

UN chief Antonio Guterres

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dance, music
and devotion

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CIVIL SERVICE

Frustration as retirees rehired for key posts

BAHARAM KHAN

Contractual appointments to senior administrative posts are impeding promotions of eligible officials to secretary-level positions, fuelling discontent within the civil administration, say bureaucrats.

At least 20 of the 70 secretaries in the civil service are working on a contractual basis. Among them, around 10 are senior secretaries holding the most crucial positions in the bureaucracy.

Over the past 14 months, 12 secretaries and senior secretaries have been appointed on contract to key administrative positions. The posts of cabinet secretary, principal secretary, public administration secretary, and home secretary are currently held by contractual appointees who retained nearly a decade ago.

Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdur Rashid had a 15-year gap from regular service. He had retired in 2016 after being made an officer on special duty (OSD) in 2009.

Principal Secretary M Siraz Uddin Miah; Public Administration Secretary Ehsanul Hoque; Home Secretary Nasimul Ghani; Women and Children Affairs Secretary Momtaz Ahmad; and Planning Commission members MA Akmal Hossain and Mokhlesur Rahman were also appointed on contract after long breaks from regular service – ranging from eight to 10 years. All six were made OSD in 2009.

According to administrative officials, contractual appointments are widely resented in bureaucracy, as they obstruct the upward mobility of career officials. For instance, if a secretary is appointed on contract, it deprives three to four officials of important postings.

However, the government had no other options available but to reappoint experienced officers on a contractual basis after the July uprising, a member of the Advisory Council told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.

Explaining the decision, he said, "The government did not want to retain those who held key positions during the previous administration. On the other hand, there was not enough time to promote the officers who had been overlooked back then and appoint them as secretaries. So, at the beginning, contractual appointments were the only option."

"However, at this stage, the number of contractual appointments should gradually be reduced, and qualified officers from the regular service should be promoted to secretary positions," he observed.

AKM Abdul Awal Majumder, a former secretary and a researcher of public administration, said, "When a secretary is appointed on contract, it effectively closes the door of opportunity for several deserving officers."

He further said contract-based appointments should be avoided except for technical positions or under special circumstances.

Former NBR chairman Badiur Rahman said, "Even if the government offers contractual appointments, retired officials should refuse such offers, considering that the practice disrupts the natural progression of the civil service."

"Those who lobby for contractual appointments do not fall under the category of good officers," he added.

Firoz Mia, a public administration expert and ex-additional secretary, said previous governments never made contractual appointments to fill top four or five positions in the civil administration.

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DISCONTENT IN BUREAUCRACY

- Resentment grows among officers waiting for promotion
- 20 of 70 secretaries working on contract
- Govt says such appointments necessary after July uprising

RISKY BUSINESS... Every morning, a floating fish market springs up along the railway tracks in the capital's Karwan Bazar. With trains speeding through every 10-15 minutes, both buyers and sellers remain on constant alert, ready to get out of the way at any moment to avoid serious injury. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

REVISED BUDGET Non-development spending to rise again

Interest payments, subsidies push expenses up; new bank recapitalisation may add pressure

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Non-development expenditure is set to rise again in the revised budget for the current fiscal year mainly due to higher costs on interest payments and subsidies.

Capital support for a new state-owned bank and possible implementation of the Pay Commission's recommendations are also likely to add pressure.

The Finance Division, Economic Relations Division, and agriculture ministry together spent Tk 54,571 crore, about 55 percent of total expenditure, during the first quarter of FY2024-25, mainly on interest and subsidies.

Of this, Tk 31,952 crore, or nearly one-third of the total, went to interest payments alone.

Against this backdrop, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed is scheduled to hold a meeting on November 10 to review the economy and prepare the revised budget.

With national elections planned for mid-February, the government aims to finalise the

SPENDING BY MINISTRIES AND DIVISIONS

JULY-SEPT FY26

Finance Division	Tk 40,917cr
Agriculture Ministry	Tk 7,496cr
Economic Relations Div	Tk 6,159cr
Education Ministry	Tk 8,478cr
Primary Edu Ministry	Tk 4,283cr
Defence Ministry	Tk 5,659cr
Public Security Div	Tk 4,657cr
Food Ministry	Tk 5,803cr
Others	Tk 21,512cr
TOTAL	Tk 104,964cr

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Govt trying to delay polls over July charter issue

Says Fakhrul; presses for
referendum on election day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has created a situation over the implementation of the July charter to delay the national election, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He called the move "unfortunate", given BNP's all-out support for the interim government.



He said some political parties are conspiring to disrupt the election process by raising referendum demand before the polls.

"We want to make it very clear that if a referendum is to be held, it must take place on the election day. The national election must be held in February 2026. Otherwise, the people of Bangladesh will not accept it," Fakhrul said at a rally in the party's central office in Nayapaltan.

The event was organised by the BNP to observe the "National Revolution and Solidarity Day." Eight political parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, have demanded a

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On the occasion of National Revolution and Solidarity Day, BNP leaders and activists brought out a massive procession from the capital's Nayapaltan yesterday afternoon. They marched through Shantinagar, Malibagh, Mouchak, Moghbazar, and Bangla Motor before concluding their programme at the Sonargaon intersection.

Six held over Sarwar killing, other crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Rapid Action Battalion has arrested six people for their alleged involvement in the killing of Sarwar Hossain Babla and other crimes in Chattogram.

The suspects are Ishtiaque Chowdhury alias Ovi, Mohammad Joni, Mahmudul Hoque Zaki, Mohammad Arman Ali, Mohammad Alauddin, and Mohammad Helal.

Of them, Alauddin and Helal are accused of shooting Sarwar to death and injuring Ershad Ullah, BNP's candidate for Chattogram 8 constituency, in the port city's Bayezid Bostami area on Wednesday during an election campaign.

In a separate incident, Ishtiaque, Zaki and Joni opened fire on five BNP activists in an area under Raozan Police Station on Wednesday night, according to the statement of a case filed over the incident.

Arman stands accused of firing bullets at auto rickshaw driver Mohammad Idris in the Bayezid Bostami area on Thursday.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Mozaffar Hossain, senior assistant director of Rab-7, said, "Our team arrested the six suspects overnight from various areas. They are linked to the

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Independent probe sought after Jahanara's allegations

ABDULLAH AL MEHDY

Former Bangladesh women's cricket team skipper Jahanara Alam's recent allegations of sexual harassment against members of the team have rocked the country's sporting fraternity, who have called for an independent inquiry and a strong response against the alleged perpetrators if proven guilty.

Jahanara, who has taken a break from cricket citing mental health issues and is currently living in Australia, bared her soul in a YouTube channel on Thursday, alleging that former women's team manager and selector Manjurul Islam and late Towhid Mahmud, former in-charge of the board's women's department, harassed her in the national team setup.

Just a few days earlier, the pacer had spoken to a national daily about grouping, favoritism and abusive



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Trump open to easing Iran sanctions Says Kazakhstan to join Abraham Accords

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump said Thursday that Iran has asked for heavy US sanctions against Tehran to be lifted -- and that he is open to having a discussion about it.

"Frankly, Iran has been asking if the sanctions could be lifted. Iran has got very heavy US sanctions, and it makes it really hard," Trump said during a dinner with Central Asian leaders.

"I'm open to hearing that, and we'll see what happens, but I would be open to it."

Western countries, including the United States, have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire atomic weapons, while Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Tehran has been reeling under years of international sanctions, especially after the United States in 2018 withdrew from an international nuclear accord with Tehran and reimposed tough punitive measures.

**N Korea fires unidentified ballistic missile
 Says Seoul's military**

AFP, Seoul

North Korea fired a ballistic missile yesterday, Seoul's military said, around a week after US President Donald Trump approved South Korea's plan to build a nuclear-powered submarine.

Analysts have said Seoul's plan to construct one of the atomic-driven vessels would likely draw an aggressive response from Pyongyang.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea fired an unidentified ballistic missile towards the East Sea, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The missile landed in the sea outside Japan's economic waters and no damage or injuries had been reported, said Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

Govt trying to delay polls

FROM PAGE 1
 referendum by November to give legal basis to the July charter.

Thousands of leaders and activists from various BNP units and its affiliated organisations joined the rally, filling the area from Kakrail to Motijheel.

Reiterating BNP's position, Fakhrul said the referendum must be held on the same day as the national polls.

He said the final recommendations of the Consensus Commission excluded notes of dissent by some political parties and included several issues that were never discussed.

"For almost a year, they worked on drafting the charter. On October 17, in front of parliament, all political parties signed the document based on the consensus reached through the National Consensus Commission," he said.

The BNP leader, however, alleged that just days later, the consensus commission came up with new recommendations that were not in the signed charter.

Fakhrul criticised a statement



Artistes perform at Dhaka Flow Fest 2025 at Shahabuddin Park in Gulshan yesterday. Blending global wellness with local culture, the festival brings people together through yoga, dance, music, and conscious living. The three-day event will end today.

PHOTO: STAR

AMAZON CLIMATE SUMMIT World leaders turn up the heat on fossil fuels

AFP, Belém

World leaders were set to meet for a second day of climate talks in the Brazilian Amazon yesterday after fiery speeches and renewed criticism of Big Oil marked the opening session.

Dozens of ministers and several heads of state and government, including those of Spain, Germany and Namibia, were set to meet in Belém just before the United Nations' (UN) annual two-week conference, COP20, which starts on Monday.

Evidence of the climate crisis, driven largely by the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, has never been clearer: the past 11 years have been the hottest on record and marked by intensifying hurricanes, heat waves and wildfires.

UN chief Antonio Guterres and a series of national leaders said on Thursday that

the world will fail to keep global warming below 1.5C, the Paris Agreement's primary target set a decade ago, but said they have not yet given up on its fallback goal of 2C.

The absence of leaders from the world's biggest polluters, including the United States, where President Donald Trump has dismissed climate science as a "con job," cast a shadow over talks, but also catalyzed calls for greater mobilization.

Countries made an unprecedented pledge to "transition away" from oil, gas and coal at COP28 in Dubai two years ago.

However, the issue has since slipped down the agenda as nations grapple with economic pressures, trade disputes and wars, and the Trump administration aggressively pushing for more fossil fuels.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's call in his opening address for a "roadmap" to halt deforestation, reduce

dependence on fossil fuels, and mobilize the financial resources needed to achieve those goals was met with applause.

The coalition backing Lula's call includes European nations and numerous small island states whose very survival is threatened by stronger cyclones and rising sea levels.

Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, railed against the "large polluters (who) continue to deliberately destroy our marine and terrestrial environments with their poisonous fossil fuel gases."

