most are used as feed for shrimp and duck farms,” she added.

Akmol Mia of Mostormore area in Dumuria said some local people collect snails for him for Tk 450-500 per sack. “On average, I buy 40-45 sacks daily and sell them to wholesale buyers who give me a commission of Tk 50-60 for every sack,” he said.

Prof Abdullah Harun Chowdhury of the environmental science department at Khulna University said, “Without snails, the natural purification capacity of waterbodies as well as fertility of croplands decreases. When snails die, their flesh and shells release nutrients including calcium, phosphorus and potassium into the soil, enriching it.”

Nirmal Kumar Paul, divisional forest officer in Khulna, said snails are listed as wild species under the Wild Animals (Preservation and Security) Act 2012.

“As per Sections 6 and 34 of the Act, no wild species shall be hunted, raised, destroyed or collected without permission. Buying, selling, importing or exporting any wild organism is also prohibited. Violation of these rules is punishable with six months' imprisonment and a fine of up to Tk 50,000,” he said.

Man, daughter killed in Sylhet road crash



UNB, Sylhet

A man and his daughter were killed, and four others injured, in a head-on collision between a bus and a private car in Osmaninagar upazila of Sylhet yesterday morning.

The deceased are Harun Mia and his 10-year-old daughter, Anisha Begum, residents of Khadimpur village in Osmaninagar, said Osmaninagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Monayem Mia.

The injured – Mukit Mia, 35, Rahima Khatun, 30, Panna Begum, 23, and Munni Akter, 23 – were taken to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Police seized the vehicles involved in the accident, the OC added.

EC acting arbitrarily in symbol allocation

Says Hasnat Abdullah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (south) of the National Citizen Party, yesterday accused the Election Commission of acting arbitrarily in allocating the party's electoral symbol.

“We have seen such arbitrary decisions from this Election Commission before. Under what policy have they now included the water lily bud (Shapla Koli) in the list? Have they clarified that? Or explained under which policy they decided not to include the water lily? They have not,” he said at a coordination meeting organised by the NCP at the Barguna District Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

“Have they clarified under which policy other political parties were allocated symbols? This shows that the Election Commission's decisions on symbol inclusion or exclusion are obstinate, dogmatic, and arbitrary,” Hasnat added.

Jamaat sets sights

FROM PAGE 3

NID Wing recorded 61,119 expatriate voter registration applications. Biometric verification was completed for 35,490, and 25,711 applications were approved. Another 1,036 were pending review, 5,136 were rejected, and 29,247 were under investigation. Data for 20,676 applicants have been uploaded to the EC's server, and 15,031 NID cards have been printed and distributed through embassies.

The registration programme has so far covered 21 stations in 11 countries – the UAE, Saudi Arabia, the UK, Italy, Kuwait, Qatar, Malaysia, Australia, Canada, Japan, and the US. Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar described engaging expatriate voters as a “political responsibility”. “If they have the opportunity to register, we advise them to collect documents and complete registration. They must realise their role in the country's politics. This should be the responsibility of every political party,” he told The Daily Star.

Ehsanul Mahbub Jubair, Jamaat assistant secretary general and head of the party's publicity department, said, “Our ameer, naye-b-ameer, and I have visited several countries multiple times. We've met local leaders to guide them on voter registration, NID issues, and the new voting app.”

He said EC centres are operating in several UK cities and US states. “We are discussing with community leaders how our brothers and sisters [supporters] can assist others in registering and voting,” he added.

“Expatriates are our remittance fighters who contribute enormously to the economy,” Jubair said. “It's our duty to ensure they can help choose national leadership through voting.”

He also urged other political parties to take similar initiatives. On October 28, Jamaat submitted 18 proposals to the EC to ensure a fair election. One of those

called for simplifying the expatriate voting process – allowing votes with either NID or passport – and for providing parties with a list of registered expatriate voters in due time.

“The EC faces a major challenge in bringing expatriate voters into the process,” said Porwar. “Once registration is complete, the voter list should be shared with political parties.”

Jubair said timing could be an issue since voting hours will vary by country. “We've advised the EC to study other countries' practices to ensure smooth voting,” he said.

Abdul Alim, a member of the Election System Reform Commission, said expatriate voting is important but often sees low turnout. “There are multiple reasons for this, depending on the voting method,” he said. “It's also a costly process, so the turnout rarely matches the level of spending.”

He said political parties also have a role in encouraging participation. “Since Bangladeshis abroad have party supporters, campaigning there is part of their political strategy – and there's no legal bar to it,” he said.

The 13th parliamentary election will introduce postal ballots for expatriate Bangladeshis alongside three categories of domestic voters. Expatriates can register online, and seat-based ballot dispatch and return will be handled by election officers.

The postal department will oversee logistics, while an EC ad-hoc committee, including representatives from relevant ministries and agencies, will supervise the process.



PRAYER TIMING					
NOVEMBER 2					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4-55	12-45	4-00	5-30	7-15	
JAMAT 5-30	1-15	4-15	5-34	7-45	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

November rain

FROM PAGE 3

the city, and drizzle soon turned into a heavy downpour around 5:00pm.

Vehicles switched on headlights well before the evening as early as when streets darkened, and many commuters were caught unprepared without umbrellas, causing suffering to commuters.

BMD said the well-marked low over south Chhattisgarh and adjoining areas moved northeastward and weakened into a low-pressure area over West Bengal and nearby regions. It is expected to weaken gradually.

Maritime ports in Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra have been advised to lower all warning signals.

Meanwhile, the Met Office also forecasts that another low-pressure area may form over the east-central Bay of Bengal

within 48 hours from last evening. Day and night temperatures across the country may drop slightly.

In its 120-hour forecast issued at 6:00pm yesterday, meteorologist Dr Abul Kalam Mallik said, “Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely at many places. Moderate to heavy rainfall may occur in some areas, and temperatures may drop slightly.”

On Monday, a few places in Chattogram division may experience rain or thundershowers, while the rest of the country will likely see partly cloudy to mainly dry weather. Temperatures may rise slightly.

On Tuesday, light rain is expected in Chattogram, Barishal, and Sylhet divisions, with dry weather elsewhere. Day temperature may remain unchanged, and night temperature may rise slightly.

Pledge equal

FROM PAGE 3

said indigenous women's shops and farms are often attacked. She emphasised that how political parties address the safety of indigenous women will determine women's overall progress in Bangladesh.

Senior journalist Sohrab Hassan criticised the government and political parties for failing to act on women's rights, saying women, who make up nearly 51 percent of the population, should have ownership of 51 percent of the country's natural resources.

Ferdousi Sultana, member of the Women's Reform Commission, said tea workers receive Tk 570 a day, but Tk 400 is deducted for housing and medical services. She called for advocacy to ensure these services are actually provided and urged the government to allow landless women to lease small ponds for livelihood.

Dr Fawzia Moslem,

president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said rural women's contributions to agriculture and family labour remain unrecognised, depriving them of equal rights to education, healthcare, food, and social recognition.

Shamsul Huda, executive director of ALRD, said political parties must include the roundtable's demands in their manifestos and the government must not neglect its responsibilities. He also criticised the government-formed consensus commission for lacking women and indigenous representation.

Presiding over the discussion, rights activist Khushi Kabir said women must be equally considered in all discussions on natural resources. She said indigenous women in the hills remain particularly marginalised and stressed the need to continue advocacy despite government inaction.

Bank Asia

Logistics & Support Services Division
Corporate Office, Bank Asia Tower, 32 & 34, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Karwanbazar, Dhaka.

Tender Notice for Selection of Contractor for Interior Decoration and Furniture with Related Work of Level-1, 2 & 7 of Rangs Tower, 68, Purana Paltan, Dhaka.

Sealed tenders are hereby invited by Bank Asia PLC for selection of Contractor for Interior Decoration, and Furniture with Related Work of Level-1, 2 & 7 of Rangs Tower, 68, Purana Paltan, Dhaka from reputed and eligible Interior Firm fulfilling the following qualifications and requirements:

- Eligibility Criteria:**
 - Should have valid registration/ownership document, up-to-date VAT/ TIN Certificate, Trade License, up-to-date Bank Solvency Certificate and other related legal document etc.
 - Should have minimum working experience of 15 years preferably in Bank having project value exceeding Tk.2.5 Crore. (Relevant experience in foreign projects, Bank and/or other international institutions, will be given preference.)
 - Should have at least 20 (twenty) ongoing and/or completed projects within last 03 (three) years.
 - Adequate and qualified Architectural team [have at least 5 (five) B. Arch.] having a team leader and/or Chief Architect bearing more than 10 years of total working experience.
 - Adequate and qualified Engineering team [have at least 5 (ten) B. Sc. Engineers] having a team leader [B. Sc., Civil Engineer] with total working experience of more than 10 years with at least 01 (one) B. Sc. Electrical Engineer with 5 years of total working experience.
- Interested bidders are requested to collect Tender Document from the Office of the undersigned during office hours (10:00 am to 3:00 pm) up to 09.11.2025 upon submission of a request letter duly signed by any authorized person as well as Tk. 5,000.00 in the form of non-refundable Payment Order favoring Bank Asia PLC.
- Documentary evidence of all the eligibility criteria along with detailed “Company Profile” will have to be submitted along with the deliverables as mentioned above as Technical proposal. Please note that, if a participating bidder fails to fulfil the above requirement, will be rejected.
- Earnest money (more than 2.5% of total quoted amount) will have to be submitted along with the financial proposal, without which, the tender will be rejected outright.
- A pre-bid meeting will be held at the office of the undersigned at 11:00 am on 06.11.2025.
- Financial proposal along with all the deliverables as mentioned above to be dropped in the Tender Box kept at the Logistics & Support Services Division (LSSD), Corporate Office, Bank Asia Tower (4th floor), 32 & 34, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Karwanbazar, Dhaka, latest by 03:30 pm on 09.11.2025 and may be opened at 04:00 pm on the same day in presence of the participants and/or their representatives, who may choose to attend subject to availability of tender committee member(s) of the Bank.
- The successful bidder will have to prepare and submit detailed architectural, electrical, sanitary & plumbing and other related working drawing based on the layout plan. 3D design of specific area as identified by the Bank will also have to be submitted by the successful bidder within the project period.
- Authority of Bank Asia PLC. reserves the right to accept, modify and/or reject any or all the tenders or may divide the works amongst the participants without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Senior Vice President
Logistics & Support Services Division
+8809617001614

Two siblings hacked to death over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Two siblings were hacked to death allegedly by their uncle over a land dispute in Raipura upazila of Narsingdi yesterday.

The deceased are Fora Mia, 26, and Shakil Mia, 20, of Charsubuddhi village in the upazila.

Md Minhazul Alam, superintendent of police in Narsingdi, said there had been a longstanding conflict between their father, Abu Taher Mia, and uncle, Auwal Mia, over ancestral property in the village. A boundary fence had been erected on the disputed land.

Around 12:30pm, when Fora and Shakil removed the fence and began filling the land with soil, their uncle Auwal allegedly became enraged and, along with his associates, launched a violent attack.

The two brothers, critically injured, were taken to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital.

Dr Farida Gulshana Kabir, resident medical officer, said the bodies were kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy. "They were brought dead to the hospital with multiple sharp weapon injuries," she said.

Md Kalimullah, additional superintendent of police in Narsingdi, said police have detained three suspects so far and efforts are underway to arrest the main perpetrators.

Auwal has been absconding since the incident, police said.

Additional police have been deployed in the area, and the situation remains under control. However, no formal complaint has yet been filed by the victims' family, said the police official.

Eight-month ban on jatka fishing begins



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A nationwide ban on catching jatka (hilsa measuring less than 10 inches long) came into effect yesterday and will remain in force until June 30 next year.

The eight-month ban aims to boost hilsa production and ensure the sustainable conservation of the species.

During this period, catching, transporting, marketing, buying, selling, or storing hilsa smaller than 25 centimetres is strictly prohibited, the fisheries and livestock ministry said in a press release.

Earlier, from October 4 to October 25 this year, the government conducted the "Hilsa Conservation Campaign 2025" to protect mature hilsa during their peak breeding season, it added.

According to the Fish Protection and Conservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, and the Fish Protection and Conservation Rules, 1985, violation of this ban is punishable by up to two years of imprisonment with labour, a fine of up to Tk 5 lakh, or both.

Faridpur bus terminal in ruins

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

The Faridpur Municipal Bus Terminal has long been in disrepair due to years of neglect and lack of maintenance, leaving passengers and transport workers in constant hardship.

During a recent visit to the terminal in the Goaldamat area of Faridpur town, on the north side of the Dhaka-Barishal highway, this correspondent found the entire area riddled with potholes.

Even light rain turns the place into a muddy pool, making movement difficult for both passengers and vehicles.

According to Faridpur municipality sources, the first terminal was built around 1980 in Goaldamat on the west side of the highway, connecting routes to Dhaka, Khulna, Benapole, Madaripur, Gopalganj and several upazilas. As transport demand grew, the municipality built the current terminal in 2004.

Now, around 400 long-haul buses and 300 mini-buses depart from the terminal daily. However, due to its limited capacity, only 100 buses can be kept on standby at a time, said transport workers.

"We face a lot of problems getting the buses in and out. Sometimes the bumpers



break. Passengers often have to wade through dirty water to get on or off the buses," said driver Babu Mallik, 33.

Another driver, Omar Ali, 28, echoed his concerns.

Azaz Aheman, 41, a regular passenger, said it was very difficult to board buses from the terminal due to mud and potholes.

Rasheduzzaman, general secretary of the Faridpur Bus Owners' Association, alleged that leaseholders collect Tk 20 daily

from each bus but take no responsibility for maintenance.

Faridpur Municipality's administrator and additional deputy commissioner (General) Md Sohrab Hossain said Tk 3.5 lakh had recently been spent on repairs.

"We don't have sufficient funds for a major renovation, but steps will be taken soon to make the drains functional," he added.



Battery-run auto-rickshaws crowd the roads in Khulna, causing severe traffic congestion. These vehicles often stop and operate at will to pick up or drop off passengers, worsening the gridlock. Residents have blamed poor regulation and urged stricter monitoring by the authorities. The photo was taken in the city's Gollamari area yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

District admin moves to lease out parts of rivers again

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Pabna district administration has issued a circular to lease out different portions of rivers across the district, naming them as enclosed waterbodies, for fish farming.

On October 13, the district administration issued the circular inviting bidders for the leases of 26 waterbodies in eight upazilas of the district for six years. Of these waterbodies, four are portions of different rivers including Ichamati and Padma flowing through the district.

Earlier, another circular was issued on January 14 last year for leasing out 63 waterbodies, including 31 that are portions of rivers, sparking widespread



criticism. After The Daily Star published a report in this regard, and later the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) served a legal notice, then the administration stopped leasing the river portions.