The idea of phasing out hydrocarbons is also gaining traction in Europe. Despite their divisions, EU countries noted that they have reduced greenhouse gas emissions for more than three decades and are aiming for a 90 percent cut by 2040.

Frustration as retirees rehired for key posts

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 "When contractual appointments are made to top administrative posts, it is natural for promotion aspirants to feel frustrated. This often hampers the normal functioning of the administration, as those awaiting promotion tend to lose focus on their responsibilities," he observed.

He further said it is customary for the government to remove officials who were unable to carry out their duties in designated posts as expected.

The interim government, however, decided to take an unusual path. It transferred at least four secretaries barely a year after their contractual appointments, instead of relieving them of their duties due to poor performance, said several officials at the Secretariat.

Terming the decision unusual in the civil administration, they said these transfers further added to resentment among bureaucrats.

Normally, contractual appointments are made for specific purposes. Once the tenure of a contract ends, the government either discontinues or renews it as deemed necessary. Such officials are not usually transferred.

They also noted that many retired officials, reappointed on contract, struggle to adapt to technology driven administrative processes that have been upgraded in recent years.

Seeking anonymity, an aggrieved additional secretary said, "Those who returned to the administration on contracts after a break of 10-15 years have clearly failed to perform."

"Why would the government still keep them in the administration by transferring them to various positions of lesser significance?" the official asked.

Mohammad Yusuf, appointed as secretary at the shipping ministry in November last year, was removed from the post this month and attached to the public administration ministry.

Even though he has no specific responsibility now, he will continue to receive salary and benefits applicable to a senior secretary, said public administration ministry officials.

MA Akmal Hossain Azad was transferred to the fisheries and livestock ministry only three months after his contractual appointment as secretary of the Health Services Division in August last year. He was later transferred to the Planning Commission as its member.

Around nine months after his appointment as secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, Siddik Zobair was removed from the position on July 22 this year and attached to the public administration ministry.

He was transferred to the National Academy for Planning and Development as its director general on October 12, meaning the government appointed a senior secretary to a post meant for an additional secretary.

Mokhlesur Rahman was moved to the Planning Commission last month after he served as senior secretary at the public administration ministry for 13 months.

There are also examples of officials being transferred from comparatively insignificant ministries to important ones, such as the current home secretary and the public administration secretary.

Seeking anonymity, an additional secretary said, "Retired officials, who have been out of the administration for years, naturally struggle to keep up with many issues."

"It's not their fault. It's just how the system works. The administration functions like a machine that needs constant updates," added the official.

Non-development spending to rise again

FROM PAGE 1
 budget revision by January, finance ministry officials said.

Last month, the Finance Division asked all ministries and divisions to submit their revised allocation proposals by November 9.

RISING COMMITMENTS

Following the June budget announcement, the government increased several allowances amid growing demands.

Most recently, it raised house rent allowances for MPO-listed teachers, adding around Tk 4,000 crore to non-development spending.

An additional cost is likely if the government moves to implement the pay commission's recommendations.

The commission is expected to submit its report by December, and the finance adviser had told The Daily Star earlier that partial implementation of the recommendations during this government's tenure had been under active consideration.

The upcoming national election will also add to expenditure, with around Tk 3,000 crore allocated for the Election Commission. The amount may rise if additional funds are sought.

Meanwhile, the government plans to inject Tk 20,000 crore in capital into a new bank to be formed by merging five troubled Islamic banks.

Of this, Tk 10,000 crore is expected to be transferred this month once the new entity's account is opened as the Bangladesh Bank is giving priority to protecting depositors' funds and restoring public confidence in the restructured system.

The central bank is expected to issue a licence for the new bank later this month after receiving the government's formal application, now awaiting law ministry clearance.

The agriculture ministry spent Tk 7,495 crore, mostly on fertiliser

Economist Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), said the capital support for the new bank could be a positive move if accompanied by lasting reforms.

"What needs to be examined is whether the reform initiatives undertaken in the banking sector will be continued under the next government," he told The Daily Star.

"Budgetary support for bank capital has been provided in the past as well. If these reforms are not sustained, it could lead to a waste of public funds, as seen in the past," said Raihan, also a professor at the University of Dhaka.

He further said just as political commitment is vital in political matters, it is equally important for economic reforms. "We have seen ample discussions on political issues. Unfortunately, we have not seen such discussions on economic issues with the political parties," he said.

FIRST QUARTER SNAPSHOT

In the last fiscal year, non-development expenditure in the revised budget rose as the government had to pay arrears in the power, energy, and fertiliser sectors, trimming development allocations.

In the first three months of this fiscal year, total government expenditure rose 10.29 percent year-on-year, reaching Tk 1,04,964 crore.

The Finance Division spent the most -- Tk 40,917 crore -- mainly on interest payments on domestic loans, power and energy subsidies, and sectoral incentives.

The Economic Relations Division followed, with Tk 6,159 crore spent on repayment of principal and interest on foreign loans.

The agriculture ministry spent Tk 7,495 crore, mostly on fertiliser

subsidies and incentives.

Three education-related ministries and divisions spent Tk 13,500 crore, largely under the non-development budget for MPO-listed institutions.

The defence ministry spent Tk 5,659 crore, the Public Security Division Tk 4,657 crore, and the food ministry Tk 5,803 crore.

Meanwhile, revenue collection rose 17 percent year-on-year to Tk 11,117 crore in the same period, up from 4.94 percent growth a year earlier.

In view of rising non-development demands, the Finance Division has introduced stricter expenditure controls in the revised budget guidelines.

For example, spending on land acquisition under the non-development budget will be halted, while under the development budget it will be allowed only after all procedures and Finance Division approval are complete.

Except for the education, health, and agriculture ministries, new allocations for residential and non-residential buildings will only be allowed where work orders have already been issued.

Restrictions have also been placed on vehicle purchases, foreign travel, and other discretionary expenses.

Selim Raihan said the upcoming revised budget should serve as a pathway for the next government, noting that most budget implementation typically occurs in the final quarter of the fiscal year.

"In this context, it is crucial to ensure that the revised budget provides a clear pathway for the next administration," he said, adding that expenditure must remain consistent with revenue to prevent fiscal pressure on the incoming government.

Six held

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 murder of Sarwar Hossain Babla, the shooting of the auto-rickshaw driver, and criminal activities in Raiganj."

The arrestees were being interrogated.

Sarwar's father Abdul Kader yesterday lodged a case with Bayezid Bostami Police Station over the killing of his son, accusing eight persons, including Sazzad Ali alias "Boro Sazzad", and 10-15 unnamed others. Maruf Hossain, an assistant commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, told this correspondent.

TRUMP VERSUS MAMDANI

The president's newest showdown

REUTERS, Washington

Donald Trump loves few things more than tackling a new political foe. But has he met his match in New York's incoming mayor Zohran Mamdani?

The mouthwatering showdown between the Republican and the young Democratic socialist could define the next phase of Trump's presidency.

Trump has appeared to relish having Mamdani as a foil, branding him a communist, mocking the name of the first Muslim and South Asian to lead America's largest city, and threatening to cut federal funding for New York City.

But his rival has shown he can play Trump at his own game.

It's rare for former reality TV star Trump to see himself upstaged, but 34-year-old Mamdani managed it at his victory rally on Tuesday night.

"Donald Trump, since I know you're watching, I have four words for you -- turn the volume up!" he said to huge cheers.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed to reporters traveling with Trump on Air Force One the next day that the president had indeed watched Mamdani speak.



'Go through all of us'

Trump and Mamdani are, at least partly, enemies with benefits.

Leftist Mamdani used Trump as a bogeyman throughout his mayoral campaign, accusing him of "fascism" and comparing the billionaire property developer to the landlords he says are ripping off New Yorkers.

He has also cannily positioned himself as part of the resistance to a president who has pushed his power to its limits and sent the National Guard into Democrat-run cities.

"To get to any of us, you will have to go through all of us," Mamdani said at the victory rally.

For hapless Democrats who have struggled to find a winning message as Trump has savaged them in recent months, Mamdani represents a long awaited chance to fight back.

But for many on the right, Trump now has the ideal opponent to bash.

As Republicans nursed their wounds from defeats in New York, Virginia and New Jersey, Trump said in a speech in Miami on Wednesday that Americans now faced a "choice between communism and common sense."

Trump also blew a dog whistle to the hard-right.

"Mamdani, whatever the hell his name is," Trump said in the same speech -- deliberately mispronouncing Ugandan-born Mamdani's surname in the same way he did with his 2024 election rival Kamala Harris.

'Flashing red lights'

Yet the stakes are far higher than a war of words.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to put New York -- his beloved home city -- in the federal crosshairs like he has previously with Los Angeles and Chicago.

Political culture lacks tolerance for dissent
Says TIB chief
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's political culture lacks tolerance, compassion, and respect for differing opinions, said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB), yesterday.

"Tolerance, compassion, and respect for differing opinions -- the core values of debate -- are almost absent from Bangladesh's political culture," he said while addressing the opening ceremony of the Inter-University Anti Corruption Debate Competition 2025.

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Mistakes were certainly made: Hasina
Three Indian news outlets publish written interviews
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three major Indian news outlets -- The Hindu, Hindustan Times and The New Indian Express -- published written interviews with ousted Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

The interview published in The Hindu newspaper cites Hasina as saying, "Mistakes were certainly made by security forces while responding to the uprising."

She also told the newspaper that she has not called upon her supporters to boycott the next

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ROAD EXPANSION WORK AT RESERVE FOREST

RHD cuts nine hills without approval

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has razed nine hills in Chattogram's Ramgarh-Sitakunda reserve forest area to expand a road without obtaining permission from the authorities.

The hill cutting, which began in May 2023, has flattened hilltops and removed around 10.14 lakh cubic feet of soil.

"The project authority only received approval for the Terms of Reference (ToR) to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment report but went ahead with hill cutting and construction in violation of the law," said Jamir Uddin, director of the Department of Environment's Chattogram regional office.

The large scale hill razing comes several months after the Forest Department estimated that around 4,630 mature trees would have to be felled and about 15,500 saplings relocated from the Ramgarh-Sitakunda Reserve Forest for the project. The RHD also took 90 acres of reserve forest land to expand the road.

The project authority only received approval for the Terms of Reference (ToR) to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment report but went ahead with hill cutting and construction in violation of the law.

JAMIR UDDIN
Director of the Department of Environment, Chattogram

According to project documents, the 38-kilometre road from Baraiyhat to Ramgarh is being widened from 18 feet to 38 feet, along with the construction of nine bridges and 24 culverts, at a cost of Tk 1,107 crore.

Project officials said the expansion, scheduled for completion by December 2025, aims to ease the transport of goods from Chattogram port to India via the



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

newly inaugurated Ramgarh land port in Khagrachhari.

The Ramgarh-Sitakunda reserve forest is home to 25 species of mammals, 123 species of birds, eight species of reptiles, and 25 species of trees, according to the Forest Department.

The project authority received ToR approval from the DoE on April 28, 2022, and applied for the EIA on December 3, 2024. However, without completing the EIA, 40 percent works of the project had already been carried out, according to an internal report by the DoE's Chattogram office.

When asked why the hills were cut without permission, project director and RHD Chattogram's superintendent engineer Zahid Hossain avoided a direct answer, saying, "We were forced to raze the hills to expand the road. We have received a notice from the Department of Environment. A hearing has already been held, and we are responding to their queries."

A recent visit by this correspondent found hills being cut at more than 10 points from Baraiyhat to Heyanko, with ongoing construction in six of those locations.

Kamal Hossain, a supernumerary professor

at the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University, said, "The unregulated cutting of hills severely destabilises the soil and disrupts the forest's natural drainage and microhabitats, putting the Ramgarh-Sitakunda Reserve Forest ecosystem at serious risk."

Cutting hills without permission violates Sections 6(a) and 12 of the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995.

The DoE report recommended filing cases and seeking environmental compensation against the project authority and the contractor for violating environmental laws. The report, submitted in April, noted that six of the hills were razed largely in the Gheramara area.

DoE Director Jamir Uddin said a hearing had already been held regarding the hill cutting.

"RHD has disagreed with us on some points, so we have decided to conduct another field visit. However, there is no doubt that the road was built by cutting hills without permission. Once all procedures are complete, we will take action against those responsible according to the law," he said.

Dengue cases overwhelm Suhrawardy hospital

HELEMUL ALAM

Thirteen-year-old Mohammad Abdul, a resident of Chandpur, has been undergoing treatment in the dengue ward at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital since Thursday, as his parents felt uncomfortable continuing treatment at the overcrowded district hospital.

"My son had been suffering from high fever since November 1. We took him to Chandpur District Hospital on November 5, where he was diagnosed with dengue," said Anowara Begum, Abdul's mother, yesterday.

She said although her son was admitted to the hospital, the overcrowded conditions made it difficult for him to receive proper care. "That is why we brought him to Suhrawardy hospital, travelling by launch, hoping for better treatment," she added.

"He is now feeling well, and we hope he will recover soon," Anowara said.

Giti Akhtar, a resident of Savar, was admitted to the hospital on November 6, as her family did not trust the local hospitals or clinics. She had been suffering from severe pain in her legs and body.

"I am now suffering from pneumonia along with dengue and was shifted to this ward a few days ago," said Giti.

Like Abdul and Giti, many dengue patients from outside Dhaka are coming to medical college hospitals in the capital in search of better treatment -- a move that sometimes puts them at even greater risk.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), at least 307 dengue patients have died, while 76,514 others have been hospitalised so far this year. Of these, 53,986 hospitalised patients are from outside Dhaka, while 197 of the reported deaths occurred in the capital.

Among the deaths, the highest number -- 148 -- were recorded at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, followed by 48 under Dhaka North City Corporation and 41 in the Barishal division.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said patients often arrive late mainly due to delayed decision-making and referrals from outside Dhaka.

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PHOTO: STAR

SM Sultan museum lies in neglect

Unfinished Sultan Ghat, poor upkeep frustrate visitors



PARTHA CHAKRABORTY,
Bagerhat

The SM Sultan Memorial Museum in Narail, which preserves the works and memories of the renowned artist, now lies unprotected and neglected.

Construction of a two-storey, boat-shaped jetty known as Sultan Ghat on the bank of the Chitra river also remains incomplete due to a lack of funds.

Located on the bank of the Chitra, the museum houses 23 original paintings by SM Sultan and 51 replicas of his works. It now faces serious problems with

maintenance amid staff shortages.

"Visitors from home and abroad come here throughout the year, especially during long holidays, but they leave disappointed as their experience remains incomplete due to the lack of proper facilities and curation," said artist Nayon Baidya.

Tandra Mukharjee, curator of the museum, said, "We are facing an acute manpower shortage. We have already applied for additional staffers. Once this problem is solved, we will be able to serve more visitors."

Visitors and locals have also demanded the completion of Sultan Ghat's construction, which began in June 2018 but came to

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PHOTO: STAR

Organized by Bangladesh BRAND FORUM *Inspiring the Nation*

mastercard presents 5th BANGLADESH FINTECH SUMMIT Powered by Prime Bank In Association with The Daily Star

CHIEF GUEST OF 3RD FINTECH AWARD

DR. AHSEN H. MANSUR Governor, Bangladesh Bank

SHISH HAIDER CHOWDHURY NDC, MHC & CEO Ministry of Roads, Transport and Bridges and of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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OSMAN ERSHAD FAIZ Managing Director & CEO, Prime Bank PLC

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INTERNATIONAL

GOVT SHUTDOWN US facing travel chaos as flights cut

AFP, Washington

Travelers across the United States were left scrambling to rebook flights as the government shutdown heaps pressure on the country's air traffic control system, prompting hundreds of flight cancellations at major American airports yesterday.

Airlines yesterday began implementing up to a 10-percent reduction in flights for 40 high-traffic areas of the country, complying with a Federal Aviation Administration order made on safety grounds.

More than 750 US flights scheduled for yesterday have been preemptively canceled Thursday, according to tracking website FlightAware.

American Airlines said it was reducing its flight schedules "amounting to 220 flights cancelled each day." Delta Airlines axed about 170 flights scheduled for yesterday, the carrier



Ukrainian firefighters extinguish a fire at the site of a Russian drone strike in Chuguv, Kharkiv region, early yesterday. Ukraine's top general said Kyiv's troops were stepping up assaults on Russian forces around the eastern Ukrainian town of Dobropillia to ease pressure on the embattled hub of Pokrovsk.

PHOTO: AFP



said, while CNN reported Southwest Airlines nixed 100 flights set for that day.

The shutdown has left tens of thousands of air traffic controllers, airport security staff and others without pay, causing personnel shortages.

On Thursday, more than 6,400 US flights were delayed, with some 200 cancellations, FlightAware data showed, as passengers faced long lines at security checkpoints.

Major airports were impacted, with travelers at Boston and Newark airports facing average delays of more than two hours, and those at Chicago's O'Hare and Washington's Reagan National more than an hour.

Explosions heard near army-controlled Sudanese capital

Say witnesses as RSF agrees to US proposal for humanitarian truce

AFP, Port Sudan

Explosions were heard near the army-controlled Sudanese capital Khartoum yesterday, witnesses told AFP, a day after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said they agreed to a humanitarian truce.

Following the RSF's capture of El-Fasher, the army's last major stronghold in western Darfur, less than two weeks ago, the paramilitaries appear to be shifting their focus eastward towards Khartoum and the oil-rich Kordofan region.

Khartoum has seen relative calm since the regular army regained control this year, but the RSF -- at war with the army since April 2023 -- has continued its attacks in several regions, targeting both military and civilian sites.

A resident in Omdurman, part of the greater Khartoum area, told AFP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, that they were awoken "around 2 am (0000 GMT) by the sound of... explosions near the Wadi



Sayidna military base".

Another resident said they "heard a drone overhead around 4 am before an explosion struck near" a power station, causing an outage in the area.

In army-controlled Atbara, around 300 kilometres (186 miles) north of Khartoum, a resident said several drones "appeared over the city shortly after 3 am" yesterday.

"Anti-aircraft defences shot them down, but I saw fires breaking out and heard sounds of explosions in the east of the city," the resident said, also on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

Another Atbara resident told AFP: "I saw 10 drones over the city, and the anti-aircraft defences were shooting them down one by one, but at the same time, I saw fires in the east of the city."

There were no immediate reports of casualties, and neither the army nor the RSF have yet commented on the attacks.

Meanwhile, the Sudan Doctors' Union said that the RSF shelled a hospital in the besieged city of Dilling in South Kordofan on Thursday morning, causing several injuries, some critical.

The shelling "destroyed the hospital's radiology and medical imaging department", crippling one of the region's vital health facilities, the union said.

Dilling has been under RSF siege since June 2023.

Independent probe sought

FROM PAGE 1
practices within the national women's team -- but her latest accusations were much more serious.

Jahanara claimed that she had given a detailed account of all the harassment she faced in a letter to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury in 2022 but no actions were taken.

During that time, the media had reported that Jahanara had sent a letter to the BCB, but it was not discussed in light of any complaints of sexual abuse.

The women's wing chairman at the time Shafiqul Alam Nadel claimed that her letter had no mention of sexual harassment.

"Jahanara complained to me that Manjurul behaved badly with her regarding fitness and performance. After several complaints, we removed him from the women's side. But Jahanara never said anything about harassment and neither her complaint to the CEO delved into any description

of harassment," Nadel told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nadel in a separate interview to a news media yesterday, also said that if the allegations are not proven, the cricket board should take some action for the controversy being brought on former players, management and others.

Bangladesh batter and Jahanara's long-time teammate Rumana Ahmed corroborated many of her allegations.

"I have seen that when she used to practice, no one would communicate with her. One could sense that there was some anger towards her. She didn't share anything with us."

"The way she described

things was actually how it happened. He [Manjurul] used to get too close while talking, would place his hands on shoulders. Even juniors complained about this to us," Rumana said.

Asked if she faced any harassment, she said: "No I did not. I would keep distance when he [Manjurul] would be

around."

She also questioned Nadel's interview where he defended some of Manjurul's behavior, "He [Nadel] never showed any concern. Whenever we would talk about the problems, he would always give assurances but would not take any steps."

"Strong steps should be taken. A chairman who we complained to, is talking in this way now although things were like that during his tenure. A proper investigation is needed," Rumana concluded.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in a media release on Thursday said it would form a committee to investigate the allegations which will submit its findings within 15 working days.

However, given the severity of the issue, former Bangladesh men's team captain Tamim Iqbal called for an independent committee to investigate the matter.

"Although the BCB has

formed an investigation committee, I believe a

separate and independent committee should be established under the National Sports Council or the government, with no one from the BCB involved," Tamim wrote on his social media page.

Bangladesh's sports advisor Asif Mahmud said the government will give all kinds of support to Jahanara and ensure "exemplary punishment" for the perpetrators.