According to the recent circular, 21 acres of Padmar Kole -- an offshoot of the Padma river -- in Pabna Sadar upazila, and 107 acres of the Ichamati river at



three points in Shanthia upazila are included.

Contacted, Pabna Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Mofizul Islam said they issued the circular for leasing out enclosed waterbodies as per rules.

"We have issued the circular for leasing out listed waterbodies above 20 acres under a development project, following proper official procedure," he said.

Asked why the portions of rivers were being considered for leasing out, the DC claimed those were already included in the list of enclosed waterbodies across the country.

Lease seekers started submitting online applications from Monday (October 20) and will continue till November 15.

"Following legal procedure, we will provide the lease to the genuine fishermen's association for fishing," the

DC added.

Executive engineer (Bera division) of Water Development Board Md Jahidul Islam, however, said a portion of Ichamati river is included in the list of registered "Jalmohal" (enclosed waterbody) so the district administration moved for its lease.

In the same way the Padmar Kole is also being leased out despite being a part of Padma river and a key natural fishing location.

Criticising the district administration's move, Tonmoy Sanyal, coordinator of BELA's Rajshahi regional office, said according to the existing law, there is no scope to lease out portions of rivers.

"According to a court verdict on February 3, 2019, all rivers are declared as legal entities or living entities. Nobody can restrict access to a river as per the law or lease out portions or offshoots of rivers for revenue," he added.

Economic Zone struggles to take off in Jamalpur

Power shortage hampers operation of lone factory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The Jamalpur Economic Zone, established in 2016 to attract investment and create jobs, is struggling to start its operation as a persistent power shortage cripples the operation of its lone factory while deterring other investors.

Located in the Dighait area beside the Jamalpur-Tangail regional highway, the 436-acre industrial zone was set up under the government's plan to develop 100 economic zones across the country to boost exports and generate employment.

It became ready for operation in 2021, with the Palli Bidyut Samity supplying electricity to the zone.

So far, 22 companies have signed agreements with the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) to set up factories there, including those in the garment, agriculture, and medical sectors. Of them, nine have completed infrastructure development, and eight large factories are waiting to begin operation.

However, only one company -- Fervent Multiboard Industries Limited -- has started production so far, and even its operation is being severely disrupted by electricity shortages.



Fervent Multiboard initially took 60 acres of land and planned to employ around 2,000 workers to produce particle boards but is now operating on 35 acres with only 700 workers.

"Our factory needs uninterrupted power to run smoothly," said Md Sona Mia, plant head of the company.

"Due to power shortages, our overall production is being severely disrupted. We are not receiving the electricity we need, and whatever supply we get is inconsistent."

According to company sources, the factory's daily production target is 900 cubic metres of particle boards, but it is currently producing just 300 cubic metres amid power shortages. The company says it needs 20 megawatts of electricity per month to operate at full capacity, but the REB supplies only three megawatts.

Md Mostafizur Rahman, general manager of Jamalpur Palli Bidyut Samity, said, "To meet the factory's demand, the power plant serving this area would need to increase its generation capacity."

He said the power plant that supplies electricity to the Jamalpur and Sherpur regions has reduced its generation, which is why they are unable to meet the current demand.

"The situation may worsen during the upcoming Boro season," he warned, noting that the Samity has no authority to request an expansion of the plant's capacity since it is privately owned.

Durjoy Khokshi, manager (engineering) of Titas Gas in Jamalpur, said, "We have started supplying gas to the economic zone following a final decision by the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources."

Rubaiyat Islam Sifat, assistant director of the Jamalpur Economic Zone under BEZA, could not be reached for comments.



Craftsperson Md Nasir Paramanik sets up his small stall at the traditional three-day fair organised for Jagaddhatri Puja in Kalaskathi village of Bakerganj upazila. He sells various household and decorative items made from palm fibre, including baskets, hats, and bags. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS



An aerial view shows damaged buildings in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa in Lewis Town, St Elizabeth, Jamaica on Friday. At least 19 people in Jamaica have died as a result of Hurricane Melissa which devastated the island nation when it roared ashore this week, a government minister told news outlets late October 31. PHOTO: AFP

‘Populists can be beaten’

Dutch centrist Jetten claims election win

AFP, The Hague

Dutch centrist leader Rob Jetten on Friday claimed victory in a knife-edge election over far-right head Geert Wilders, saying his surprise success showed populist movements could be beaten in Europe.

The 38-year-old head of the D66 centrist party is now on track to become the youngest and first openly gay prime minister of the European Union's fifth-largest economy.

With far-right parties on the march in France, Germany, and Britain, the Dutch vote was seen as a bellwether for the strength of populists in Europe.

Jetten told AFP his positive message of optimism had convinced the Dutch electorate and delivered victory over the anti-Islam, anti-immigration Wilders. "I think we've now shown to the rest of Europe and the world that it is possible to beat the populist movements if you campaign with a positive message for your country," he said.

Dutch news agency ANP, which collates and distributes the vote tally, called the cliffhanger election for Jetten, saying he could not be overhauled.

With the final constituency result arriving Friday evening, only the overseas postal votes are still to be counted.

Expats have historically broken for more centrist and left-wing parties. At the last election in 2023, D66 outscored the PVV by nearly 3,000 postal votes.



South Korea hosts Xi

AFP, Gyeongju

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung hosted Xi Jinping for their first meeting yesterday as the Chinese head of state took centre stage and relorged old ties at an Asian summit from which US leader Donald Trump was largely absent.

The talks on the sidelines of the APEC gathering came on the final day of Xi's first trip to South Korea in more than a decade and a day after his meeting with Canada's premier reset damaged ties.

Lee welcomed Xi at a grand opening ceremony complete with soldiers wearing traditional garb.

The visit was the Chinese leader's first since 2014 and comes after years of strained ties over everything from trade to cultural disputes.

Lee told Xi he had "long looked forward to meeting you in person" and framed his trip as a reset in relations.

Xi, in turn, described China and South Korea as "important neighbours that cannot be moved and also partners that cannot be separated".

He told Lee that the two countries should "respect each other's societal differences and development paths... (and) resolve contradictions and disagreements through friendly consultation", according to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.

Russian missile strikes on Ukraine hit 2.5-year high

AFP, Kyiv

Russia fired more missiles at Ukraine in October than in any month since at least the start of 2023 as it pounded the country's energy grid in night-time attacks, an AFP analysis of Ukrainian data showed.

Russian strikes have caused sweeping blackouts affecting tens of thousands of people, with Moscow targeting Ukraine's power grid for the fourth winter running in what Kyiv and its backers say is a deliberate and cynical strategy to wear down Ukraine's civilian population.

Russia's army fired 270 missiles over October, up 46 percent on the previous month, according to an AFP analysis of daily data published by Ukraine's air force.

That was the highest one-month tally since Kyiv started routinely publishing statistics at the beginning of 2023.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused Russia of wanting to sow "chaos" by striking the country's energy grid so intensely.

"Russia's task is to create chaos and apply psychological pressure on the population through strikes on energy facilities and railways," Zelensky told journalists at a briefing last month.

As in previous winters, rolling blackouts have been introduced in every region of the country, including Kyiv, throughout October to deal with shortfalls in power.

Israel says latest Gaza remains not hostages

Hamas reports strikes amid shaky ceasefire

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel yesterday said that three bodies it received from Gaza the night before were not hostages held in the Palestinian territory, as a Hamas security source reported fresh strikes in the south.

Despite occasional flare-ups, a fragile truce has been holding in Gaza since October 10, based on a US-brokered deal centred on the return of all Israeli hostages, both living and dead.

Israel's military told AFP that a forensic analysis revealed that three bodies it received via the Red Cross on Friday were not those of any of the deceased captives still to be handed over as part of the ceasefire deal.

Hamas's armed wing said Saturday that it had handed over bodies it had not positively identified, alleging Israel had declined its offer to provide samples for testing and "demanded the bodies for examination".

"We handed them over to preempt any enemy claims," the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades said.

After the start of the truce, Hamas returned the 20 surviving hostages still in its custody and began the process of returning the remains of the dead.

Of the 17 bodies returned since the start of the ceasefire, 15 were Israelis, one was Thai and one was Nepalese.



Hamas has also returned another unidentified body that had not been listed among the 28 missing, as well as the partial remains of a deceased Israeli hostage who had already been recovered early in the war.

That incident drew outrage in Israel, which said the group had violated the agreement by returning the partial remains rather than the body of another hostage.

Israel has accused Hamas of not returning the dead hostages quickly enough, but the Palestinian group says it will take time to locate remains buried in Gaza's ruins.

In its statement Saturday, the Al-Qassam Brigades called on mediators and the Red

Cross to provide the "necessary equipment and personnel to work on recovering all the bodies simultaneously".

Hamas and Israel, meanwhile, have traded accusations of breaking the ceasefire.

A Hamas security source told AFP on Saturday that Israel had carried out several air strikes in the south at dawn, and that "warships opened fire toward the shores of Khan Yunis".

Earlier in the week, the Israeli military launched its deadliest night of bombing since the truce after one of its soldiers was killed in south Gaza, with the territory's civil defence agency reporting more than 100 people killed.

Hamas denied it had anything to do with the attack, and Israel

later said it had begun "renewed enforcement of the ceasefire".

Father-of-five Hisham al-Bardai, who recently returned to his home in north Gaza's Jabalia camp, told AFP yesterday that he had heard "gunfire several times from the occupation forces" during the night.

"The truce has begun, but the war hasn't ended, and (Israel's) policy of starvation continues," he said, referring to Israel's strict blockade on the entry of supplies into Gaza, which it eased after the ceasefire went into effect.

Like many Gazans who moved back to neighbourhoods previously under evacuation orders, Bardai found a collapsed building where his home once stood.

"Despite the widespread destruction in Jabalia camp, people are starting to return, even though the situation is dangerous," the 37-year-old said.

The implementation of the later stages of US President Donald Trump's ceasefire plan has yet to be agreed, particularly as it concerns disarming Hamas, establishing a transitional authority and deploying an international stabilisation force.

The force is expected to be drawn from a coalition of mainly Arab and Muslim nations, and would train and support vetted Palestinian police, with backing from Egypt and Jordan, as well as secure border areas and prevent weapons smuggling.

US ready to help allies counter 'aggressive' China

Pentagon chief tells Asean summit

REUTERS, KUALA LUMPUR

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth yesterday took aim at Beijing over an increase in "destabilising actions" in the South China Sea and committed to supporting Southeast Asian countries with technology to help them respond jointly to Chinese threats.

On a second day in Kuala Lumpur packed with meetings that included multilateral talks with allies Australia, Japan and the Philippines, Hegseth proposed to ASEAN defence ministers the building of shared maritime domain awareness and said China had shown a lack of respect and threatened their territorial sovereignty.

"You live it on the threats we all face from China's aggression and course of actions in the South China Sea and elsewhere," he said.

"We need to develop our joint capabilities to respond, and this includes being able to monitor maritime conduct and develop the tools that allow us to respond quickly ... ensuring that whoever is on the receiving end of aggression and provocation is then, therefore, by definition, not alone."

"No one can innovate and scale like the United States of America, and we're eager to share those capabilities with allies and partners," Hegseth added.

CHINESE COAST GUARD ARMADA

Hegseth's remarks came a day after the armed forces of Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the U.S. held a drill in the South China Sea, a patrol that a Chinese military spokesperson said "seriously undermined peace and stability".

Beijing claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea via a line on its maps that overlaps with parts of the exclusive economic zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

China has deployed an armada of coast guard vessels hundreds of kilometres off its mainland that has repeatedly clashed with vessels of the Philippines and been accused of disrupting energy activities of Malaysia and Vietnam.

Beijing denies acting aggressively and says its coast guard has operated professionally in defending Chinese territory from incursions.

On Friday, its Defence Minister Dong Jun said it was necessary for China and ASEAN to work together to "pool Eastern strength" and safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Hegseth's visit to Southeast Asia came soon after Trump announced on social media that he had asked the US military to "start testing our Nuclear Weapons", after a halt for 33 years, a move that appeared to be a message to China and Russia.



A Long March-2F carrier rocket, carrying the Shenzhou-21 spacecraft and a crew of three astronauts, lifts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in the Gobi desert, in northwest China on Friday. The crew took off for China's Tiangong space station, including the country's youngest ever astronaut and four lab mice. PHOTO: AFP

The ‘consensus’ fiasco

An experiment that should not have failed

Reaching consensus is not in our political DNA. That is why the prolonged effort of the National Consensus Commission (NCC) needs to be praised, but now that its mandate has ended, we need to reflect on why it has failed, not totally but principally. True, there are 84 recommendations that were agreed upon, albeit with dissent on a number of them. Where it really collapsed, however, was in the process of implementation: the NCP and Jamaat insist on an immediate decision for an early referendum, while BNP prefers a more moderate position—in favour of a referendum and the national election being held on the same day.

Two issues have now completely blocked further progress. First, the insistence of NCP and Jamaat that the referendum must be held as early as possible, certainly before the election. Second, the NCC’s recommendation that the provisions of the July National Charter be automatically incorporated into the constitution if the newly formed Jatiya Sangsad, acting as a Constitution Reform Council, fails to take action within a 270-day timeframe. BNP opposes both demands. So, now there is a clear political divide.

We think there is still a possibility, albeit faint, of an agreement on the referendum, as BNP is not opposed to it in principle, only the timing. However, there exists a more serious concern about the suitability of the referendum itself. A referendum is usually held on a clear “yes” or “no” question. The three referendums held in Bangladesh before—in 1977, 1985, and 1991—all had very clear questions to which the public had to respond. The first two asked whether the public approved the tenures of Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman and Lt Gen HM Ershad, respectively, and the third asked whether the public approved the Twelfth Amendment that would restore the parliamentary government system.

But a referendum on a minimum package of 48 constitutional items in a charter is virtually unheard of. How many voters will know all the provisions? How does one vote “yes” or “no” if they agree with some items and disagree with others? And when no effort has been made to explain the charter’s content to the public, how can the government or the relevant political parties justify calling a referendum on them at all?

The second issue—automatically incorporating 48 charter provisions into the constitution, bypassing an elected parliament—is even more problematic. Constitutional experts have called this an anti-parliamentary practice, asking whether such a precedent exists anywhere in the world.

Amid the confusion and uncertainty created by these divergent viewpoints and positions, one thing we firmly insist on is that the election must be held in February, as declared by Professor Yunus. The people of Bangladesh have been deprived of their right to vote since 2014, and the voters will not tolerate any excuse or manoeuvre to delay a free and fair election any longer. All political parties should realise that.