"We will speak with the victim, and if she wishes to pursue legal action, since this is a criminal offence, we, on behalf of the government, will look into it with the most seriousness and ensure that those who were involved receive exemplary punishment," Asif said in an interview yesterday.

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victim, and if she wishes to pursue legal action, since this is a criminal offence, we, on behalf of the government, will look into it with the most seriousness and ensure that those who were involved receive exemplary punishment," Asif said in an interview yesterday.

Meanwhile, Manjurul, currently in China, responded to the allegations in a Facebook post on Friday night, saying he welcomed BCB's decision to form an inquiry committee and is willing to face any investigation.

Shamsuddin's men retreated to Harun Shopping Complex. Nasirul's supporters then allegedly set fire to at least ten motorbikes, vandalised Shamsuddin's office on the complex's ground floor, and damaged several nearby shops.

Several senior upazila officials tried to intervene but failed to stop the violence. The clashes continued until around 5:30pm, when army personnel arrived and restored order.

Both sides later blamed each other.

Shamsuddin alleged that Awami League activists joined Nasirul's men in attacking his supporters and office, injuring 15 people and damaging portraits of Khaleda Zia.

Nasirul, however, claimed he was not present and that his men were attacked first. "One of our men was injured by a

Onion prices soar by Tk 30 per kg

FROM PAGE 12
He added that recent rainfall damaged part of the onions stored by farmers, worsening the supply crunch.

Several traders at Karwan Bazar said some wholesalers have started stockpiling onions, which may further destabilise the market.

Mohammad Mazed, general secretary of the Wholesale Onion Traders Association and also an importer, said fresh local onions will reach the

market in about six weeks.

"Until then, there will be a shortage in supply," he said.

He added that onion imports from India have been suspended for a long time, putting extra pressure on the local market.

"To keep prices stable, imports must resume immediately; otherwise, prices may rise further," he warned, urging quick government action.

Monir Hossain, a resident of Ibrahimpur, said, "I bought onions for Tk 80 per kg last week, but today it's Tk 110. If there was

Hatirpool, and Karwan Bazar, local onions were found selling for Tk 110-120 per kilogramme.

Mohammad Yusuf, owner of Yusuf Sabjibitan, said, "Last week we sold onions for Tk 80-90 per kg, but now it's Tk 115-120. We don't know why prices have suddenly increased. Wholesalers couldn't give us a clear answer."

Monir Hossain, a resident of Ibrahimpur, said, "I bought onions for Tk 80 per kg last week, but today it's Tk 110. If there was

a shortage, prices should have gone up gradually, not overnight."

"I now have to spend an extra Tk 60 for just two kilograms of onions. For people with fixed incomes like me, it's a real burden," he added.

Mohammad Rony, a grocery shop owner, said he stopped selling onions for a few days after the price hike as customers protested.

"But now I'm selling them at Tk 110 per kg since everyone else is selling at the same rate," he said.

BNP strayed

FROM PAGE 12

referendum before the national election are the same people who feared the result of student union elections. After their defeat in the Ducusu [Dhaka University Central Students' Union] polls, they conspired in various ways to stop the polls at other universities," Taher alleged at the event, which was presided over by Nurul Islam Bulbul, ameer of Jamaat's South City unit.

At another programme, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said

23 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

and near Kazi Sirajul Islam Mohila College Mor. Around 4:00pm, they brought out processions and clashed near the Boalmari municipality office, pelting each other with bricks.

O ut n u m b e r e d Shamsuddin's men retreated to Harun Shopping Complex. Nasirul's supporters then allegedly set fire to at least ten motorbikes, vandalised Shamsuddin's office on the complex's ground floor, and damaged several nearby shops.

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ignoring the demand for a referendum under pressure from any political party could push the upcoming national polls into a crisis, reports BSS.

He urged the government to immediately issue an order to implement the July charter and announce a date for the referendum.

Speaking as the chief guest at an election rally in Khulna's Phultala upazila yesterday, the Jamaat leader mentioned that his party welcomes the proposal for dialogue among political parties to resolve the ongoing crisis.

machete. Bystanders later retaliated after bricks were thrown from the shopping complex," he said.

Mahmudul Hasan, OC of Boalmari Police Station, said three police personnel were injured during the clashes. "The situation is now under control," he added.

In Patuakhali, violence broke out around 9:00pm on Thursday, allegedly over who would get the nomination for the next national election -- BNP's Hasan Mamun or Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur, popularly known as "VP Nur."

Locals said supporters of both parties clashed at Dakshin Kupalbera intersection as they were returning after holding separate programmes in Kupalbera Bazar.

The injured have been admitted to Galachipa Upazila Health Complex.

Local Judo Dal leader Ilias claimed Gono Odhikar Parishad men attacked them without provocation, injuring 15 people and damaging portraits of Khaleda Zia.

Nasirul, however, claimed he was not present and that his men were attacked first. "One of our men was injured by a

Five killed

FROM PAGE 12

hospital in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province, "five people died in today's incident -- four women and one man -- and six were wounded."

There was no immediate report of victims from the Pakistani side. The two countries quickly blamed each other for initiating the fire.

"While the third round of negotiations with the Pakistani side has begun in Istanbul, unfortunately, this afternoon Pakistani forces once again opened fire on Spin Boldak," Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

"The Islamic Emirate's forces, out of respect for the negotiation team and to prevent civilian casualties, have so far shown no reaction," the official added on X.

Pakistan denied the accusation and put the blame on Afghanistan.

"We strongly reject claims circulated by the Afghan side," Pakistan's Information Ministry said on X. "Firing was initiated from the Afghan side, to which our security forces responded immediately in a measured

and responsible manner."

Hamidullah Fitrat, deputy spokesman for the Taliban authorities, said "we don't know the reason" for the Pakistani fire, telling AFP that talks in Turkey were ongoing.

"Pakistan used light and heavy weapons and targeted civilian areas," said an Afghan military source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Ali Mohammed Haqmal, head of Kandahar's information department said the firing was brief. Residents told AFP it lasted 10-15 minutes.

Pakistan confirmed that calm had been restored.

"The situation was brought under control due to responsible action by Pakistani forces and the ceasefire remains intact," the information ministry said. "Pakistan remains committed to ongoing dialogue and expects reciprocity from Afghan authorities."

Negotiations in Istanbul reached an impasse last week when it came to finalising ceasefire details, with each side accusing the other of not being willing to cooperate.

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Halt construction on Pragati Sarani

DNCC move to occupy road, footpath revives a troubling precedent

It is surprising to learn that the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has begun constructing a ward office occupying the footpath and a part of the Pragati Sarani near Baridhara point. According to a report, the DNCC initially planned to set up a garbage depot at the site but changed the plan after protests from residents. Later, it decided to turn the spot into an office for the corporation's employees at ward 18, ignoring complaints about the footpath's occupation and its impact on traffic and pedestrian movement.

While we grew accustomed to seeing such protector-turned-violator conduct by public institutions during the Awami League rule, its recurrence now shows that authoritarian tendencies still persist. The site in question is one of the busiest stretches of road in the Baridhara diplomatic zone. Building on a public right of way by cutting down trees, pouring concrete, and installing pillars—without any impact assessment on traffic or pedestrian safety—is not just a case of bad judgement; it is a violation of the very idea of public space. We must also ask, if the corporation itself starts grabbing roads and footpaths, what moral authority does it retain to act against the many encroachments that choke Dhaka every day?

While talking to this daily, an urban planner has rightly termed the DNCC move as "equivalent to committing a crime." He pointed out that DNCC could have rented a space temporarily while exploring more viable long-term options. But instead of choosing a rational path, it is opting to occupy a public road. When asked, the DNCC administrator has said that he does not support any establishment there, and that DNCC is searching for an alternative location for both the garbage depot and the office. But he has not clarified whether the current project has been shelved. Clearly, this is not just an encroachment problem; it is also a governance problem. A government agency cannot simply break the law it is mandated to enforce.

We, therefore, call upon the DNCC to immediately suspend the construction, reopen the footpath, and restore the road to public use. If there has been abuse of power by any official or contractor, it must also be investigated. The corporation must decide where the office will go through a transparent process, based on urban planning norms and community consultation. As things stand, Dhaka's road space is already among the most scarce in the world. The DNCC or any other state agency must not exacerbate the problem, and must demonstrate, through action, that the era of arbitrary abuse of public space is over.

Grave failures in migration oversight

Stop Bangladeshi migrants' forced-hiring in Ukraine war

It is deeply troubling that Bangladeshi migrant workers are being exploited abroad in one of the most dangerous ways imaginable. A recent Brac report reveals that many of our workers, who travelled legally to Russia with valid work visas, have been coerced into joining the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Promised jobs in construction, oil, or logistics, these men were stripped of their passports and forced into military service near the front lines. According to testimonies gathered from survivors and families, some workers were injured or killed, while some families lost contact with their sons, and returnees still live with traumatic memories.

Brac's findings suggest that both licensed and unlicensed recruiting agents in Bangladesh are involved in this grim trade. Under the guise of high-paying job offers, they send unsuspecting workers to Russia, only for intermediaries there to hand them over to the military. Such cases reveal not just criminal exploitation but deep flaws in Bangladesh's migration oversight. These workers were victimised despite following all legal procedures, including obtaining work visas, and signing verified contracts.

One of these men, Afzal Hossain Meraj, went to Russia in August 2023 for a welding job with a promised monthly salary of Tk 70,000, after paying Tk 6.5 lakh to a recruiting agency in Uttara. Four months later, a broker in Russia offered him what seemed like a better job, with larger bonuses, higher pay, and even the promise of citizenship. But after he agreed, his passport was seized, and he was sent to the battlefield instead of a job site. He secretly called his father and told him that he feared for his life after seeing two other Bangladeshi killed in combat. Such a situation must be stopped urgently.

While the exact number of Bangladeshi caught up in Russia's war remains unknown, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) estimates that around 2,000 people have travelled to Russia with work visas in recent years, with at least a few dozen Bangladeshi feared dead or missing. Brac suspects that several hundred may currently be stranded in active combat areas.

Clearly, the failure to monitor recruitment, verify foreign job offers, or track Bangladeshi workers abroad has turned our migration system into an exploitative one. Without stronger oversight, even "legal" migration routes can be abused by traffickers. Authorities, therefore, must treat this issue as a national emergency. Stronger collaboration between the foreign ministry, CID, and migration agencies is urgently needed to locate those missing, rescue those trapped in war zones, and hold those involved accountable. Public awareness campaigns, especially in rural areas, should warn potential migrants about fraudulent offers. Finally, Bangladesh must use all diplomatic channels to press Russia for the safe return of all coerced nationals and prevent further recruitment of our citizens into the war.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Super Typhoon Haiyan strikes the Philippines

On this day in 2013, the Philippines endured what many consider to be its worst natural disaster, when Super Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded to strike land, hit the country.