Address menstrual health crisis of tea workers

Garden owners must ensure proper toilets, sanitary facilities for women workers

It is quite concerning that women tea workers in our tea gardens continue to suffer due to the neglect of estate owners regarding their basic health and hygiene needs. Despite toiling from dawn to dusk, these workers receive a meagre wage of Tk 178 a day, with which they cannot even afford a proper meal for their families, let alone sanitary napkins for themselves during menstruation. Reportedly, most of them still use old, torn pieces of cloth during their periods, which is unhygienic. Moreover, there are no proper toilet facilities for them at work, and they are often forced to work through menstrual pain without any rest or medicine. Their harsh reality lays bare the deep-rooted gender inequality and systemic neglect that continue to plague the women of the tea gardens.

Our reporter talked to tea workers of Moulvibazar’s Madhabkunda Tea Estate and found the alarming reality of women’s suffering during menstruation due to a lack of support from the authorities. One worker, Geeta, said she often has to work through severe menstrual pain, knowing that any rest would mean losing her daily wage. When she once missed two days of work due to period-related illness, her supervisor withheld her pay for the entire week, which is shocking. The lack of menstrual hygiene, safe childbirth facilities, and proper nutrition in the gardens makes these women highly vulnerable to infections and long-term health complications. A 2017 survey found that nearly 44.8 percent of female tea workers lacked access to sanitary latrines.

The gap between policy and practice is also stark. The government’s 2021 National Menstrual Hygiene Management Strategy promised that every girl and woman could “menstruate safely and with dignity,” but implementation has barely reached the tea gardens. Meanwhile, social stigma surrounding menstruation further silences them, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation across generations.

It is time both the government and estate owners recognised menstrual hygiene as a right of workers. Tea estates must ensure separate toilets for women, access to clean water, affordable sanitary products, and paid medical leave for menstrual discomfort. They should also consider providing female workers with a special allowance to maintain menstrual health. Such measures would not cost much but would help improve the overall health of women workers, which, in turn, would enhance their productivity and ultimately benefit the estates. Additionally, NGOs and local health departments should work together to raise awareness on the issue and distribute reusable or low-cost sanitary pads free of charge to tea workers.

Why we need a two-year economic recovery agenda



Dr Selim Raihan is professor in the Department of Economics at Dhaka University, and executive director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). He can be reached at selim.raihan@gmail.com.

SELIM RAIHAN

The economy of Bangladesh, once the envy of the developing world for its steady growth and poverty reduction, is now caught in a slow, uncertain transition. Growth has weakened, private investment has stalled, poverty has worsened, and job creation has lost momentum. Inflation has remained stubbornly high for more than two years, eroding real incomes and the fragile middle class that took decades to build. What is more worrying is that this economic malaise coincides with an uncertain period of political and institutional transition.

The truth is plain: Bangladesh needs a short, sharp, and actionable two-year economic recovery agenda—a plan that stabilises, restores, and prepares the economy for a more ambitious reform phase beyond 2027. In other words, the economy needs a landing pad before it can take off again.

The political change following the July-August uprising raised hopes for renewal. The interim administration commissioned a white paper report to investigate what went wrong in the past and a task force report to chart a reform path. These documents diagnosed familiar ills: weak fiscal capacity, fragile banking governance, regulatory uncertainty, declining export competitiveness, and, above all, regressed economic and political institutions characterised by acute corruption and deeply embedded cronyism.

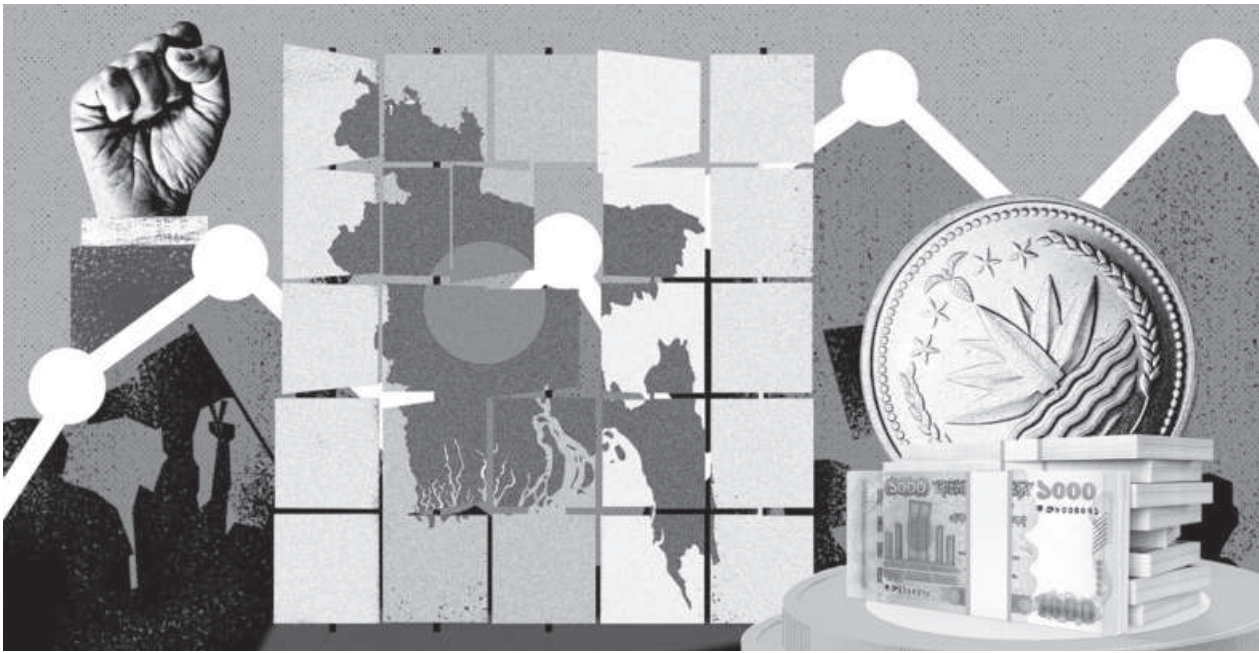
All these analyses were sound; the problem, as always, lies in translation—turning knowledge into policy and policy into action. Unfortunately, the interim government has not been able to launch any major reform momentum based on the recommendations of these two reports.

For too long, Bangladesh has relied on growth momentum driven by remittances and ready-made garments. Those engines are now losing steam. Private investment as a share of GDP has remained almost unchanged for a decade. New jobs are scarce, especially for the youth, whose frustration is visible in the public mood. The external sector, meanwhile, faces a double bind: limited diversification on the one hand and growing vulnerability to global shocks on the other.

In short, the economy has lost its rhythm. What it needs now is a focused, time-bound recovery plan anchored in a realistic political economy understanding of what can actually be implemented over the next two years.

Why precisely two years? Because Bangladesh faces a compressed

timeline. A general election is expected in February 2026, after which a newly elected government will take the driving seat. The country is also set to graduate from the least developed country (LDC) category in 2026, losing several preferential trade and financing facilities. Global headwinds—tight monetary conditions, geopolitical realignments, and volatile commodity prices—are adding to the pressure. Domestically, institutional inertia and public mistrust have deepened.



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Therefore, the next 24 months leading up to early 2026 must be treated as a bridge period—long enough to make meaningful progress, short enough to maintain urgency. The focus should be on implementing practical, high-impact measures that can restore confidence in the economy. Simply put, Bangladesh needs a compact recovery contract between the state, businesses, and citizens.

Any recovery agenda must begin with macroeconomic stabilisation. Persistent inflation, hovering around or above nine percent, has been the single biggest drain on public trust. Price stability is not merely a technical issue; it is a political and social necessity. Containing inflation requires both discipline and coordination—tightening monetary policy, maintaining prudent fiscal policy, rationalising subsidies, and improving supply chain management for essentials.

the past decade, Bangladesh’s private investment has hovered around 22–23 percent of GDP—far below what is required to sustain 7–8 percent growth. The reasons are well known: cumbersome regulations, policy unpredictability, weak contract enforcement, and costly, unreliable energy supplies.

As part of the two-year recovery plan, the government could launch a “One-Stop Fast-Track Investment Desk” within the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), mandated to process large- and medium-scale investments within a fixed timeline.

Equally critical is financial sector repair. The banking system’s fragility—manifested in high non-performing loans, politically connected defaulters, and poor supervision—has choked credit to productive sectors. Restoring discipline will take time, but immediate steps such as publishing a transparent

financing, and local infrastructure. In this sense, recovery and reform are not opposites; they are sequential steps in the same process.

The coming months will test Bangladesh’s resilience. Political uncertainty is real; global shocks are beyond control. But paralysis is not an option. From this perspective, a two-year recovery agenda offers both a cushion and a compass—cushioning the economy from immediate shocks while steering it towards deeper reforms.

The country cannot fix everything in two years, but it can start fixing something, and that would be progress. Restoring economic stability, unlocking investment, protecting citizens, and signalling credible reform—these four priorities should define the recovery agenda.

Every crisis hides an opportunity. The question is no longer what needs to be done, but whether we have the determination to do it.

Dhaka’s gridlock is a crisis of coordination



Dhrubo Alam is deputy transport planner at the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA).

DHRUBO ALAM

For millions of commuters in Dhaka, daily life is a relentless crawl due to the seemingly incurable congestion. The cost is measured not only in frustration but also in staggering economic losses. Comprehensive analyses and reports revealed that this inefficiency translated into an estimated loss of \$6.5 billion in 2020 alone, with millions of productive hours vanishing into exhaust-filled air.

For decades, we looked for the solution in more flyovers, wider roads, and grand new projects. But it lies under the layers of failed plans and bureaucratic inertia, as Dhaka’s traffic crisis is not a failure of engineering but a catastrophic failure of governance.

The city’s transport sector is managed by an alphabet soup of agencies with unclear, overlapping, and often conflicting mandates. The Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) is meant to coordinate; the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to regulate; the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to enforce; and the city corporations (DNCC and DSCC) to build and maintain. Yet, in practice, these bodies operate in silos, often at cross-purposes. This institutional chaos ensures that even the most well-intentioned plans fail before they begin.

This is not a recent issue. As early as 1981, the Dhaka Metropolitan Area

Integrated Urban Development Project (DMAIUDP) predicted the city’s slide into severe congestion and recommended a north-south mass transit corridor. The plan was technically sound but drafted by a commission without the power to implement it. It was shelved, and its foresight ignored—setting a tragic precedent for decades of technically brilliant plans defeated by a lack of political will and executive authority.

Our planning also long failed to recognise the city’s intrinsic nature. Dhaka was, and for much of its population remains, a city of non-motorised transport. Rickshaws once made up as much as 85 percent of vehicular traffic. Yet, for decades, policy has focused almost exclusively on private cars, often by sidelining or banning the very modes of transport that serve the majority and are best suited to our dense urban fabric.

Furthermore, over the past two decades, hundreds of crores have been spent on installing modern traffic signal systems. The World Bank-funded Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) installed them—they became dysfunctional. The Clean Air and Sustainable Environment (CASE) project upgraded them with solar panels and timers—they too failed. A recent pilot for an advanced traffic management system saw its crucial

software stolen from a warehouse before it could even be installed.

Why do these expensive systems consistently fail? The city corporations own the hardware but lack manpower and resources for maintenance. Meanwhile, utility companies routinely dig up roads for repairs, severing underground signal cables without coordinating with police or city authorities.

The result is the absurd sight of traffic police manually directing vehicles. The only place in Dhaka where signals function reliably is the Cantonment area—where a single authority, the military, manages planning, operation, and maintenance. This proves that the problem is not technological but institutional: our civilian agencies simply cannot work together.

This dysfunction extends to the highest levels. The DTCA was legally established as the supreme coordinating body for all transport projects, yet it is routinely bypassed by powerful implementing agencies. The Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), responsible for the metro rail, has been publicly accused by the DTCA of ignoring its coordination mandate—allegedly due to bureaucratic rivalries and seniority clashes.

In the face of such governance failures, our default response has been to build. Thousands of crores have been poured into flyovers—the Mohakhali, Khilgaon, and Mayor Hanif structures stand as towering monuments to this approach. While they offer localised relief, these are expensive, tactical fixes that do little to address the strategic disease of an uncoordinated transport system. They are “concrete solutions” offering the illusion of progress while the underlying institutional decay

deepens.

The metro rail and planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines represent a historic investment in the city’s future. But this infrastructure will be squandered without a revolution in governance.

The path forward requires bold structural reform. The DTCA must be transformed from a toothless coordinating body into a powerful Urban Transport Authority (UTA), equipped with the legal authority, executive power, and bureaucratic seniority to enforce its mandate and compel inter-agency cooperation. Legally binding protocols must govern all work affecting road networks: a utility company that severs a signal cable without clearance should face immediate and substantial penalties. Coordination also must be mandatory.

We must also invest in institutional capacity, not just construction. The DTCA needs in-house technical expertise to guide and validate projects. The BRTA requires resources to enforce vehicle fitness standards and overhaul the chaotic bus route permit system. The DMP must be supported with reliable technology and modern training to manage Dhaka’s streets effectively.

Finally, transport planning must be integrated with land use. The new mass transit corridors should catalyse smart urban growth. The Detailed Area Plan’s vision for transit-oriented development must be rigorously implemented to ensure high-density, mixed-use communities around transit hubs. For too long, institutional silos and bureaucratic rivalries have held Dhaka hostage. It is time to stop building over the problem and start fixing the broken system beneath.

INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Journalists cannot be safe if power remains unaccountable



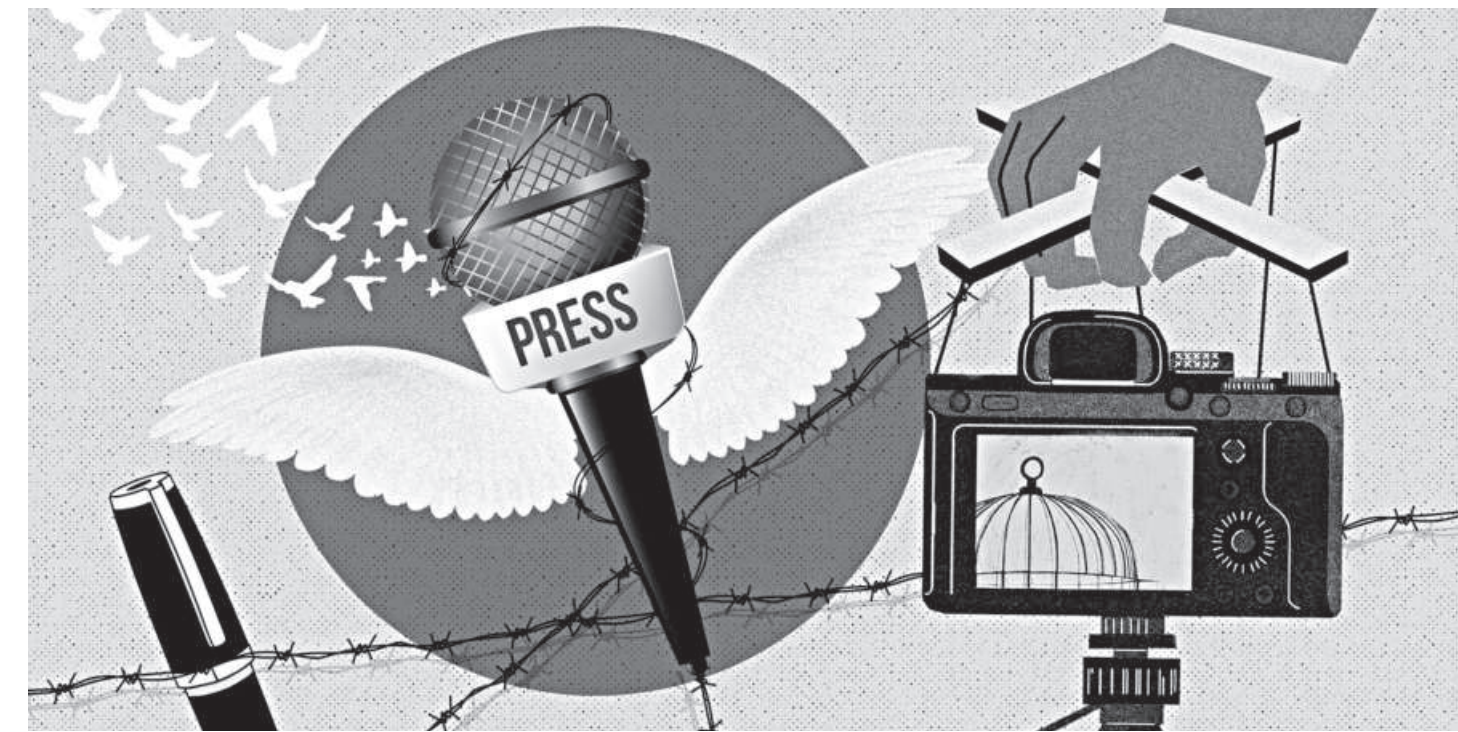
Zillur Rahman
is the host of current affairs talk show 'Tritiya Matra', who also serves as president of Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). His X handle is @zillur.

ZILLUR RAHMAN

Every year on November 2, the world marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. Despite the attention this has brought to the threats facing journalists worldwide, the latter, unfortunately, continue to be killed or targeted while doing their jobs, and in most cases, the perpetrators have faced no meaningful consequences. Impunity not only ends lives; it also corrodes public faith in accountability measures, fuels self-censorship, and emboldens those who thrive in the shadows.

Bangladesh is hardly unfamiliar with this reality. Here, journalism has never been a safe profession *per se*. Numerous journalists—whether local correspondents or prominent members of the national media—have experienced harassment, intimidation, vexatious lawsuits, disappearances, and even murder. The unresolved 2012 killing of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Rumi stands as a stark symbol of justice deferred into oblivion. Our rage over such cases has faded, but the attacks have not.

Several journalists have been killed in the last two years alone. Khandaker Shah Alam of *Daily Matrijagat* was killed in June 2025 during a targeted attack in Nabinagar, Brahmanbaria. In August, after reportedly filming armed men chasing a man in Gazipur, 38-year-old reporter Md Asaduzzaman Tuhin was hacked to death with machetes. Hasan Mehedi of the *Dhaka Times* was killed in Jatrabari while covering the student-led uprising in 2024. Around the same time in Sylhet, two more journalists—Abu Taher Md Turab and Shakil Hossain—were shot dead. Beyond these atrocious fatalities, many journalists have faced arrests or injuries for disclosing corruption, criminal networks, or abuses of power. Many have also endured online vilification, freezing of bank accounts,



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

legal harassment, threats against their families, etc.

After the 2024 uprising, there was a moment when many hoped this cycle of dread would face serious reckoning. For a while, a more open media environment did emerge, raising expectations that long-stalled investigations into crimes against journalists would finally move forward. Yet, 14 months later, we are confronted with a sobering truth: that political change alone cannot dismantle entrenched impunity. When law enforcement can be bent by vested interests,

when institutions lack insulation from socio-political and commercial pressures, those who target journalists will continue to believe they can get away with it.

Of late, threats have increasingly shifted online, particularly against women journalists, who face organised campaigns designed to break their morale and destroy their reputations. Even after the repeal of the infamous Digital Security Act, the tendency to

and recommend accountability—these are the kinds of concrete commitments that political parties must make in their election manifestos. These are not partisan demands. They are basic prerequisites for a functioning democracy.

In the past, despite repeated promises, no government or political party has delivered the structural protections that journalists need. Neither the current interim administration

a guarantee, which is what journalists require.

Media leaders must also take stock of the prevailing situation. Risk-taking journalists should not be abandoned when things do not work out. News organisations must invest in legal support, safety protocols, and editorial independence to avoid internal censorship dictated by business or political interests. A compromised media ecosystem, even with enough resources or paper freedom, cannot legitimately keep those in power in check, nor can it protect its journalists or serve public interests with integrity.

The public, too, must recognise that attacks on journalists are attacks on their right to know. Every major revelation on any irregularity in public procurement, land grabs, police abuse, financial fraud, or hospital malpractice begins with a reporter prepared to take risks most citizens will never have to face. When that reporter is harmed or threatened—and the perpetrator goes unpunished—society loses and unchecked power wins.

Bangladesh is currently at a critical juncture. Our political future is still up in the air. The authorities are trying to project a vision of democratic renewal and stability. But real stability—the kind that protects the economy and our international credibility—depends on truth, not fear. If a democracy cannot safeguard those exposing underlying threats to people's rights, then it cannot protect those rights at all.

Today, despite the pain and fear of colleagues in some media organisations, journalists continue to work with extraordinary courage. They deserve an ecosystem that values that service. They deserve justice for all the wrongs done to them over the years. Ending impunity is not a concession to the media. It is a much-needed barrier against future crimes, against the silencing of dissent, and against fear swallowing the truth. Where justice falls, truth also falls. And where truth falls, democracy cannot stand. Bangladesh must strive to avoid that future, especially at the threshold of an election that will shape this nation's path.

If we want a Bangladesh that can hold its head high among democracies, we must firmly defend those who defend our right to know. It is a collective duty. And the time to act is now.

‘The Fourth Estate will not survive unless defended’

Martin Moore and Thomas Colley, authors of *Dictating Reality: The Global Battle to Control the News (2025)*, discuss how governments worldwide manipulate the media, reshape public perception, and construct competing realities in an age of digital disinformation. The interview was conducted by Shamsuddoza Sajen of The Daily Star.

Dictating Reality examines how states are reshaping the news to serve their political aims worldwide. What prompted you to explore this phenomenon, and how did your understanding of media control evolve throughout your research?

The idea of writing *Dictating Reality* came during our research into Russian and Chinese state media coverage of the 2020 US election. We wondered whether they would support or oppose Donald Trump's re-election and how they would cover his claims that Joe Biden's victory was fraudulent.

This was during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, which broadened our focus. With daily reporting about how governments were explaining their Covid responses (and non-responses), we started examining news in many more countries. We were struck by how many democracies were using authoritarian news control techniques—censorship, taking control of state media, attacking journalists, and limiting funding and access only to pro-government outlets.

We then found something more worrying: that more and more citizens disagree not just on the truth about things like Covid-19; they appear to be living in entirely different realities. Not only that, government efforts to control the news were central to how these alternative realities were spreading. In Russia, the government claimed that its full-scale invasion of Ukraine was to liberate it from fascism, rather than subjugate it. China was claiming that it is not the world's leading authoritarian state, but the world's leading democracy. Leaders like Donald Trump in the US or Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil peddled a version of reality in which they were the only ones who could save democracy from its enemies, while their opponents saw them as would-be tyrants seeking to destroy democracy. *Dictating Reality* documents how these leaders and governments try to influence the news to spread their parallel realities.

What underlying political or technological shifts have made this authoritarian turn in news possible in autocracies and democracies alike?

A major shift is a change in norms—that is, established behaviours—whereby more democracies are adopting authoritarian approaches to news. Previously, a White House press briefing would include leading American and international news outlets, even though the US government knew some outlets would criticise them, because holding



Thomas Colley

Martin Moore

power to account was recognised as the role of the press in a democracy. That idea is under threat. Now some of those outlets are banned by the Trump administration. Others it has sued. In the UK, successive governments have repeatedly questioned the impartiality of the public service broadcaster, the BBC, and reduced its funding.

Technology has not caused these changes, but it has contributed, because social media enables governments to bypass news outlets that might criticise them. Jair Bolsonaro ignored mainstream news outlets, and created his own (dis)information ecosystem on social media. He did not need mainstream media to win the presidency. Other leaders combine new technologies with older ones. India's Narendra Modi rarely does press conferences, instead using social media, and supportive news channels like Republic TV. Trump uses his platform, Truth Social, and old-school political rallies. These leaders use these tools to convince audiences that, to get the truth, they should just listen to their leader and ignore the news media (thereby avoiding challenge, scrutiny, and blame).

Your book describes how governments construct “alternative realities.” How does this manipulation differ from traditional propaganda, and why do citizens believe these versions of reality even when evidence contradicts them?

There is a significant overlap, as we are essentially describing the spread of authoritarian propaganda techniques in democracies, accelerated by the technologies of the digital age. A classic example is how leaders like Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, or Narendra Modi claim their countries are threatened by a range of enemies (usually some combination of opposition politicians and ethnic minorities),

and that they are the only ones who can save them from destruction. Stoking fear this way is a century-old propaganda technique. But the range of tools to spread these narratives has multiplied. Social media algorithms prioritise whatever content is most engaging, provocative, and popular. Fear-based messaging spreads more easily. Whether it is true is often irrelevant.

Why do people believe these versions of reality even when evidence contradicts them? First, because people may not be aware of the evidence, because their personalised information feeds, or the groups they join, do not engage with alternative perspectives. Secondly, they may not find the source credible. When Trump was asked why he attacks the press, he admitted that he does it so that when they criticise him, no one believes them. Third, because the stories these leaders tell are appealing. They present a simple view of the world and provide people with a sense of belonging. It is easier to blame a single ethnic minority for a country's problems than recognise the complex issues societies face. It is easier to believe a charismatic leader could save the nation rather than trusting in the messy democratic process. It is more appealing to believe your country is defending others, not attacking them; that your country is right and others are wrong.

Social media platforms are often blamed for amplifying misinformation. In your research, how do state strategies intersect with algorithmic systems—are governments adapting to exploit them, or are the platforms themselves complicit in creating echo chambers?

The political actors that get their versions of reality to dominate successfully exploit the technologies of the day. Social media algorithms, by prioritising engaging content

over factual content, favour attention-grabbing over detail. They favour the controversial lie over the prosaic truth. While the effect of echo chambers should not be exaggerated, it is easier to create them than ever. In Brazil's 2022 election, Lula da Silva and Jair Bolsonaro's campaigns used WhatsApp groups to spread messages to their followers. Their campaign webpages listed thousands of groups citizens could join, and party administrators could feed them the latest message or meme. Platforms are complicit by being structured in a way that determines how information spreads, driven by their desire to maximise profit by maximising engagement. But for political success, what matters most

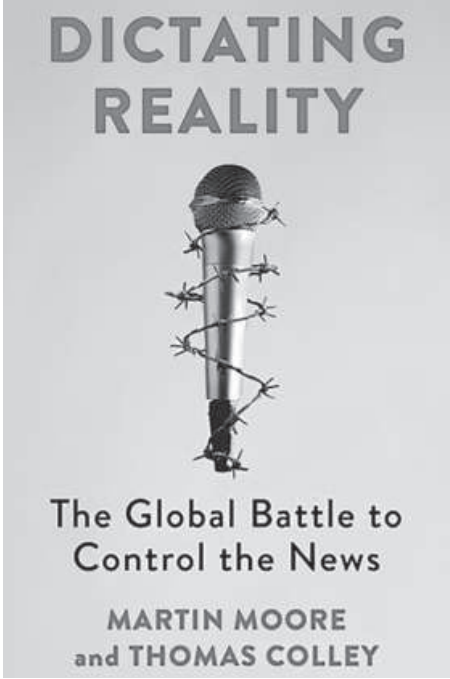
intimidation and harassment. Yet resistance remains crucial. There is still demand for high-quality, factual information. One of us lives in Latvia, which hosts several news outlets Russia expelled following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. That such outlets continue to reach Russian audiences with fact-based journalism is very important. Support from networks of larger media outlets, and from democratic governments committed to media freedom, can help too.

Fact-checking is another area under severe financial threat, particularly since Meta and X deprioritised it. But even if fact-checkers struggle to keep up with the volume of disinformation produced online, political actors often stop spreading narratives once they have been debunked. Supporting such efforts remains important, even if removing disinformation from the internet is, as we write in *Dictating Reality*, like “trying to remove waste from the ocean with a teaspoon”.

Finally, we must remember that the semi-constitutional role that journalists play as a “Fourth Estate” will not survive unless defended. We are grateful to journalists worldwide—many of whom we interviewed for this book—who continue to produce informative, critically-engaged journalism under threat of coercion. But we do not underestimate the challenge they face.

In practical terms, what can be done by media institutions, educators, and readers themselves to rebuild trust in journalism and resist state manipulation of truth?

We must recognise that our institutions of knowledge are being re-formed in the digital age, and that this provides huge opportunities both for those who want to destroy them and for those who want to re-build them. As civil society, we must recognise that unless we participate in the reinvention of these institutions, they will not remain authoritative and credible. Jonathan Rauch talks about the “constitution of knowledge”—the methods societies have developed over centuries to establish the truth (by which we mean what is knowable, public, and verifiable)—including through science, academia, the justice system, and journalism. Each is now under threat from authority figures who think that weakening them will enhance their own power. Rather than retreat from this threat, or align with those who are creating alternative realities, we need to work out how to reconfigure these institutions so they are fit for the age in which we live.



is how governments use the media available to them. The same is true of generative AI, which is why countries like China are fighting to determine which AIs their citizens use. Control those, and one controls what version of reality citizens experience.

The book argues that the media's traditional role as a democratic watchdog is weakening. What does genuine resistance look like for journalists today, especially in countries where independent media face financial and political constraints?

It is easy to make recommendations from the sidelines while journalists face growing



‘BHALLAGENA’:

Arnob’s new album is a triumph of cohesion and variety (New)

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

“I promise that I won’t take another 10-year gap to release my next album!” joked Shayan Chowdhury Arnob, at the intimate launching ceremony of *Bhallagena* on October 27. This was his first solo album after *Doob*, which was released in 2015. A 10-year gap can be devastating to a musician, even someone of Arnob’s stature—times change, styles become outdated, and industries move on. But this is Arnob we’re talking about—he helms Coke Studio Bangla, performs all over the world, and has relentlessly reinvented himself throughout the years, all while keeping his signature, quirky timelessness, which is also evident in *Bhallagena*.

When an artist takes a long time away, expectations run high, and the album’s reception may hinge on how it compares with his earlier landmark works, of which Arnob has many. On top of that, Arnob tends to work with poetic lyrics and deeper themes, which means that the audience will likely take time to fully absorb his compositions. Featuring contributions from Kolkata-based friend Taufiq Riaz (writer of popular songs like *Bhalobasha* *Tarpor* and *Tor Jonno*) and the late Rajib Ashraf, the album serves as a poignant tribute to the latter.

The album starts with *Joker*, penned by Srijato Bandopadhyay.

Its lilting rhythm and evocative, floating imagery speak of both the liberating flight and the inherent fragility of existence. But the emotional anchor is the title track, *Bhallagena Kichu*. This duet, featuring Arnob and his beloved, Sunidhi Nayak, is a raw, palpable burst of feeling—it functions simultaneously as a deep lament for a lost friend and a cathartic release. This was the last song that Rajib Ashraf gave Arnob, before his untimely demise.

Dushu Cheler Gaan, by its unusual, mischievous nature, is a groovy treat, accentuated by the masterpiece of a bassline by Faizan Rashid Buno.

Haay Chil adapts a Jibanananda Das poem. It deliberately slows the pace, drawing the listener into a meditative and dreamlike space, a clear echo of the longing and solitude that have always permeated Arnob’s best work. This particular song has been composed by The Seesaw Quartet, headed by tenor saxophonist Rahin Haider.

The latter half of the album further develops this reflective mood. *Tomar Mati* offers a feeling of deep belonging, grounded in earthy and resonant musical layers. *Shopnorogi* introduces a trance-like state and elevates not only the album, but the listener.

The album is concluded by *Okale Brishti*, which translates the chaos of sudden rain into a metaphor for unresolved, tempestuous inner feelings.

Bhallagena is a triumph of cohesion and variety; it feels like a collection of small, emotionally charged vignettes that form a much larger, cohesive emotional landscape. It is an album that demands to be absorbed whole, in a single sitting, where the silence between the songs often speaks with the same eloquence as the music itself.

The album is a thoughtful, mature comeback from Arnob—one that leverages his strengths wonderfully. For fans of the artiste’s previous work, this is a welcome and satisfying escapade. For newcomers, this might be a great entry point into the more reflective side of Bangladeshi music.





Warner Bros nears deal for Keanu Reeves and Tim Miller sci-fi film ‘Shiver’

Warner Bros is reportedly in the final stages of negotiations to acquire *Shiver*, an upcoming sci-fi action film that will unite Keanu Reeves with *Deadpool* director Tim Miller.

It is penned by Ian Shorr, who previously penned *Infinite* starring Mark Wahlberg and Chiwetel Ejiofor, and *Office Uprising* for Sony Crackle. Aaron Ryder and Andrew Swett are producing the film under Ryder Picture Company, alongside Matthew Vaughn, best known for directing *Kingsman* and *Kick-Ass*.


Reeves, currently performing on Broadway alongside Alex Winter in *Waiting for Godot*, has had a packed year. He recently voiced Shadow in *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*, which grossed over \$492 million globally. He also stars in Aziz Ansari’s comedy *Good Fortune*, which is now in theatres.

WHAT’S THE HAPS?

‘Batigharer Natok: Monkey Trial’

Batighar Theatre returns with the 26th staging of *Monkey Trial*, adapted from Jerome Lawrence and Robert Edwin Lee’s classic play. Directed by Muktonil, the production revisits the historic 1925 *Scopes Monkey Trial* – a landmark case that questioned the teaching of evolution in schools and ignited global debates on science and faith.

Date: Monday | Nov 10, 2025
Time: 7:15pm
Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA



NEWS

Raozan gripped by fear amid BNP factional feud

FROM PAGE 14
The other victims include Awami League activists Abdul Mannan, Muhammad Yusuf Miah, Abu Taher, and Muhammad Hasan.

Contacted, Akbar said, “I don’t practice the politics of arms, nor do I need it. A group that enjoyed a favourable position in politics during the Awami League period is now instigating party leaders and workers.”

He says he never instructed any of his activists to engage in gunfights or killings.

“However, what is happening now is embarrassing for everyone. I demanded a joint-force operation to

recover arms, but no such major drive has taken place,” Akbar added.

Also contacted, Giasuddin said, “There’s a big difference between Akbar’s politics and mine. He’s not even a voter of Raozan. Now, by taking shelter with the AL men and criminals, he is trying to show his strength there. More than three of my boys – all innocent – have been killed in their attacks. He’s doing whatever he wants.”

“If the local police had shown firmness, there would be no room for terrorists in Raozan,” he said, adding that the police are merely avoiding responsibility by dealing with the

situation through cases and counter-cases.

“I myself am now formally requesting the chief adviser to set up a Rab camp in South Raozan – there will be no space for extortion and terrorism there.”

Belayet Hossain, assistant superintendent of police (Raozan-Rangunia Circle), told The Daily Star that several raids were carried out to arrest the suspects involved in political violence.

“Efforts are ongoing to capture the armed criminals,” he said, adding that many flee into the surrounding hills after committing crimes.

8,850 youths to be trained in martial arts

FROM PAGE 14
The mention of “firearms” in Asif’s post sparked debate and confusion.

The following day, he made another post stating that “8,250 young men and 600 young women aged 18 to 35 will receive training.” He also changed “firearm shooting” to simply “shooting.”

However, he shared four photo cards with his post – one of which continued to mention “firearms”.

When The Daily Star contacted Asif for comments, he did not respond.

Speaking to BBC Bangla recently, the adviser explained, “The idea is to implement mass defence in Bangladesh. Given our military and geographical realities, this is essential. It doesn’t mean we will always have to go to war, but it’s important to maintain morale and increase the number of reserve forces.”

“Considering Bangladesh’s geographic and military position,

mass defence is our only option. If someone has basic training and at least knows how to operate a weapon, they can serve the country if given arms.”

Regarding the firearms training, Asif said that while live bullet firing had been intended, it was not feasible due to lack of approval and limitations in budget and infrastructure.

He noted the potential to expand the training in future, depending on national security needs.

“If live round firing can be taught, I think it will be an important addition to mass defence and national security. Training 20,000 youths each year would be a major achievement. In 10 years, the trained force would reach 200,000, which is huge and would significantly bolster our reserve forces.”

According to the BKSP admission notice, the 15-day residential training will be conducted in 114 batches at BKSP centres in Dhaka, Cox’s Bazar,

Chattogram, Khulna, Barishal, Sylhet, and Dinajpur.

Eligible candidates must be Bangladeshi citizens aged 18 to 35, physically and mentally fit, and have passed at least the Secondary School Certificate examination.

Participants will receive free accommodation, meals, a tracksuit, T-shirt, and shoes during the course. Upon successful completion, they will be awarded a certificate and a daily allowance of Tk 300, amounting to Tk 4,200 for the entire training period.

According to BKSP, only female participants will be trained at the Dhaka centre, while male participants will undergo training at the other six regional centres.

Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis via the online portal bksps.gov.bd, where aspirants must fill out the prescribed form and upload necessary documents.

Ensure blanket security

FROM PAGE 2
The chief adviser instructed the chiefs of three services to ensure that the upcoming election is held under a blanket of security.

“The interim government is committed to ensuring that the election, to be held in the first half of February, is free, fair, neutral,

peaceful, and festive,” Yunus said.

The army, navy, and air chiefs informed the chief adviser that the armed forces are fully prepared for election duties, according to the press statement.

A total of 90,000 army personnel, 2,500 members of the navy, and several from the air force will be

deployed to maintain law and order during the polls. One army company will be deployed in each upazila, the release read.

At the meeting, the chiefs of three services also invited the chief adviser to attend the Armed Forces Day celebrations on November 21.

Nat’l unity a must to save the country

FROM PAGE 14
for future politics and strengthen our democracy.”

Yunus added that people expect reforms that will foster a democratic culture in Bangladesh, prevent any future dictatorship, ensure overall national development, and protect the civil rights and dignity of every citizen.

“The most encouraging aspect is that these reforms have been agreed upon by us, not imposed from outside. In the past, foreign mediators, including representatives of the UN and friendly countries, have often intervened in Bangladesh’s political dialogue. But after the July mass uprising, the political parties decided to solve our own crisis internally. All parties have come together, engaged in political debate, and paved the way for a solution. Instead of relying on the world, we have presented our national unity as an example to the world,” he said.

On behalf of the nation, he thanked all political leaders who worked tirelessly to make the charter possible, calling it a historic

achievement.

The July charter is a unique global example, he said. “Nothing like this has happened anywhere else in the world. It will be a shining moment in political history. Other nations may consider forming a ‘Consensus Commission’ during times of crisis as a model for nation-building.”

He also acknowledged the contributions of the Vice-Chairman of the National Consensus Commission, Ali Riaz, members Badiul Alam Majumdar, Iftekharuzzaman, Safar Raj Hossain, Justice Emdadul Haque, Mohammad Ayub Mia, Special Assistant Monir Haider, and media representatives who covered the commission’s work for months.

“We must preserve the unprecedented unity we have achieved in state reforms. Fascist forces have devoted all their strength to divide the nation. For the past 15 months, we have unitedly confronted their various conspiracies. To defeat fascism and safeguard this country, there is no other option but to maintain national unity,” he added.

Tanzania president

FROM PAGE 12
Tanzania’s main opposition party CHADEMA – which was barred from the election for refusing to sign a code of conduct and had its leader arrested for treason in April – said on Friday that hundreds of people had been killed in the protests.

The UN human rights office said credible reports indicated that at least 10 people were killed in three cities.

The government dismissed the opposition’s death toll as “hugely exaggerated” and has rejected criticism of its human rights record. Reuters could not independently verify casualty figures.

The authorities have imposed a nationwide curfew since Wednesday and restricted access to the internet. Many international flights have been cancelled, and operations at Dar es Salaam’s port, a hub for fuel imports and exports of metals mined across the region, have been disrupted.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in a statement issued on Friday by his spokesperson, called “for a thorough and impartial investigation into all allegations of excessive use of force” and deplored the loss of life.

Arakan Army threat grows

FROM PAGE 14
Col Mohiuddin Ahmed, commander of the BGB’s Ramu sector, told this newspaper, “The BGB member was injured while on duty along the zero line. There were not supposed to be any mines in that area, but the Arakan Army violated international law by placing them there.”

Asked about taking steps or communicating with Arakan Army, he said, “We have sent a protest note to the Myanmar authority and the Arakan Army. They have not responded yet.”

He added that they have already taken steps for mine-sweeping operations to avert any untoward incidents in future.

Meanwhile, the BGB Headquarters said Akhtar was buried at his village home in Bhola yesterday with full state and military honours.

“The BGB is deeply grieved by the loss of such a sincere, brave, and dedicated member. His supreme

sacrifice in protecting the sovereignty of the nation will be remembered forever,” it said in a statement.

BORDER TENSIONS
Local sources said clashes between the Arakan Army and Rohingya armed groups such as Arsa, RSO, and ARA have become frequent along the border, stretching from Duchhari in Naikhongchhari to Whykong in Teknaf.

On October 25, a Bangladeshi woman, Chenoara Begum, was wounded by stray bullets from a gunfight across the border in the Whykong area.

Sirajul Mostafa, a local union member, said, “Many who own shrimp farms or catch crabs along the Naf river are afraid to go out.”

Regarding the issue, BGB official Col Mohiuddin said the clashes were taking place inside Myanmar. “We continuously urge locals to stay alert and have intensified patrols to ensure no armed groups cross into

Bangladesh.”

ABDUCTION
At least 116 Bangladeshi fishermen were abducted by the Arakan Army from the Bay since August, according to official data.

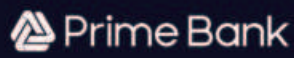
In the first nine months of this year, the Arakan Army abducted 235 fishermen – 124 have since returned, but 111 remain captive, including 62 Rohingyas.

Sajid Ahmed, president of the Teknaf Kaukkhali Fishing Trawler Owners’ Association, said fishermen are now too scared to go to the sea.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sheikh Ehsan Uddin, Teknaf upazila nirbahi officer, said based on received complaints, 106 fishermen still remained captive.

“Several Rohingyas are also among them. As there is no formal channel of communication with the Arakan Army, efforts are being made informally to bring them back.”

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Dr. S. S. Ramesh
 Director, Department of Health and Family Welfare,
 Government of Karnataka



Dr. N. S. Ravi



Dr. Anuradha Kulkarni
 Associate Professor, Department of English
 Pimpri Chinchwad Education Trust's
 Pimpri Chinchwad Education Trust's
 Pimpri Chinchwad Education Trust's



Dr. Anand Kumar
 Director, Department of Health and Family Welfare,
 Government of Karnataka



A circular portrait of Dr. Rakesh Kumar Singh, a middle-aged man with short dark hair, wearing a light blue shirt under a dark blazer. He is set against a solid blue background.



Dr. Shalini Singh
 Associate Professor
 Department of Chemistry
 University of Delhi



Dr. Anand Kulkarni
 Director, Department of Health and Safety
 Director, Occupational Health and Safety



Dr. Rakesh Kumar
 Director, Center for Health Equity Research
 and Promotion, University of Illinois at Chicago



Dr. Rakesh Kumar
 Director, Department of Health and Family Welfare
 Government of India



Dr. Anuradha Kulkarni
 Associate Professor, Department of English
 Pimpri Chinchwad Education Trust's
 Pimpri Chinchwad Education Trust's
 Pimpri Chinchwad Education Trust's



Dr. Anil Kumar
 Director, Institute of Health and Society
 Indian Council of Medical Research



Dr. Anand Kumar
 Director, Department of Health and Family Welfare,
 Government of Karnataka



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✉ info@mindmapperbd.com

From fossil fuels to fatalities: WHO highlights climate’s human toll

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and global partners released the 2025 Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change report, warning that continued reliance on fossil fuels and slow adaptation to climate change were already causing devastating health impacts worldwide. The report, produced in collaboration with WHO, found that 12 of 20 key health indicators had reached record levels, highlighting the human cost of climate inaction.

Dr Jeremy Farrar, WHO Assistant Director-General, stated that “every fraction of a degree of warming costs lives and livelihoods”, emphasising that climate action offered the greatest opportunity to save lives through cleaner air, healthier diets, and resilient health systems.

The report showed that heat-related deaths had risen 23% since the 1990s, reaching an average of 546,000 per year. In 2024, the average person experienced 16 days of dangerous heat, with infants and older adults facing over 20 days. Droughts and heatwaves contributed to food insecurity for 124 million people in 2023, while heat exposure caused 640 billion potential lost labour hours, equivalent to US\$1.09 trillion in productivity losses.