EDITORIAL

Dhaka University's clean-up paradox



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

At the heart of the capital stands the University of Dhaka, a place that often evokes the nation's consciousness and shapes its identity. From the 1952 Language Movement to the 1971 Liberation War, from the anti-autocratic movement in the 1990s to the July uprising in 2024, DU has been at the thick of things, ushering in changes that at times seemed unattainable. The revival of its student body, Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), after six years promised changes to the overall health of the university, which was diagnosed with many ills. But as soon as the DUCSU members picked up broomsticks to "set things right" at the "rotten" campus (to borrow Shakespearean lingo), the paradoxes of the city that never sleeps began to unfold.

The "clean campus" aimed at reclaiming public space, restoring order, and instilling discipline exposed an ironic and tragic fact: these young leaders are simply repeating the mistakes of the state, adding to the problem instead of solving it. While I fully support their cause and enthusiasm, I feel that their execution has blurred the fragile line between activism and authority. In a city where the municipal reflex is to "beautify" through occasional bulldozing of illegal structures and the eviction of homeless through periodic nightly actions, students have mimicked the same logic of erasure. Both student leaders and university spokespersons have publicly announced that marginalised people are a problem of the state. They have little or no sympathy for the people they deem "parasites" in our ecosystem. As stakeholders of a public university funded by taxpayers, with public roads running through its campus and vital public institutions (e.g., hospitals, metro stations, transport hubs, museums, academies, parks, and fairgrounds) within its campus, the university simply

cannot isolate itself from the people who form the invisible nervous system of campus life.

Instead of leading the "imagination," it is unfortunate that our student leaders with megaphones and sticks in their hands have joined the bulldozer brigade. And the targets of their cleansing campaign are the invisible people who keep both the city and university operational. No matter how empowered we feel to treat the tea sellers, snack vendors, cobblers, rag-pickers, and street dwellers as pollutants to be washed away, we need them. Conversely, they need us. If there is one value that we want to add to



FILE PHOTO: MAHATHIR MOHAMMED

Instead of leading with vision, it is unfortunate that our student leaders with megaphones and sticks in their hands have joined the bulldozer brigade.

our education, it is empathy for both humans and non-humans. It is easy to profile the homeless people as needle pushers or drug peddlers. However, their existence within the system serves as a symptom of broader issues that require careful treatment. Surprisingly, there is not enough reaction to the drastic "clean-up campaign" led by our students.

However, I must give them credit for identifying one important pattern that plagues the public system. Many

formal economy, comprising offices, malls, and even universities, rests on an informal foundation of service and survival. For instance, members of the upper and middle classes hire drivers, helping hands, security guards, private tutors and cleaners. Then these "hired" group use the informal sector of transport workers, food carts, street hawkers and waste pickers, allowing them to survive and grow.

However, the clean-up drive, aimed at bringing order, failed to see this

staff and student leaders patronise the informal sector as a side hustle. They run a syndicate and extort money from the informal sector. With proper planning, this can be channelled into campus revenues and on-campus student jobs. The cleaning drive with a little bit of planning, time and care could have easily garnered public support. Instead, it has been treated merely as a photo op, accompanied by follow-up social media campaigns, making it seem as if DU has transformed into a place like Singapore.

We can easily dismiss the theatrics as youthful exuberance, but the episode has unbottled our repressed unconscious. The schizophrenia of DU is in full display. We are a city that depends heavily on our informal sector and yet, pretends to be allergic to it. What employers of various sectors, who get different incentives for creating jobs, will never tell us is that an estimated 80 percent of workers operate outside any formal contract. We take care of those who take care of us without the need for any incentives. We are a terrarium in a self-supporting ecosystem where our

dynamic transaction and interaction as a necessity for our sustainable existence. Besides, any call for "order" often starts with the marginalisation of "the other." City corporations call it "beautification," varsity students call it "cleanliness." The drive has reinforced an old elitism, the colonial reflex that associates cleanliness with class and order with exclusion. The "educated" once again stand clean by pushing the "uneducated" into the shadows. The logic is simple: any unsightly entity is dispensable. The drama occurring in the gated communities of elite housing societies, or the leafy areas of the tri-state region is repeated in the DU scenic pl.

However, we expect more from our young leaders. We want them to come up with a creative and sustainable solution to the problem. How about an ideation competition? We can involve the alumni in initiating and funding a competition that aims to find clean and inclusive solutions. The challenge lies in managing vending zones and waste collection points sustainably. DU can pilot a model of co-existence between livelihood and hygiene that city corporations can replicate in the future. These are the academia-industry linkages that ranking agencies promote. We do not achieve any perceptual change when we insist on beauty through brutality. We can enhance our reputation by not reproducing the world as it is but by crafting a prototype of the world as it could be.

DUCSU can think of a "Clean Campus, Kind Campus" project that highlights DU as the country's urban conscience. In its current project, the legacy will not be the litter it removed but the humanity it overlooked. The campaign can still change its lens by making it not about eviction but inclusion. Let our students work in collaboration with the university and city authorities to map vending spaces that don't block walkways. Let business students come up with start-ups and microcredit models for campus vendors and on-campus jobs for students living under the poverty line. Let voluntary clubs monitor waste management, and research clubs with real-time data for the policy interventions. Let DU's next "clean-up" be intellectual, clearing away prejudices, not people.

What Bangladesh can learn from China's influencer regulation



Aparajita Debnath

is advocate at the Dhaka Judge Court.

APARAJITA DEBNATH

China has recently introduced a sweeping new regulation requiring social media influencers to hold formal qualifications such as a university degree, professional licence, or recognised certification—before they offer advice on sensitive topics like health, finance, education, law, or medicine. The directive, issued by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), aims to protect users from harmful or misleading guidance, such as unverified health tips, unsafe skincare practices, financial "get-rich-quick" schemes, or legal advice from unqualified individuals.

Far from being viewed as an attack on free expression, the law is justified as a safeguard for public welfare in an era when online information spreads far faster than traditional guidance. The logic is that, without minimum standards, society risks exposure to "opinion-bombs" from laypersons posing as professionals.

In countries like Bangladesh, where social media reach is vast and consumer awareness often limited, many unqualified individuals are offering advice on health, skincare, investment, legal rights, and mental wellness. This trend warrants serious scrutiny due to its potential impact on users. Common examples of influencer promotions include skin-whitening products, slimming teas or juices, and libido-enhancing oils or tablets. Without oversight or credentials, such advice can lead to harmful side effects, wasted money, and emotional distress. By distinguishing between mere opinion and expert advice, regulation

can protect the public while preserving freedom of expression.

China's approach demonstrates that it is possible to impose restrictions for the greater good rather than resorting to blanket censorship. The intent is not to suppress free speech but to ensure accountability for those perceived as authorities in specialised domains.

Recent studies reveal that misinformation from unqualified Bangladeshi content creators poses a growing public health concern. Research on health misinformation in Bangladesh notes that most health-related posts originate from individuals with no medical background, yet 60.7 percent of surveyed users reported following online health tips. One alarming case involved a local vlogger promoting the use of Savlon disinfectant spray and a fogging machine on the body as a Covid precaution—an unsafe and scientifically baseless act. Such examples illustrate how unqualified advice can cause physical harm and delay access to proper medical care.

Beauty and skincare content is another domain rife with misinformation. Influencers frequently promote cosmetic products without understanding their safety or ingredients. A recent study by the Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) found that 22 out of 26 skin-lightening creams available in Bangladesh contained mercury levels up to 24,800 times the legal limit. Marketed as "herbal" or "safe," these products are often endorsed by influencers who lack any dermatological expertise.

Studies indicate that around 50 percent of Gen Z and millennial followers trust influencers to provide reliable advice about the products or services they promote. This places a moral responsibility on influencers to share honest opinions rather than sponsored endorsements. Yet, social media feeds are filled with personalities praising products as "the best in the market" without credible proof, perpetuating what scholars call a "trust economy."

In 2023, a popular online shop owner known as Sabu was arrested following a complaint from a customer who developed a skin condition after using her "miracle soap." Sabu frequently appeared on live streams, claiming her product would lighten skin tone and asserting it had been

tested and approved by the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI)—claims that were later proven false. This case highlights how the absence of credential requirements enables influencers to masquerade as experts, sometimes with dangerous outcomes.

With millions of Bangladeshis relying on social media for health, beauty, financial, and lifestyle guidance, the stakes are high. Influencers today are not merely entertainers; they often shape decisions that affect physical health, mental well-being, and financial security. While China's model may not be flawless, its underlying rationale remains sound.

Bangladesh already has a legal framework recognising expert opinion—Section 45 of The Evidence Act, 1872, which accepts expertise only from individuals with demonstrable training, experience, or specialised knowledge in a relevant field such as law, science, or art. Courts are empowered to reject opinions from unqualified individuals because ordinary people are unlikely to make accurate judgments in such matters. Extending this principle to the digital sphere would be both logical and beneficial.

If influencers wish to provide medical advice, promote chemical skincare products, or offer guidance on legal or financial matters, they should be held to similar evidentiary standards. Social media platforms could verify credentials, label expert content, and require disclaimers from non-experts. This would not curtail free expression, as individuals could still share personal experiences or opinions. The only change would be that claims presented as expert advice must meet the same legitimacy threshold already recognised by our justice system.

In an age when misinformation can be deadly, such a move would not constitute censorship; it would represent responsible governance in the public interest.

How Bangladesh can secure global jobs for maritime graduates



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AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh is producing far more deck and engine cadets than the global shipping market can absorb, resulting in a national crisis. Cadets face long waits for training berths, skills atrophy, and a slide from officer-track careers into underemployment. Our training pipeline can produce several hundred officer-track graduates annually, but the number of shipboard training berths has lagged well behind. When a cadet cannot promptly secure the 12 plus months of sea time for a first Certificate of Competency (CoC), every passing quarter erodes competence, confidence, and employability. This mismatch between output and openings has been flagged by industry voices and analysts repeatedly, including calls to rethink maritime education and align intake with real demand as mentioned in an article, titled "Why Bangladesh must rethink its maritime education," by *The Financial Express*.

Worse, our graduates face frictions that peers from leading seafarer hubs do not. According to a report by this daily, cadets from many countries can travel on seafarer IDs to seek berths, but Bangladeshi cadets often cannot without prior work visas, shutting them out of interviews and last-minute joinder opportunities in crew-change ports. That single administrative choke-point compounds the placement gap created by an oversupplied cohort.