The report also highlighted the disparity between fossil fuel subsidies and climate finance: governments spent US\$956 billion on fossil fuels in 2023, more than triple the global climate finance pledged.

Despite these challenges, climate action yielded measurable benefits. Reduced coal pollution prevented an estimated 160,000 premature deaths annually between 2010 and 2022, renewable energy created 16 million jobs, and health-related greenhouse gas emissions fell 16% globally.

As COP30 in Brazil approached, WHO and partners urged placing health at the center of climate policy, emphasising that rapid clean energy adoption, sustainable diets, and resilient health systems could save millions of lives while curbing climate change.

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION



Action, inclusion, and independence

RABEYA FERDOUS

Observed globally on 27 October, World Occupational Therapy Day celebrates the vital role occupational therapists play in helping people live fuller, more independent lives. This year's theme, “Occupational Therapy in Action,” underscores the profession’s hands-on approach to improving daily functioning and overall wellbeing.

In Bangladesh, a growing number of dedicated occupational therapists are making a difference across hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and community settings – supporting individuals of all ages to regain confidence, independence, and quality of life.

Occupational therapists provide therapy in the following settings:

1. Adult neurological disorder: stroke, Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), transverse myelitis (TM), Parkinson's disease (PD), brain tumours, etc.
2. Child Neurological Conditions: Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Cerebral Palsy (CP), Intellectual Disability (ID), Stroke, etc.
3. Musculoskeletal Disease: Low back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain, knee pain, ankle pain, etc.
4. Hand Condition: Hand fracture, burn, nerve injury, arthritis, etc.
5. Psychiatric conditions: depression, mood disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety, panic disorder, etc.

6. Elderly care: Occupational therapists have a crucial role in rehabilitating elderly people.

7. Ergonomical setup: Occupational therapists have a great role in ergonomic setup. They evaluate workplaces and tasks to identify risks, provide recommendations for workstation and environmental adjustments and educate employees on injury prevention and healthy work practices.

At present there are 496 graduated occupational therapists, and they work nationally and internationally. In Bangladesh, occupational therapists work in the following areas:

1. Government Hospital
2. Non-government hospital
3. Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP)
4. Different national and international NGOs
5. Special School
6. Private practice

At present there are 4 institute-run occupational therapy graduate courses. These are:

1. Bangladesh Health Professions Institute (BHPi)
2. Saic College of Medical Science and Technology (SAIC)
3. Mymensingh College of Physiotherapy and Health Sciences (MCPH)
4. Japan Bangladesh Friendship College of Physiotherapy and Health Sciences

Occupational therapists have an important role in rehabilitating all types of disabled patients. The Bangladesh government should take necessary steps to recruit qualified BSc holder occupational therapists in different government hospitals. That’s how patients can benefit.

The writer is an occupational therapist at the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the National Institute of Neurosciences & Hospital (NINS&H). Email: rabeyal988@gmail.com



ACT FAST, SAVE BRAIN, SAVE LIFE

The role of physiotherapy in paralysis rehabilitation

DR MEASIN ALI

Every year, World Stroke Day is observed globally on October 29 to raise awareness about the prevention, early recognition, and rehabilitation of stroke. The theme for 2025 – “Act FAST, Save Brain, Save Life” – emphasises the urgency of early action to minimise brain damage and save lives.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in every four adults will experience a stroke during their lifetime. While stroke can be life-threatening, prompt medical treatment and comprehensive rehabilitation can significantly improve survival and quality of life.

What is a stroke?

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, preventing brain tissue from getting enough oxygen and nutrients. Brain cells begin to die within minutes.

There are two main types of stroke.

1. **Ischaemic Stroke:** Caused by a blockage or clot in a blood vessel supplying the brain.

2. **Haemorrhagic Stroke:** Caused by the rupture of a blood vessel, leading to bleeding into or around the brain.

Causes and risk factors:

Several modifiable and non-modifiable factors increase the risk of stroke:

- Long term high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes mellitus
- High cholesterol levels
- Smoking and excessive alcohol intake

- Chronic stress and sedentary lifestyle
- Obesity
- Family history or genetic predisposition

Warning signs: remember FAST

Recognising the symptoms early can save lives. The acronym FAST helps identify key warning signs:

- F – Face: Drooping of one side of the face
- A – Arm: Weakness or numbness in one arm or leg
- S – Speech: Slurred or incoherent speech
- T – Time: Act immediately and seek emergency medical help

Other symptoms may include sudden loss of vision, dizziness, imbalance, confusion, or loss of consciousness.

Diagnosis:

Diagnostic tests such as CT scans, MRIs, Doppler ultrasounds, and blood tests help determine whether a stroke is caused by a blockage or bleeding. Early diagnosis guides the appropriate treatment approach.

Treatment options:

• **Ischaemic Stroke:** Treated with clot-dissolving drugs (thrombolytic therapy) if administered within 3–4.5 hours of symptom onset.

• **Haemorrhagic Stroke:** Requires controlling bleeding and brain pressure through medication or surgical intervention.

In all cases, managing underlying conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and cholesterol is essential to prevent recurrence.

Physiotherapy in paralysis rehabilitation:

Many stroke survivors experience paralysis (hemiplegia) on one side of the body. Physiotherapy plays a vital role in restoring mobility, independence, and confidence.

1. **Early stage (Acute Phase):**

- Promotes blood circulation and prevents complications like joint stiffness and muscle contracture.
- Maintains passive movement to prevent spasticity.

2. **Rehabilitation stage:**

- Gradual re-education of movement, including sitting, standing, walking, and maintaining balance.

• Balance training, gait training, stretching, and strengthening exercises help restore functional independence.

3. **Advanced recovery:**

- Incorporation of electrical stimulation and task-orientated exercises to enhance motor control.
- Collaboration with speech therapists and occupational therapists to improve speech, hand function, and daily activity performance.

Stroke is not only treatable but also largely preventable through a healthy lifestyle, balanced diet, regular exercise, stress management, and avoidance of smoking and alcohol.

Timely medical intervention combined with dedicated physiotherapy-based rehabilitation can help stroke survivors reclaim their independence and live a meaningful, active life once again.

The writer is the Chairman and Chief Consultant at Dhaka City Physiotherapy Hospital, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. Email: dreasin20@gmail.com

A PERSONAL JOURNEY

The tao of healing touch

LUBNA MARIUM

I had been confined to a wheelchair for months, crippled by scoliosis and uncertainty. It was during this dark phase that my friend An Jing (Lynda) – a Chinese businesswoman living in Dhaka trained in *Tui na* (a form of alternative medicine) and orthopaedic therapy, introduced me to Traditional Chinese Medicine. Under her care, the pain began to ease. Then she urged me to travel to Beihai, Guangxi, to meet Dr Wang Fenghua, founder of the Yi Jin Fu Gu Dian – “Hall of Muscle-Tendon Transformation and Bone Adjustment”.

When Dr Wang met me at the station, I asked, “Can you help me?” He smiled: “Bangladesh has crossed the sea to come to China. China will, of course, help.” That moment began a healing far deeper than the physical.

A sixth-generation master of *Anmo* (a massage technique) and *Zheng Gu Shui* (a traditional Chinese herbal liniment, Bone-Setting Water, used for pain and injuries), Dr Wang descends from a century of “Golden-Hand Bone-Setters.” His father, Wang Hongbin, a teacher and healer, taught that true medicine unites Buddhism, Taoism, Confucian ethics, martial discipline, and the art of life.

Founded on August 8, 2008, Dr Wang’s Beihai clinic embodies this spirit of balance and compassion. Its guiding words are “*Don’t get angry over disputes; don’t blame others.*” For him, a calm heart is worth more than a hundred techniques.

The Taoist view sees the human as a microcosm of the cosmos; healing, therefore, restores harmony between internal and external rhythms. Walking through the neighborhood after each session, I was greeted by the warmth of Beihai’s residents – shopkeepers, café owners, and street – food vendors who, with translation apps and bright smiles, made a foreigner feel at home. Their kindness, too, was part of the treatment.

When I left Beihai, I walked unaided. The Tao, I realised, lives not only in ancient wisdom but in human kindness – where each compassionate touch becomes the path to wholeness.

The writer is a dancer, researcher, and cultural activist in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

From crisis to care: Why Bangladesh needs a mental health vision

SHIABUR RAHMAN

In a factory outside Gazipur, a 19-year-old operator once told a counsellor from SAJIDA Foundation, “Apa, my hands don’t shake because of the machines. They shake because of what I am carrying inside my chest.” She was not alone. Across Bangladesh, countless people carry their struggles silently – unseen in policy and uncared in national conversations.

The country is living through an age of compound crises. Rapid urbanisation, climate disruptions, economic transitions, and disasters are colliding with something silent yet destructive – psychological distress. Beneath every migration story or workplace burnout, statistic lies an unspoken layer of mental strain. Yet mental health has long remained an afterthought in Bangladesh’s development discourse. The neglect has a cost: families suffer, productivity drops, and the most vulnerable slip to the margins.

SAJIDA Foundation chose to invest in mental health. Its philosophy is simple yet radical – dignity is impossible without mental wellbeing.

CEO Zahida Fizza Kabir believes mental health must be a system woven through health, social protection, and enterprise. SAJIDA built a continuum of care stretching from community

helplines to advanced clinical facilities. This led to the creation of SHOJON, a tele-mental health platform connecting individuals with trained professionals via phone and digital channels, normalising help-seeking behaviour.

At the clinical end, Psychological Health and Wellness Care (PHWC) emerged as a pioneering one-stop facility combining psychiatrists and psychologists under one roof for individual, family, and group counselling.

Complementing this is The HUB – SAJIDA’s Neuroscience & Psychiatry Hub – offering assessment, diagnosis, and treatment in a nurturing environment. For children with special needs, Inner Circle Private Limited (ICPL) provides Bangladesh’s first certified early intervention centre offering ABA, occupational, and speech therapies aligned with global standards.

SAJIDA’s Proshanti programme, recognised by the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office, offers community-based supported living for people with chronic mental illness, helping them rebuild skills and reintegrate into society – a regional milestone in community psychiatry.

As climate threats intensify, SAJIDA has linked mental wellbeing with environmental stress through its Community Mental Health

Initiative (CMHI), supporting climate-vulnerable communities and addressing emerging issues such as adolescent distress, workplace burnout, and climate anxiety.

To bridge the shortage of mental health professionals, SAJIDA, in partnership with India’s Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM) and Dhaka University, developed a six-month course in Community Mental Health Care to train non-specialists in ethical, person-centred support.

Its partnerships span public hospitals, universities, development partners, and private enterprises. SAJIDA’s helplines are referenced by UN Women, its counselling services are embedded in hospitals, and its research collaborations are shaping data-driven policy reform.

Over the next five years, SAJIDA plans to expand investments in technology-driven solutions, women and youth mental health, and community resilience.

If Bangladesh is to move from crisis to care, from neglect to dignity, mental health must be placed at the centre of national development. SAJIDA has drawn the roadmap. The question is whether the rest of us will follow its lead.

The writer is a journalist. E-mail: rahmansrdk@gmail.com



From yoga to music: The Flow Fest Dhaka 2025 inspires a citywide movement for wellbeing

Across Bangladesh, a growing number of wellness and awareness programmes are inspiring people to prioritise their physical and mental wellbeing through community-driven experiences. From fitness events to mindfulness workshops, these initiatives reflect a nationwide shift toward healthier, more balanced living. One such event is The Flow Fest Dhaka 2025, a three-day celebration of holistic well-being that brings together movement, meditation, music, and creativity.

The Flow Fest Dhaka 2025 will take place at Justice Shahabuddin Park, Gulshan, from November 6 to 8, 2025, uniting movement, meditation, music, art, talks, and family-friendly activities in a three-day celebration of holistic well-being. Expect sunrise 5K runs, morning yoga and breathwork, Shareapy conversations, a buzzing fitness pavilion, creative labs, a kids’ zone, a community marketplace, and evening performances led by local and international coaches, artists, and changemakers. The event is entirely free. Register at www.theflowfest.com/dhaka.

BICC 2025 calls for mandatory screening and national cancer policy

The Oncology Club Bangladesh recently organised the Bangladesh International Cancer Congress (BICC) 2025, where experts called for mandatory cancer screening in select cases to ensure early detection and reduce mortality rates, according to a press release.

More than 1,200 oncologists, healthcare professionals, and researchers – including 31 international experts from 16 countries – participated in the congress, held in academic partnership with the University of Bologna (Italy), SingHealth (Singapore), and the Global Health Catalyst.

At the media briefing, cancer specialist Dr A F M Kamal Uddin warned of an alarming rise in cancer cases, citing Bangladesh’s severe shortage of radiotherapy machines – only 29 available against a national need of 209. He urged the government to prioritise the installation of new machines in divisional cities such as Chattogram and Sylhet.

Dr M Saiful Haque emphasised the urgency of a comprehensive national cancer policy and long-term planning to make treatment accessible and affordable. He also highlighted the importance of public awareness as the first line of defence against cancer.

Experts reiterated that without major changes in diet, lifestyle, and preventive measures, cancer prevention will remain difficult. The congress ended with a unified call for early screening, system-wide policy reform, and collective national action to fight cancer in Bangladesh.



World awaits NEW QUEENS OF CRICKET

Both India and South Africa stand on the cusp of history, eyeing their first-ever ICC Women's World Cup title as they face off in the all-important final at the Dr DY Patil Sports Academy in Navi Mumbai today. While South Africa bounced back from the embarrassment of being bowled out for 69 and 97 earlier in the tournament, India defied the odds in a record run chase to deny reigning champions Australia in a thrilling semifinal.

South Africa will take confidence from the fact that they have beaten India in each of their last three World Cup encounters, including a three-wicket win earlier in this edition. India, on the other hand, have won the other three of the six matches played between the two sides in the competition's history.

India, however, boast a strong

overall WODI record against South Africa -- winning 20 and losing 13 of the 34 matches played, with one game ending in no result.

This is the first ODI World Cup final that features neither Australia nor England.

India are set to play their third ODI World Cup final, after appearances in 2005 and 2017. No team has played three finals without lifting the trophy.

South Africa have smashed 31 sixes in this World Cup -- the most by any team.

South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt is just 40 runs away from surpassing Australia's Alyssa Healy's record for most runs in a single World Cup edition. Healy scored 509 runs in 2022, while Wolvaardt has 470 so far in this edition.



With the whole crowd behind India, it will be a great opportunity.... But at the same time, I think it puts a lot of pressure on them. I think it sort of plays in our favour.

South Africa captain
LAURA WOLVAARDT

Women's cricket moved ahead and we saw many girls on the ground. So I am sure that if we win this final, we will see many more changes and we will see more cricket, not only on the international level but also on the domestic level.