However, there is a proven way out. Vietnam, once in a similar bind, partnered with the Dutch Shipping and Transport College (STC) Group and the University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City to create UT-STC—a finishing school plus placement hub that aligned training to European expectations (including International Maritime

Organization compliant and DNV certified simulators and employer-designed modules). Then it actively brokered cadet berths with EU ship owners. UT STC is also a Marlins approved English test centre, underscoring language and soft-skill standards that recruiters trust.

In late 2009, I, along with two of my colleagues, had the privilege of attending a two week refresher training programme arranged by the STC Group in Vietnam. The programme was held at their joint venture institute adjacent to the University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City (UT-HCMC), the very partnership that produced the remarkable UT-STC model. Observing the institution's infrastructure, curriculum integration, and the precision with which Dutch maritime training principles have been localised was a revelation. The blend of theory, simulator work, and industry exposure reflected a deep alignment between academic preparation and real world vessel operations.

The experience provided more than academic insight; it offered a living demonstration of how structured collaboration with an international training house can transform the employability of maritime graduates. The Vietnamese cadets we met were confident, linguistically competent, and visibly aligned with international safety and operational culture. It was evident that the Dutch collaboration had not merely transferred technology, rather it had transferred a mindset. The proximity to UT-HCMC allowed continuous academic linkage, while STC's involvement ensured that the training retained credibility with European shipowners. For us, it was both inspiring and instructive working model that Bangladesh can adapt almost directly.

To do that, first, Bangladesh must create a Bangladesh Maritime University (BMU)-anchored international finishing track: a 12 week, employer-co-designed module layered on top of cadet programmes delivered with a reputable foreign partner—so the credential signals instant trust to global crewing managers. That partner could be an EU training house (in the style of STC) or a Nordic academy favoured by Norwegian owners. The goal is simple: when a CV lands on

officer demand projections by international shipping associations, such as Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and employer commitments from any finishing-track partner. This can protect cohorts from avoidable underemployment while rebuilding credibility.

Fourth, make placement a public good, not a private gamble. A national cadet placement portal under the Department of Shipping

associations: the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, German and Dutch groups, and Japanese networks. Vietnam's UT-STC did not wait for the market to come to it. It went to the market with an offer owners could trust. The lessons from my own exposure to UT-STC reaffirm that successful initiatives stem, not from waiting for opportunity, but from deliberately engineering trust through competence, transparency, and collaboration.

Sixth, protect the brand by protecting the licence. Certifying integrity is everything. Any policy that dilutes the pathways to the continuous discharge certificate (CDC)—an official document for seafarers with records of their sea service history—or, CoC or tolerates weak sea-time verification undermines every graduate's prospects. The quickest way to lose EU and white-list confidence is to appear casual about standards; the quickest way to win is to be stricter than required and invite inspection, a stance repeatedly advocated in policy commentary.

Finally, treat post cadet drift as a solvable training gap, not an individual failure. When berths are scarce, BMU and the academies should keep graduates warm with simulator refreshers, English labs, dynamic positioning familiarisation, LNG cargo basics and digital seamanship modules, so a six month wait does not become a skills cliff. In Vietnam, UT-STC's short courses were designed to convert waiting time into competitiveness—a small investment with outsized hiring returns once recruiters arrive. Having seen this first-hand, I am convinced that Bangladesh can replicate this "warm-hold" model (before skills learned at the academy get cold) at modest cost but immense strategic benefit.

This is not about lowering ambition; it is about raising certainty. A Bangladesh-EU finishing track signals quality. Mobility agreements remove pointless frictions. Demand-shaped intake protects cohorts. A national placement platform levels access. Tough love on licensing safeguards recognition. And "warm hold" training flips idle time into value. Do these together and you change the first employer's calculus from risk-averse to opportunity-seeking. Give our cadets the last mile they've earned; the ships, and the world, will do the rest.



VISUAL: MONOROM POLOK

a superintendent's desk in Hamburg or Oslo, the badge says "job ready." This is precisely the direction urged by reformers arguing for quality over unchecked expansion.

Second, fix the visa choke-point. Pursue targeted seafarer mobility arrangements with crew change hubs, such as the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Hong Kong, so that Bangladeshi cadets holding seafarers identity documents (SDIDs) can enter, interview and join vessels without pre-secured employment visas, as competitors do.

Third, tie intake to real demand. Leading suppliers like the Philippines shape maritime school admissions against forecast vacancies. Bangladesh should do the same for the next five intakes. We can use

and BMU can standardise profiles, publish transparent queues, and let vetted employers pull candidates directly; pairing it with strict ethical-recruitment oversight of manning agents so families are not extorted for berths. India's ability to move large graduate cohorts into foreign fleets each year is not accidental; it is coordination as mentioned in an article "Why Bangladesh needs a national maritime roadmap," published by *The Daily Star*.

Fifth, sell Bangladesh's edge. Our flagship academy and new public campuses have infrastructure that, if curated properly, can impress owners. Package simulator time, English-for-mariners benchmarks and safety culture into a co-branded assurance with the foreign partner and take it to owners'

silence 192 others. Each vetoing state should be forced to engage in a public, Socratic-style Q&A, so that its contradictions face the threat of exposé and reasoning becomes part of the record, whereby transparency transforms impunity into exposure.

Permanent members should also adopt the regulation proposed by France and Mexico, pledging not to use the veto in cases involving genocide or mass atrocities. These reforms require no charter amendment, only political will. The UN can add real consequences. For example, states that block humanitarian action losing leadership of peacekeeping committees or major UN posts for a period. Power values prestige more than legality, and when prestige is at risk, restraint follows.

For small and middle states, these reforms are not abstract ideals but survival mechanisms. The UN is the only forum where a small country in Asia or Africa can speak with the same legal dignity as a superpower. Expanding the council to include more regional giants would only amplify inequality. True multilateralism means accountability, not aristocracy.

Like every decades-old organisation, the UN, too, needs reform; but not the kind that inflates privilege in the name of progress. It needs conventions that discipline the veto, not expansions that distribute it. Shaming the council into acting responsibly, and strengthening the UN General Assembly's voice, would achieve more than adding new permanent seats ever could.

The task today is not to add more seats but to make those already seated answer for their choices. Power cannot be shared fairly until it learns to limit itself. Reforming the UN means teaching power, at last, the habit of restraint.

Expanding the UN Security Council won't make it fairer



Sanjaya Kalika
is a Nepalese international lawyer and a Herring Scholar at the University of Oxford.

SANJAYA KALIKA

As the United Nations turned 80 last month, the familiar refrain of "reform or perish" echoed once again through diplomatic circles. From Tokyo to Brasilia, governments are renewing calls to expand the UN Security Council by adding new members to make it "representative of today's realities" and to break the monopoly of the five powers that have ruled since 1945. While the demand sounds fair, expanding the council would not democratise the UN—it would simply multiply vetoes, deepen paralysis, and transform an exclusive club into a larger but equally unaccountable one.

The argument for expansion rests on moral intuition: why should China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—five victors of an eight-decade old war—still define global security? New Delhi, now leading the BRICS bloc and lobbying harder than ever for a permanent seat, says global governance must reflect contemporary power shifts. Tokyo, Berlin, and Brasilia echo that call. Yet, their campaigns sound less like reform and more like recognition drives—narratives of deservingness wrapped in moral vocabulary. That is a bit like Donald Trump's insistence on getting the Nobel Peace Prize.

The veto remains the UN's original sin and a defining compromise. Without it, the great powers would never have joined the organisation; but with it, they can paralyse the UN whenever interests collide. The council already struggles to respond to Gaza, Myanmar, and Ukraine, where vetoes by the United States, China, and Russia have immobilised action. Imagine doubling that number.

China, and Russia have immobilised action. Imagine doubling that number.

Advocates call expansion "democratisation," but an oligarchic enlargement would hardly fit any definition of democracy. Expanding the permanent membership would merely formalise each region's unofficial—and self-declared—hegemons, allowing them to claim

to speak for their neighbours. In South Asia, India's bid alarms its neighbours. In Africa, Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt compete for primacy. In Latin America, Brazil's ambitions unsettle Argentina and Mexico. And when Germany argues that it deserves a permanent seat, Italy retorts that it, too, lost the war. Regardless of these rivalries, an expanded elite, with or without vetoes, would move slower, decide less, and legitimise the hierarchies it was meant to resist.

The world is not unrepresented at the UN Security Council. Ten non-permanent seats, distributed among five regional groups and rotated biennially, already give every region a say. Even small (or supposedly far-flung) states such as Nepal, Benin, and Jamaica have served multiple terms on the council with exactly as many votes as France or China. What silences

equality and cooperation, offers a warning. India's ongoing boycott since 2016 has paralysed SAARC by treating it as an extension of bilateral diplomacy, or, worse, domestic politics. The UN could meet a similar fate if dominated by regional giants—reformed on paper but stagnant in practice.

The UN's crisis, however, is not numerical but ethical. Too many states defy its principles with impunity. For example, Russia not only cited self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter while invading Ukraine, it also filed the "notification" within 24 hours of the start of hostilities, as required by Article 51. India, a would-be permanent member, on the other hand, did not even fulfil such a requirement when carrying out strikes against Pakistan in May. The problem, therefore, is not that too few sit on the council but that too many disregard what it stands for. Adding seats will not change that behaviour; it will reward it.

Still, abolishing the veto is as unrealistic as expanding it is unwise. The answer lies in taming it—making it politically unusable except, perhaps, in extraordinary cases. Britain's monarchy offers a useful analogy, where the Crown's powers have been rendered inert by centuries-long conventions. The British Crown today acts only on ministerial or parliamentary advice; authority persists in law but not in exercise. The veto can evolve the same way. The UN Charter need not be rewritten, and Pandora's box need not be opened, as long as political practice can turn power into restraint.

Every veto should be visible, explainable, and costly. A single veto ought to trigger an emergency session of the General Assembly under the Uniting for Peace resolution, ensuring that one member's decision cannot

them is not absence but hierarchy, where, although the elected ten can vote, one veto from the unelected five can erase everyone else. Expansion would only enlarge that hierarchy, not dismantle it.

South Asia's own regional body, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), established on the UN's ideals of

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 24 Class cutter
- 26 Track trip
- 29 Discuss
- 30 Convoy truck
- 31 Fitting
- 32 Tom Cruise movie
- 33 Ready for war
- 40 Pull along
- 41 Woodwind part
- DOWN**
- 1 Fancy party
- 5 Years gone by
- 9 Speed trap device
- 10 Farm towers
- 12 Brighten
- 13 Skilled
- 14 Formal headwear
- 16 Greek vowel
- 17 Mechanical learning
- 18 Twist of fiction
- 21 NFL tiebreakers
- 22 Aloud
- 23 35-Down variety

2 Makes suitable

3 Turning tool

4 Region

5 Free TV spot: Abbr.

6 Lend a hand

7 Shirt part

8 Critic's annual list

9 Stylishly quaint

11 Asterisk

15 Bun worn on the head

19 Pillage

20 Mamie's husband

22 Pants part

23 Groan inducer

24 High quality

25 John of "Three's Company"

26 Pea or peanut

27 Tickled

28 Longed

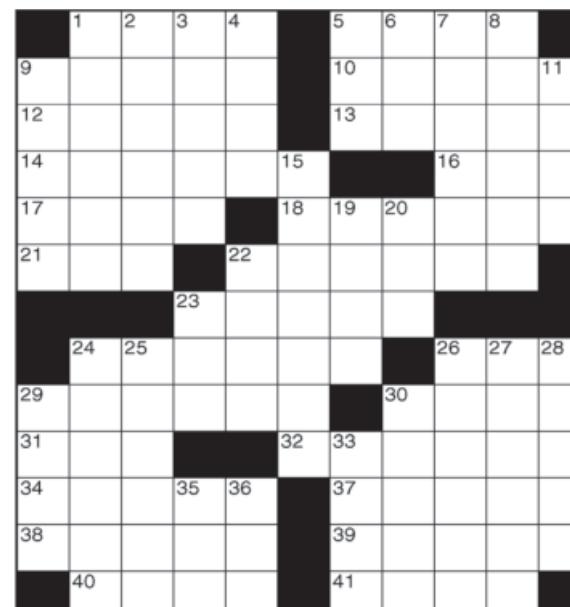
29 Yaks it up

30 Future fungus

33 Poet Khayyám

35 Brewed beverage

36 Work unit



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



Changing the industry, ONE HIT AT A TIME

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Fresh off the announcement of *Andhar*, touted to be the film which will have the highest post-production budget in Bangladeshi history, the ever ambitious Raihan Rafi dropped by The Daily Star for a fresh shoot and a cup of coffee. He seems to have some more surprises up his sleeve.

How did you manage to keep the cast of 'Andhar' a secret for so long?

Well, we have non-disclosure agreements in place – and we are very strict about them. We almost had an incident on the set of *Taandob*, where a crew member was found to be leaking snippets on Tiktok. We handed over the crew member to the police and found many more 'incriminating' footage, unrelated to the film, on his phone. However, it went smoothly with

After filming *Surongo*, I felt extremely exhausted and uncomfortable due to my weight. It was affecting my work. I made a promise to myself to look after my own body, and I started eating healthier and working out.

Andhar, since the entire cast was adamant on keeping it under wraps.

You mentioned having a huge post-production budget for this film.

Indeed – it will be higher than it was ever before – that too after being filmed in Bangladesh with no additional costs abroad. We built roads, lakes, and built a camp to shoot this film. Chanchal Chowdhury, Siam Ahmed, Nazifa, Tushi, Rehan, Mostafa Monwar, Afsana Mimi, and Gazi Rakayet – they gave their all, and now, it's time for the magic of post-production – which will take about a year.

What about 'Lion'?
Audiences were eager to see the rapport between Sariful Razz and Jeet. When will that be released?

I have quite a few films on the pipeline, so I won't speak for a particular one. We will release a film on two of the following Eids. I have signed with Alpha-i and SVF for further productions.

There was a huge cliffhanger at the end of 'Taandob'. When will you announce the sequel?

I haven't shared it with anyone, but we will announce a sequel this month. Whether it is *Surongo 2* or *Taandob 2*, you'll have to wait and find out!

Will 'Surongo 2' feature Shakib Khan?

(Laughs) It just might.

You've lost a lot of weight. When did you start becoming health-conscious?

After filming *Surongo*, I felt extremely exhausted and uncomfortable due to my weight. It was affecting my work. I made a promise to myself to look after my own body, and I started eating healthier and working out. I quit smoking as well. I have managed to lose 16 kilos, which is quite the feat for me. I would like to reiterate that our bodies come before anything – and I urge everyone to take care of their own health.

How do you come up with the concepts for your films?

It takes at least a year for me to bring one of my stories from the concept board to shooting it. I write the stories beforehand, and later pick what I want to work on after I've given myself time to think about it. I live, breathe, and eat cinema – I have already planned what I will make in 2027.

Drop a message for the audience.

What else can I say but 'thank you'? You are literally the reason that I've been able to do what I love, from *Poromon 2* to *Taandob*. I want to add that my next target is not to adhere to the standards of our film industry, but to meet international standards, as I believe that this is where we should all aim in order to take our films to the world.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSVED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



'Monkey Trial'

Nov 10 | 7:15 pm onwards
Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA



Ali Azmat & James - Legends Live in Dhaka

Nov 14 | 5 pm-11 pm
United Convention Centre, Purbachal



'Sound of Soul'

Nov 28 | 3 pm-11 pm
Swadeshi Arena, 300-feet Expressway



TV TALKIES

THE WITCHER: Season 4

Netflix's *The Witcher* is back with its highly anticipated fourth season, the second-to-last chapter of the hit fantasy series based on Andrzej Sapkowski's novels. The season continues after the dramatic events of Season 3, with Geralt, Yennefer, and Ciri separated across a war-torn Continent. The season, adapted mainly from *Baptism of Fire*, explores how unlikely alliances form among outcasts and warriors as political tensions, magical conspiracies, and monstrous threats escalate. *The Witcher: Season 4* has consistently held the No 1 position on Netflix in Bangladesh last week, reflecting its widespread popularity. It ends on a dramatic cliffhanger, setting the stage for the final Season 5. All episodes are streaming exclusively on Netflix.

WHAT'S PLAYING

'Hate Me' by ELLIE GOULDING & JUICE WRLD



Few collaborations have captured heartbreak with such cinematic clarity as *Hate Me*. Ellie Goulding's crystalline vocals slice through the haze of Juice WRLD's verses; half-plea, half-defense – in a track that pairs pop polish with emotional rawness.

The music video amplifies that

tension. Goulding drifts through shifting projections of herself, trapped in a digital loop of obsession and memory. Juice WRLD, seated under stark lighting, exhales clouds of smoke between lines; each breath heavy with weariness, each lyric delivered like a confession he's tired of repeating. The camera – unfiltered

and unhurried, as though the song itself is trying to catch up to his thoughts.

Released in June 2019, *Hate Me* still resonates across streaming platforms, its mood undimmed by time.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix

Death by Lightning



Hulu

All's Fair



Apple TV+
Pluribus



Chorki
Tomar Jonno Mon



Hoichoi
Anusandhan



STYLE STATEMENT

SYDNEY SWEENEY

The gorgeous Sydney Sweeney always brings her A-game when it comes to fashion, and this look is no exception. Recently, the actress stunned in a chic, shimmery silver dress that radiated pure star power. The metallic ensemble, adorned with shimmering star motifs, perfectly captures the essence of her celestial allure. Every detail from the dazzling heels to the star-shaped jewels – exudes confidence, charisma, and a touch of ethereal magic.





A man rides his bicycle nearly 20-25 kilometres from the Arani area of Charghat upazila to Rajshahi city, carrying mats made from date palm leaves. These mats are in high demand in the city and sell for Tk 200-220 each. The photo was taken from Kendriya Udyan in Rajshahi recently.

'Can't contest polls without Tk 10-20 crore'
Says Asif Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyan yesterday said in Bangladesh's current political reality, contesting election requires around Tk 10-20 crore, making it difficult for people like him to participate amid the influence of black money.

"We have to think repeatedly whether to contest or not," he said while speaking at a roundtable organised by the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement at Jatiya Press Club.

Asif, also youth and sports adviser, said, "We have seen that those who talked most about reforms somehow shifted to anti-reform politics after August 5. We really don't understand what benefits this anti-reform politics brings for them. It certainly harms our country, but how does it benefit them? I fail to understand that."

He went on to say, "When it comes to democratic transformation, we seem to be going in circles. We talk about democratic change -- 300 members will go to the parliament. Among these 300, the question is, how many have Tk 20 crore?"

"In this reality, only those who have access to that 'black money' have the opportunity to participate in elections, or if someone gives it to others. Then you take money from someone to contest, and after being elected, you have to fulfil their interests," he said.

"We have repeatedly requested the health ministry to approve more posts and expand our facilities, but we have yet to see any meaningful response," he said.

He said a proposal has been sent to the ministry seeking approval for new buildings and more than 100 machines.

"Due to space shortages, we are unable to accommodate all patients," Dr Munim said. "We are prioritising completion of the new cancer building so that several overcrowded units can be shifted there."

The adviser questioned.



Locals suffer as road remains dug up for 11 months

JAYDUL ISLAM, Netrakona

Residents of several villages in Durgapur upazila of Netrakona are suffering immensely as the five-kilometre road from Munshipara via Bhaduwa to Krishnapur in Gaokandia union has remained dug up for nearly 11 months.

The roadwork, which began almost a year ago, was halted soon after initial excavation, leaving it completely unusable and in a deplorable state.

The prolonged delay in completing the road construction has left around 30,000 people from at least eight villages facing significant hassle with their daily commute, locals said.

According to the Local Government Engineering Department in Netrakona, a Tk 8 crore project was undertaken to pave the 5 km rural road. The contract was awarded in September last year to Messrs Hemayet Ali, with the deadline set for April 2026.



"The road has been abandoned soon after work began. We had thought the road would be constructed anew to make our commutes convenient. However, the situation has only worsened further," said Mustafa, a local resident.

"We can't take our paddy to the main market because of this road's present condition. We are being compelled to sell our produce locally at a lower price," said Rahim Uddin, a local farmer.

Md Azad Rahman, a representative of the construction firm, said, "Since the beginning of the project, we have been facing a severe shortage of sand. As all government-approved sand quarries are closed, it has been impossible to procure sand. Even after trying to purchase private land for sand extraction, we faced local obstacles. Without a supply of sand, it's not possible to continue the work."

Contacted, Md Muniruzzaman, upazila engineer of LGED in Durgapur, said, "The contractor initially began box-cutting work, but due to complications regarding sand procurement, the work was halted."

"We have sent multiple notices urging the contractor to resume construction work. A meeting was held on October 27 in this regard. We hope the work will be completed by next year," he added.

Mistakes were certainly

FROM PAGE 3
national election. "Let me be clear: I have not called for a boycott. The point I was making was that millions of Awami League voters will not vote at all if they are denied the chance to support their preferred choice," Hasina said.