India captain
HARMANPREET KAUR

Shanto remains Test captain

SPORTS REPORTER

Najmul Hossain Shanto will continue as the captain of the Bangladesh Test team until the conclusion of the 2025-2027 ICC World Test Championship cycle, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced on Saturday.

The announcement also ended recent speculations regarding the Test captaincy. The southpaw batter had announced he was stepping down at the end of the two-match Test series against Sri Lanka in June after being stripped of ODI captaincy without prior notice.

Shanto, who first took over the Test captaincy in 2023, has so far led Bangladesh in 14 Test matches, winning four, losing nine and drawing one.

BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul said the decision reflects the board's confidence in the 27-year-old batter's leadership and his vision for Bangladesh's red-ball cricket.

"Shanto has shown composure, commitment, and a deep understanding of Test cricket. Under his leadership, we have seen growth and belief in the team. The board feels that continuity in leadership will serve us well as we move forward in this new Test Championship cycle."

Expressing his appreciation, Shanto said: "I feel truly honoured to continue leading the Bangladesh Test team, and I am very grateful to the Board for the faith and trust they have shown in my captaincy."

'We tend to block all outside noise'

West Indies cricket hasn't enjoyed much success in recent times. Alongside their on-field struggles across all three formats, they also face numerous problems, including financial issues, reform in the board, and players' welfare issues. Roston Chase, who is a familiar face across all three formats for the Caribbean side and also their Test skipper, recently talked to *The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan* on the recent and upcoming events, including the two-tier system in Test cricket and the T20 World Cup. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): You guys came here with three consecutive T20 series defeats and the recent ODI series loss to Bangladesh. How satisfying was this series win for you guys?

Roston Chase (RC): It's very satisfying because when we lost in the ODIs, we were very hurt. We thought that it was a series we should have won, especially with Bangladesh being close to us in the standings. We want to compete for that automatic qualifying spot [ICC World Cup 2027]. So, we were very down-spirited by that. But we said that we would come back in the T20s and try to win, and that's what we did. So, it was very pleasing to see that the guys bounce back and still have the confidence to play some good cricket.

DS: You were out of the Test side for over two years and returned to the side while also being named skipper. Then West Indies lost back-to-back series to Australia and India. How much captaincy pressure are you feeling at the moment?

RC: It's not good to be on the losing side, but cricket is a game where you can't really harp on the negatives too much, or else when you go out there to play, you're



not going to be in the right frame of mind and focus to do what is needed at that point in time. So, we just try to bin those bad experiences, take the positives, and move forward.

DS: You know that there's some talk about the two-tier system in Test

cricket. How do you see that system? Do you think teams like West Indies and Bangladesh will be hugely affected by it?

RC: I don't have many thoughts about the two-tier system. It's not something that has been put in place; it's just ideas that people have been throwing around. If it's supposed to happen, it will happen.

DS: The T20 World Cup is coming up in the next couple of months in India and Sri Lanka. How do you see your side, given it's been a while since West Indies last won the World Cup?

RC: I think we have a good, well-balanced group of guys -- a good core group, especially from the guys that played in the last T20 World Cup [in 2024]. I think there will be some familiar faces.

DS: A lot of things are happening in West Indies cricket regarding financial issues and on-field struggles. How do you actually see all these things?

RC: We just tend to block all the outside noise. We don't really listen to social media and stuff like that. We just come as a team, sit down, come up with ideas about how we can win games and how we can consistently perform.

'Better to play my brand of attacking cricket'

Soumya Sarkar has a flair that sets him apart from most Bangladeshi batters -- something he showcased in the recent ODI series against the West Indies, where he struck a blistering 91 in the third ODI on a difficult Mirpur wicket. The 32-year-old spoke to *The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi* about his career, maintaining belief through ups and downs, and his approach to batting. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): In Mirpur, during the third ODI against the West Indies, you batted aggressively on a tough wicket. What was your secret?

Soumya Sarkar (SS): Not really a secret, but there have been gradual changes in my game. Against Afghanistan or the West Indies, I couldn't make some innings bigger, but the process was the same. The wicket was tough (against West Indies) -- in the first match, I got out early, and in the second, I tried to stick around after early wickets fell, thinking I could cover later, but the pitch didn't allow that. Realising I could get out anytime, I felt it was better to play my brand of attacking cricket in the last game.

DS: Was there any special emphasis on footwork?

SS: No. Everyone's footwork is different. I never tried to change mine. Some have big movements, some small. I just wanted to bring changes to my work ethic, practice, among other things.

DS: Have you tried anything different? Players often talk about "process,"

but it's different for everyone. What process brought you runs?

SS: Runs only give you confidence, nothing else. Sometimes you don't score even on good batting wickets because you're low on confidence, your footwork isn't right, or you're not connecting well. Runs bring positivity, which helps a lot.

DS: Do you follow the same process in ODIs and domestic cricket? How do you judge success and failure?

SS: Scoring runs gives confidence for the next game, but every innings is a new beginning. The next day, you face the first ball again, so you have to start fresh. A consistent routine increases your chances of success.

DS: You've been in and out of the national side. Even after scoring in ODIs against the West Indies, you were dropped for the T20Is. How hard is it to stay confident?

SS: It's the same for everyone. Whether



senior or junior, when you return to the team, you have to readjust to the setup and international cricket. If you start well, it becomes easier; if not, you can overthink. Players must fix things themselves and adapt.

DS: Do the first 10 deliveries determine how you'll perform?

SS: Not exactly. It's your routine and discipline that determine your chances of success. That's how confidence grows.

DS: Earlier, you wanted to contribute as an all-rounder. What led you to focus on opening again?

SS: I've always been confident as an opener. I still bowl, but I don't get regular chances. Usually, I got the ball in tough situations when the main bowlers couldn't do much. If I had bowled regularly, it might've been different.

DS: Do you regret not becoming a full-time all-rounder?

SS: Not really. I'm established as a batter.

Earlier, it was tough to be a third seamer -- when I debuted, the team usually played one pacer and more spinners. Now we play three seamers, but back then it was different.

DS: Despite doing well in the third ODI, you weren't in the T20I side. Thoughts?

SS: Not really. If I get the call again, I'll go and play.

DS: You once said your batch hasn't become seniors even after 10 years. Do you still think so? and , do you feel your responsibility has increased now?

SS: I've played for 10 years, but during that time, players like Tamim [Iqbal] bhai and Shakib [Al Hasan] bhai were there, so our names didn't come forward. When they left, juniors came in, so there's no senior or junior now. If they had retired earlier, maybe we'd have been the seniors. But since we were in and out while they were still playing, that's why I said it. And yes, obviously, everyone in a team of 11 has responsibilities -- I always feel that as a player.



Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe, who scored 31 goals in his debut LaLiga season, was presented with his first-ever European Golden Boot award on Friday for 2024-25 in front of his teammates at the Santiago Bernabeu. Mbappe secured 62 points, finishing ahead of Sporting CP's Viktor Gyokeres (58.5) and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (58).

PHOTO: REUTERS



CHESS WORLD CUP Neer earns draw, Fahad beaten

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's International Masters Manon Reza Neer and Fahad Rahman began their campaigns at the World Chess Cup 2025, which started on Saturday in Goa, with contrasting fortunes. Neer earned an impressive draw against a much higher-rated opponent, while Fahad suffered defeat in his opening game.

Playing with the white pieces, Neer held Norway's Grandmaster Aryan Tari (rating 2631) to a draw, despite having a rating of 2369. Neer will play the second game on Sunday with the black pieces. If that game also ends in a draw, the match will move to rapid games, and if still undecided, blitz tiebreakers will follow. The winner of the match will qualify for the second round.

In contrast, Fahad faced a tough opponent in Ukraine's Grandmaster Vasyl Ivanchuk, who is rated around 200 points higher than him (Ivanchuk 2616, Fahad 2416). He will now play with the black pieces on Sunday and must win to stay alive in the tournament.

Naim, Mahfijul put Mymensingh in strong position

SPORTS REPORTER

Openers Mohammad Naim and Mahfijul Islam Robin struck centuries to put Mymensingh Division in a strong position against Rangpur Division on the opening day of the second round of the National Cricket League's (NCL) longer version in Cox's Bazar on Saturday.

Electing to bat, Mymensingh enjoyed a flying start as Naim and Mahfijul added 220 runs for the opening wicket. Naim made 111 off 163 balls with nine fours and two sixes to register his fourth first-class hundred, while Mahfijul struck his maiden ton, scoring 127 off 228 balls with 14 boundaries. Their efforts guided Mymensingh to a solid 281 for two at stumps.

At the other Cox's Bazar venue, Chattogram Division also dominated with the bat against Barishal Division. Opener Sadikur Rahman hit a career best 122 off 174 balls, while former national skipper Mominul Haque remained unbeaten on 84, as Chattogram reached 260 for four at the close of play.

In Mirpur, Rajshahi Division's spinners took charge, bundling out Khulna Division for just 121. Nihaduzzaman and Meherob Hasan grabbed three wickets each, while Mrittunjoy Chowdhury top-scored with 23. Rajshahi ended the day on 87 for three, trailing by 34 runs, with all three wickets taken by Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

In Sylhet, only 43.1 overs were possible due to rain and bad light, as Dhaka Division reached 120 for five. Mahidul Islam Ankon remained not out on 36 for Dhaka while Sylhet pacers Ebadot Hossain (3-49) and Khaled Ahmed (2-25) shared the wickets.



Raozan gripped by fear amid BNP factional feud

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, *ctg*

Since August 5 last year, residents of Chattogram's Raozan have been gripped by a sense of constant insecurity, as rival politicians fight for dominance in the absence of effective police action, leaving behind a string of politically motivated killings.

Armed criminals have been moving out in the open freely, often threatening business owners and residents for extortion or just to show off their muscle power, The Daily Star has learnt from locals who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Recent visits to Raozan's Noapara Bazar and Pahartali Bazar revealed that locals have been petrified into silence. Despite several attempts, no one was willing to speak openly, while traders were unwilling to speak with the media at all.

The correspondent spoke with several traders who said they were threatened over the phone for extortion money during last Ramadan and after Eid-ul-Fitr.

"Although the situation seemed to have improved after Eid-ul-Fitr, we are living in fear following the series of killings. Police know who the killers are, but despite that, there has not been any serious crackdown," a trader from Bharatshwari Plaza in Noapara Bazar told The Daily Star on the condition of anonymity.



An employee of the Nasser Medical Complex sits on the ground resting after the unloading of body bags containing the 30 corpses of Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel and released as part of the hostage exchange deal. The photo was taken in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on October 31, 2025.

PHOTO: AFP

Nat'l unity a must to save the country

Says Yunus, hails National Consensus Commission for completing its tasks

UNB, Dhaka

National unity is crucial to defeat fascism and save the country, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus said yesterday.

"We face a great challenge in shaping the future of this country. This challenge cannot be met by a single person, organisation, agency, or government alone. Unity among all political parties and factions is essential, and it must be maintained despite any adversity," he said in a statement last night.

He also thanked the members of the National Consensus Commission for engaging with all active political parties and reaching an agreement to formulate and implement the July National Charter.

Describing the charter as a historic achievement, the chief adviser said, "This document is invaluable for our nation. It will not only guide the upcoming national elections but also serve as a roadmap

PHOTO ON PAGE 2

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According to Raozan Police Station, there have been 14 murders in the upazila in the past year, with seven of them being politically motivated. Firearms were used in every incident. A total of 39 suspects have been arrested so far, but none of the identified gunmen have been detained.

Most clashes and murders involve followers of the two rival leaders, who were inactive during the Awami League rule.

The leaders are Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury and Golam Akbar Khandakar.

In July, the BNP dissolved its Chattogram north district convening committee and expelled Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury from his post as party vice-chairman following a clash between rival party factions in Raozan. Golam Akbar Khandakar was convener of the committee.

Last month, local businessman Abdul Hakim and Jubo Dal activist Mohammad Alamgir were shot dead. Hakim was a close aide of Giasuddin, while Alamgir belonged to Akbar's faction.

"We suspect that he was murdered for his political affiliation," Alamgir's son Arafat Hossain told The Daily Star.

Hakim's brother Parvez Alam echoed the same. "My brother was very close to Giasuddin Quader. Many leaders did not take this relationship well. This might be one of the reasons behind the murder."

According to Raozan Police Station, 14 murders have taken place in the upazila in the past year, with seven of them being politically motivated. Firearms were used in every incident. A total of 39 suspects have been arrested so far, but none of the identified gunmen have been arrested.

Apart from Alamgir and Hakim, those killed in political violence include BNP activists Komor Uddin, Md Ibrahim, Manik Abdullah, Muhammad Selim, Didarul Alam and businessman Jahangir Alam, who was involved in a local political dispute within the BNP.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Arakan Army threat grows along the border

BGB man hurt in landmine explosion dies

MOKAMMEL SHUVO and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A Border Guard Bangladesh soldier died after being injured in a landmine explosion, allegedly planted by the Arakan Army along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, the latest in a series of incidents that have endangered security personnel and civilians.

Nayek Akhtar Hossain, 35, of BGB 34 Battalion in Cox's Bazar, was on patrol along the Naikhongchhari border with Myanmar in Bandarban on October 12. The mine exploded near the zero line, blowing off his right leg.

He was first treated at Ramu Cantonment Hospital and later airlifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, where he died on Friday.

BGB officials said after Myanmar's junta forces withdrew from the border in December last year and the rebel group, the Arakan Army, reportedly continued laying mines along the border and even within parts of the no-man's land.

Landmine explosions and

gunfights between rival groups in Myanmar along the border surged in recent months. Bangladeshi fishermen from the Bay of Bengal are being abducted, allegedly by members of the Arakan Army, spreading fear among locals.

"Bangladesh should take

indiscriminately along the border to counter Rohingya armed groups, showing no regard for any rules or regulations.

"Bangladesh needs to conduct mine-sweeping operations in border areas to ensure security and protect civilians," said Emdadul.

Bangladesh should take diplomatic initiatives to address the emerging security threats along the border and prevent any provocative incidents along the border.

Major (retd) Emdadul Islam
a security expert and former consulate chief in Sittwe, Myanmar



diplomatic initiatives to address the emerging security threats along the border and prevent any provocative incidents along the border," Major (retd) Emdadul Islam, a security expert and former consulate chief, Sittwe, Myanmar, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the Arakan Army has installed landmines

According to BGB data, at least 65 Bangladeshis have been injured by landmines since fighting broke out between Myanmar's government troops and the Arakan Army last year.

Two Rohingyas were killed by landmines in 2024, and five others were injured in 2023.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

'Poor governance' caused regime falls in SA nations

Says Ajit Doval

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval has said "poor governance" was the driving factor behind the uprisings that led to the fall of governments in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in recent years.

Delivering the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Memorial Lecture on governance to mark India's National Unity Day on Friday, Doval said governance plays a crucial role in nation-building and in ensuring a country's stability and progress.

Citing examples from both history and the present day, he said, "The rise and fall of the great empires, monarchies, oligarchies, aristocracies or democracies is actually a history of their governance."

"In the recent cases of regime change through non-constitutional methods in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and others, these were actually cases of poor governance."

Doval identified authoritarianism, injustice, and discrimination as key causes of state failure.

"Authoritarianism that is oppressive, with discriminatory laws, poor delivery of justice, marginalisation of populations, and human rights violations, contributes to the fall of a nation."

"There is no accountability. People don't know why they are doing what they are doing ... This is how the decay starts."



Tanzania president re-elected in polls marred by violence

REUTERS

Tanzania President Samia Suluhu Hassan was declared yesterday the landslide winner of an election that set off deadly protests across the country this week over the exclusion of her main challengers.

The East African nation's electoral commission said Hassan, who took power in 2021 after the death in office of her predecessor, received more than 31.9 million votes, or 97.66% of the total, handing her a fresh five-year term.

Protests erupted during Wednesday's vote for president and parliament, with some demonstrators tearing down banners of Hassan and setting fire to government buildings and police firing tear gas and gunshots, according to witnesses.

Demonstrators are angry about the electoral commission's exclusion of Hassan's two biggest challengers from the race and what human rights groups have said are widespread arrests and abductions of opponents.

In a speech from the administrative capital Dodoma after being certified as the winner, Hassan said the actions of the protesters were "neither responsible nor patriotic".

"When it comes to the security of Tanzania, there is no debate -- we must use all available security avenues to ensure the country remains safe," she said.

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MOVING AT SNAIL'S PACE... This half-kilometre stretch of the six-lane Dhaka-Sylhet highway is almost entirely occupied by illegal street vendors and parking, making it extremely difficult for vehicles to cross this section without getting stuck for hours on end. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon in Bhulta of Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

8,850 youths to be trained in martial arts, shooting

Initiative aims to build morale, expand reserve force, says Asif

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to launch a programme to equip young people with basic combat and protection skills, including martial arts and shooting.

The training, styled "Basic Self-Defence Training for Youths", is scheduled to begin on November 8, with online registration now open.

Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain highlighted the initiative in a Facebook post on October 20. He wrote, "A total of 8,850 trainees will initially receive training at seven centres across the country. They will be trained in karate, judo, taekwondo, and firearm shooting."

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP) issued a circular on October 16, announcing the programme, which will be implemented under the youth and sports ministry's supervision as part of efforts to strengthen national defence capabilities.

It said that in the first phase, 8,850 youths -- 8,250 males and 600 females aged 18-35 -- will be trained in martial arts and shooting disciplines at seven BKSP residential training centres across the country.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Col Md Golam Mabud Hasan, director (Training) at BKSP, said the project will run until February 2028, adding that around 8,000 applications have already been submitted.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

END IMPUNITY, UPHOLD PRESS FREEDOM

MAHFUZ ANAM

The Daily Star joins the freedom-loving world today in observing the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. We do so because we strongly believe that without a free and independent media, democracy cannot be established, the freedom of individuals and communities cannot be ensured, abuses of human rights will go unreported and unpunished, and we will never have an accountable government. This, in turn, will perpetuate the culture of impunity, for justice itself cannot be established in any society without a free press.

According to UNESCO, over the past 19 years, since 2006, 1,800 journalists have been killed worldwide. Regrettably, "nine out of ten cases of these killings remain judicially unresolved", says the UN body.

Most recently, Israel has deliberately, recklessly, and vindictively killed more than 270 Palestinian journalists covering the genocide in Gaza, according to figures from Reporters Without Borders. They did so with complete impunity -- without the due condemnation such crimes demand from the United Nations, the international community,

SEE PAGE J2



STAR FILE PHOTO

Journalists trapped in legal maze

Cases weigh on at least 296 media professionals

ZYMA ISLAM

More than a year since the July uprising, at least 296 journalists and media managers remain entangled in cases linked to the deaths and violence during the protests.

Interviews of journalists across 27 districts show at least 101 of them face murder charges, 22 face attempted murder, and 112 are accused of vandalism and explosive-related offences, among other charges.

The actual numbers may be higher, as The Daily Star could not confirm the legal sections in a number of cases. So far, at least 18 journalists have been arrested at different times since the uprising.

An analysis of the cases reveals how the sacrifice of those killed in July has been folded into battles driven more by politics than justice.

On the evening of July 31, 2024, the uncle of protester Nayeem Howlader fought his way through an embattled city to the office of this newspaper to tell the tale of how his nephew was shot dead in Jatrabari 12 days earlier.

He showed a photo of Nayeem lying cold in a mortuary freezer, a single bullet lodged above his heart.

Nayeem's death was as real and raw as day. The murder case filed with the Jatrabari Police Station over his death, however, is a hefty document accusing up to 500 people.

They include three journalists.

"I have no hope of getting justice from this farcical case," is all that Nayeem's father, Md Kamrul would say on record.

When the body of Md Akkas Ali, a 44-year-old worker at a plastic factory, was brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on August 5, 2024, he was logged as unidentified. A bullet had pierced his chest; his left palm smeared with the blood he tried to stop.

"He had gone out to look for his son ... even though there was shooting all around," said his brother Abdur Razzak.

The case over Akkas' killing names 115 accused. Among them are 14 journalists.

"We are ordinary people. I did not know how to file a case. A local ward councillor of BNP approached me and offered help. He and his men wrote everything. I do not know the people they named in the case," said Razzak, a small trader. He still has hopes of justice.

The murder case over the death of Zubair Omar Khan, a law student of Bangladesh University of Professionals, on August 5, 2024, similarly lists a large number of accused, including two journalists.

Filed with the CMM court, the case is far from seeing a charge sheet, as investigators probe the culpability of each.

Khan's family said lawyers aligned with the BNP or the Jamaat-e-Islami assisted them in filing the case and preparing the list of accused.

Contacted for comments yesterday, Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua told The Daily Star that journalists should be arrested under the relevant law if there are

specific allegations against them.

"But being partisan is a moral offence, not a criminal one. We want justice for those who have died. These cases against journalists will never stand in court -- and that, ultimately, will be an injustice to the victims," he said.

"Proving these allegations will be extremely difficult. This is nothing but harassment, an abuse of the criminal justice system. It poses a challenge for the judiciary, as the law is being used as a tool of oppression against the weak."

Around 20 percent of journalists facing cases had identifiable ties with the Awami League regime, including those observed campaigning for the party or holding posts.

They include Narayanganj's Komol Khan and Raju Ahmed, known aides of former lawmaker Shamim Osman; one was seen firing two guns under Osman's armed group. Thirteen others had held AL positions, including Nayeemul Islam Khan, former press secretary to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The accused journalists are from 53 media houses, including 30 national newspapers and TV stations. About 74 percent of them are outside Dhaka.

Among them is Gazi Television's Brahmanbaria correspondent Zahir Rayhan, jailed since August 17 in a case filed on July 7 this year over a protester shot in both legs during a celebratory rally in Utara on August 5, 2024.

"My husband has never been involved in wrongdoing," said his wife, Shahnaz Parvin,

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JYOTIRMOY BARUA
Supreme Court lawyer

describing sleepless nights and the burden of raising three children alone.

"Our two daughters are in school, and our eldest son studies in college in Dhaka. Keeping their spirits up and ensuring their education continues, everything has become my sole responsibility," she said, adding, "I can't sleep at night. The children want to see their father. This has been an unbearably difficult time for me."

Veteran broadcast journalist ZI Mamun, named in two murder cases and two ICT



STAR FILE PHOTO

complaints, said he had spoken to the complainants and neither of them knew him.

"The victim had died in Mirpur. I am truly sorry for this loss, but I had nothing to do with it. The brother filed the case with the help of lawyers and the police," said Mamun. He claimed that the other case was filed by a local political leader in Khilgaon, who filed the case a year on.

One father who filed a case after his son's death, implicating journalists, said on the condition of anonymity that the case has now become a "headache".

"People I do not even know now contact me, begging me to remove their names from the case. I left Dhaka because of the calls. After my son died, the local politicians came and started badgering me to file a case. I just went with them, and they wrote down everything and I just signed. I have even heard that they are using my son's case for extortion," said the father.

The Daily Star has obtained copies of two affidavits, each signed by a complainant seeking withdrawal of charges against two journalists over the July uprising. Since the affidavits are yet to be accepted at court, this newspaper is withholding the identities of the accused and the complainants.

One was a murder case, while the other was filed under the Explosive Substances Act

over general violence.

"His name was included as accused number 26 in the case, which did not happen with my knowledge. I neither know him, nor have I ever met him," said one affidavit.

The other stated, "I filed a case against 104 people linked with the ruling party. I was not present at the time of filing the case. I sought help from students involved with the anti-discrimination movement."

More interestingly, not all cases trace to the uprising.

Idris Ali, former publicity secretary of the BNP's Moulvibazar district unit, filed a case in Sreemangal on November 18, 2024. He accused 10 journalists over an alleged bomb blast at the press club in June 2020 during PPE distribution amid the pandemic.

This newspaper's correspondent verified that no such explosion took place at that place on that day.

RTV's local correspondent Chowdhury Bhaskar Home was arrested in the case on November 17, 2024, and later freed on High Court bail in January 2025.

A district correspondent from Kushtia alleged that cases had been filed against him and others in order to get them fired from their jobs, so that others can take their place.

The journalist, who has since then managed another position, requested

anonymity out of fear of losing his current job.

After Dhaka, Sylhet has the highest number of journalists prosecuted in such cases -- 39, including two with Awami League ties, one a former councillor and another a former city mayor.

Most journalists who were implicated in cases filed in the Sylhet division are unwilling to comment on the matter, fearing further harassment.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, several of them said that police have begun dropping their names from the charge sheet of the cases, and they do not want to escalate the situation by making public statements.

The government has repeatedly said little can be done in these cases.

Speaking at a discussion on June 26 this year, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said the law ministry has limited authority to prevent cases, including those for serious offences like murder, from being filed against journalists, as anyone can initiate a case in Bangladesh.

He explained that his ministry can only intervene to withdraw a case after a charge sheet has been submitted and the trial process has formally begun. "If a case is under police investigation, the law ministry can do nothing about it. It falls under the police's jurisdiction."

On October 7, 2024, the information ministry formed a committee to review harassment cases filed against journalists.

Journalists were asked to submit details and evidence of cases filed against them after July 1, 2024, either personally or through their editors, to the ministry.

However, this review committee found only 72 cases, revealed M Abdullah, former president of a section of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, who was a part of the committee.

Most of the cases were filed outside Dhaka and arose from personal disputes, not political persecution, he said at a discussion on September 28.

At the same discussion, Information Adviser Mahfuz Alam said, "Even if one journalist is the victim of a retaliatory case, we have to protest against it."

He, however, added, "Our ministry has nothing to do with it, so we submitted the list to the home ministry for further inquiry."

None of the journalists this newspaper spoke to for this story said that their cases have been dismissed.

[Our Sylhet Correspondent Dwaha Chowdhury, Moulvibazar Correspondent Mintu Deshwara, Brahmanbaria Correspondent Masuk Hridoy, Netrakona Correspondent Jaudul Islam, Kushtia Correspondent Anis Mondol, Bogura Correspondent Mostafa Shabui, and Narayanganj Correspondent Saurav Hossain Siam contributed to this report.]

JOURNALISTS KILLED IN ISRAEL'S GENOCIDE



AT LEAST

273

JOURNALISTS
KILLED

162

INJURED

2 MISSING

92 ARRESTED

SOURCES: AL JAZEERA, CPJ

More journalists have been killed in Gaza since the conflict began on October 7, 2023, than in the US Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan combined.

Brown University's Costs of War project

“Israel kills journalists. Killing journalists is killing the truth. And a world without truth is a world where executioners reign supreme.”

ANTHONY BELLANGER, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS

“Israel isn't just assassinating journalists but attacking journalism itself by preventing the documentation of genocide.”

AMNESTY, INTERNATIONAL

“Israel is engaging in the deadliest and most deliberate effort to kill and silence journalists that CPJ has ever documented. By silencing the press, Israel is silencing the war.”

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS



“On the one hand, Israel continues to deny access to any international media and on the other, it kills with impunity local journalists who are the world's only professional lens into the agony of genocide and famine unfolding in Gaza... Act without delay before Israel shuts down the last voices in Gaza.”

UN EXPERTS

END IMPUNITY, UPHOLD PRESS FREEDOM

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or the democratic nations of the world. Most distressingly, the global community of journalists has not raised its voice of protest as loudly or as persistently as these horrific killings warranted.

While Sheikh Hasina insulted the nation by subjecting it to an unparalleled level of oppression, the present interim government has inflicted another kind of humiliation on us by allowing the largest-ever judicial harassment of journalists in our history.

While 18 journalists were arrested without any specific charges, the more acutely embarrassing reality is that at least

296 journalists have been implicated in unsubstantiated criminal cases, many of them for murder.

As a newspaper that takes pride in independent and ethical journalism and champions the rights of journalists, we find it deeply troubling that Bangladesh appears to have one of the highest numbers of journalists accused in murder cases in recent times.

The law minister has said that the government cannot prevent anyone from filing a case. We ask in response: even when it is clear that the law is being abused? We believe the authorities could easily have investigated and found that many of these cases would be

extremely difficult to prove. There may well have been instances of partisan journalism and even corruption, for which those involved could have been properly tried and punished under appropriate laws. But murder?

A year ago, on October 7, 2024, the government set up a committee, led by an additional secretary of the information ministry, to monitor cases of harassment against journalists. On October 27 last year, the government called upon journalists to submit information with proof of harassment. This committee took note of 72 cases and forwarded them to the home ministry for action.

At a meeting on September 28, 2025, the current Information Adviser, Mahfuj Alam, said, “Even if one journalist is a victim of a retaliatory case, we have to protest against it. We have found 72 journalists facing such cases; our ministry has nothing to do with it, so we have submitted the list to the home ministry for further inquiry.”

That is where it stands now — 16 months since the initiative began. The law ministry issued an ordinance this year empowering the police to remove the name of any accused if a preliminary investigation found no evidence against them. Previously, such action required a magistrate's approval. Yet, none of the

journalists accused have benefited from this measure.

By publishing this special supplement today, we want to reiterate this fundamental truth: if we want to build a democratic society, if our leaders truly wish to establish an accountable and transparent government and if our political parties believe in a just society and one that is governed by law and not by dictated by it, then an independent, ethical and free media is a precondition. We are promised freedom, but have to suffer harassment, humiliation, confinement and incarceration in every era. Sadly, even the July charter fails to safeguard press freedom in clear terms.