"Whatever happens our campaign will be peaceful. The last thing Bangladeshis need is yet more violent upheaval."

Speaking to the Hindustan Times, the Awami League president -- whose party's activities remain banned in Bangladesh -- expressed gratitude to India for offering refuge.

"I am deeply grateful to the Indian people for providing me with a safe haven," she said. "The connections between our two countries are broad and deep. We pride ourselves on being India's reliable partner."

Addressing the ban on her party's activities, Hasina said, "As a party, we will continue to challenge this ban legally, diplomatically and peacefully to ensure that ordinary people retain their right to choose their representatives."

Regarding her role in the 2024 crackdown on protesters, during which the UN estimates say 1,400 people were killed, she said, "...Mistakes were certainly made by some members of the law enforcement in their handling of the violence."

"But to suggest that I was directing minute-by-minute tactical responses from the Prime Minister's Office is to fundamentally misunderstand how security forces work. I repeat, at no point did I authorise security forces to fire on crowds," Hasina said.

However, The Daily Star's own investigations found that Hasina had personally authorised the use of lethal weapons. This newspaper had reported on a phone recording from July 18, 2024 where Hasina tells her nephew, former Dhaka South Mayor Fazle Noor Taposh, "I have given instructions, now I have given direct instructions; now they will use lethal weapons. Wherever they find them [protesters], they will shoot directly."

The ousted prime minister told The New Indian Express that Awami League "ardently wishes to participate" in the next national election.

"We have to break this cycle of parties either boycotting elections or being banned, because it undermines the legitimacy of the government," she added. "Bangladesh badly needs to hold a free, fair and inclusive election, so that the country can begin to heal and move towards reconciliation."

It should be pointed out that Hasina has been accused of disenfranchising millions of voters through holding elections without the participation of opposition parties. Ironically, her regime had summarily banned the Jamaat-e-Islami just days before her ouster in 2024.

Previously, Reuters, AFP, and the UK-based Independent had published written interviews with Hasina on October 29, marking the first time she spoke to international media since taking refuge in India.

Train operations halted at 3 Narsingdi stations for 3yrs

JAHIDUL ISLAM, Narsingdi

Train operations have remained suspended at three railway stations in Narsingdi -- Amliganj, Srinidhi, and Ghorashal -- for the past three years due to an acute shortage of manpower, with posts for station masters and officials lying vacant. This has caused significant hardship to thousands of local people who depend on trains for their commute.



During a recent visit to Amliganj Railway Station, this correspondent found the platform dusty and deserted, with an eerie silence prevailing. A large padlock hung on the station master's office door, with a sign on the window reading 'Station Closed'.

Much of the equipment was in disrepair, while makeshift shops had started to emerge within the premises.

A similar scene was witnessed at

Srinidhi and Ghorashal stations. In particular, the closure of the Ghorashal station -- a regional hub of industrial activity -- has negatively impacted local businesses and transportation.

According to locals, trains no longer stop properly at these stations. Instead, they halt briefly on the main line for passengers to get on and off, which poses serious safety risks.

Locals also noted that with the station masters' posts lying vacant,

longer stop here, we have to travel to distant stations, wasting both time and money. The station is now filled with garbage and illegal shops due to prolonged closure. We urge the authorities to immediately appoint staff and reopen the station."

Mohammad Ali, 62, from Srinidhi, said, "I used to travel easily from here, but now that's no longer possible. Walking to a distant station is very difficult at my age. Sometimes I



the stations have faced operational collapse, leading to theft and vandalism. On July 31 and August 1, 2022, electric motors were stolen from three signal lines at Amliganj station. Earlier, motors from both ends of the station had also been stolen. As a result, none of the signal lights are now functional.

Rafiqul Islam, 42, a resident of Amliganj, said, "Now that trains no

skip important trips due to the inconvenience."

Contacted, Md Abdul Mannan, station master of Narsingdi Railway Station, said, "Amliganj, Srinidhi, and Ghorashal stations are closed due to existing manpower shortages. The matter has been reported to higher authorities. We hope the stations will be reopened soon once station masters and necessary staff are appointed."

Youth gunned down in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

A youth was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Rahimnagar village under Naihati Union of Rupsa Upazila in Khulna on Thursday night, police said.

The deceased was identified as Sohel Hawlader, son of Rustum Hawlader of the village. He had been living abroad for a long time and returned to the country a few days back.

The incident occurred around 9:00pm on Thursday in the sand field of Manik Sardar in the village.

A Sabur Khan, OC (Investigation) of Rupsa Police Station, said that Sohel had left his house to buy bread and curd when he was attacked. He was hit by eight bullets fired by the assailants in different parts of his body.

Police said an operation is underway to determine the motive behind the murder and to apprehend those involved.

15 shops gutted in Ramgati upazila fire

UNB, Lakshmpur

At least 15 shops were gutted in a fire that broke out early yesterday at Alexander Bazar in Ramgati upazila of Lakshmpur.

The fire started around 3:00am, said Khokon Majumdar, station officer of Ramgati Fire Service.

According to locals, the blaze originated from an electrical short circuit at a grocery shop and quickly spread to adjacent shops.

On information, two units of the fire service rushed to the spot and, with the help of locals, managed to bring the fire under control after about two hours of frantic effort.

Shop owners estimated that the loss caused by the fire amounted to around Tk 50 lakh.

REFLECTIONS

THE RISK OF BECOMING:

Notes on translation and transformation



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

NASEEF FARUQUE AMIN

Translation is risk, and poetry is the highest form of risk. To translate a poem is to follow it into the flame, risking that what survives the burning is no longer what first arrived. Accepting this, I have undertaken the translation of Late Prabuddha Sundar Kar's Bangla poem "Jhuki" into English. The poem, originally published as the first poem in the poet's *Mayatant* (2001) collection, appears below.

Jhuki

Etodin jake dekhā gelo, se amār dāmi
Etodin amār hoye se águner bhetor
jhapiye porechhe
Ek śūnyatā theke vōl̄ kheyē chītē
porechhe arék śūnyatā

Ghumer bhetor samudra swapna ar
boba dhwani bhar niye madhyarate se
jege uthechhe

Je patar arale kuyaśār cheye aspaṣṭa
meyerā padma photay

Sei patar opor assthira jalabindu
hoye amake se etodin arale rekhechhe

Aj theke dāmi shoriye sampurṇa
jhuki nite chāi

This poem resides in the threshold between two selves: the self that has lived as a protective shell and the self that emerges once that shell is rejected. Translation of such a poem is never a simple linguistic operation. It is a negotiation with identity, illusion, and silence. A poem like this does not ask to be carried across languages. It asks to be awakened through a second life. It requires listening not only to language but to the psychic architecture hidden beneath language. At its core, "Jhuki" is a poem about the perilous act of becoming. The speaker sheds a constructed self, the dummy, that has long absorbed pain and illusion on their behalf. This shedding is violent yet necessary, a psychic rebirth where the self risks exposure to authenticity.

In this poem, identity is not a stable self. It is a layered shell. The dummy is a defensive persona that has stood in for the speaker. It has been seen instead of the true self.

What becomes clear in this work is that pronouns are not neutral. The Bangla phrase "jake dekhā gelo" (The one who has been seen) keeps the speaker displaced from the one observed. A crucial psychological distance resides there. Not "I saw" but "The one who has been seen." Psychoanalytically, the self is viewed from outside, as if the narrator

is encountering the ghost of an ego constructed for survival. This dummy is not a puppet. It is a provisional self that has substituted true experience. The translator needed to preserve this psychic distance. Keeping the English line impersonal protects the poem's dissociated gaze.

Walter Benjamin wrote that the translator must reveal the relationship between languages that is hidden inside the original text. According to him, translation is not a copy. It is a continuation of the poem's "afterlife." In "Jhuki," that afterlife is already embedded in the poem. The speaker stands on the edge of a transformation that has already begun. The poem itself is in a state of metamorphosis. So the translation must become part of that change rather than simply describing it. Its tense is not retrospective but continuously happening. So the translation remains in the present perfect—the tense of ongoing transformation rather than closure.

The imagery of leaping into fire provided another challenge. The instinct of an insect rushing to flame is not heroic. It is a compulsion of desire and destruction. Freud named this compulsion the death drive (Todestrieb). A desire for release through self ruin. The dummy absorbs the death drive. The real self is preserved by letting the false self burn. Bangla diction evokes this helplessness. Therefore, English needed to resist the temptation of romanticising the leap. "It has rushed into fire" restores the instinctive self-harm that the original contains. The dummy is driven by its own self-annihilation, perhaps because that is the only way to keep the true self untouched.

The act of "vōl̄ kheyē chītē porechhe arék śūnyatā" (vaulting outward) suggested abrupt propulsion. The psyche does not glide from one emotional void to another. It is hurled. This creates a kinetic structure in the poem, a movement through emptiness that gave the translation its spine: vaulting outward from one emptiness and flung into another. A rhythmic echo of the poem's vertigo.

The lines "Ghumer bhetor samudra swapna ar boba dhwani bhar niye" (carrying ocean dreams in sleep and the weight of voiceless sound) and "madhyarate se jege uthechhe" (It has awakened in the middle of the

night) form the poem's deepest point of psychic tension. Within "ghumer bhetor" (within sleep), the self is submerged in the interior landscape of the unconscious, drifting through "samudra swapna" (ocean dreams) that recall Freud's notion of the "oceanic feeling," that primordial sense of dissolution before the birth of selfhood. Yet those dreams are burdened with "boba dhwani bhar" (the weight of voiceless sound), an image of language

In translation, this demanded a rhythm that mirrors the slow breaking of a wave: Carrying ocean-dreams in sleep / and the weight of voiceless sound, / It has awakened / in the middle of the night. The cadence holds the pulse of emergence, as if consciousness itself is surfacing from darkness, trembling with the knowledge that every awakening carries the risk of unmaking what was safe.

Then comes the mist. And girls

Finally, the poem arrives at its violence. "dāmi shoriye" (sloughing the dummy) is not simply removing. It is shedding of skin. A snake does not discard its skin gently. Shedding is a rupture. The old surface of the self peels away and drops to the floor. Only through pain can the true surface breathe. Therefore, I chose "sloughing the dummy" because the word carries the biology of transformation. The phantasm self is torn away in order for the authentic self to risk exposure.

The poem's tense demanded the present perfect because the injury and awakening have not been completed. According to Benjamin, translation is the echo of the original in a new constellation. In this constellation, the poem's afterlife becomes the moment of choosing danger over disguise. Translation, therefore, becomes a ritual of shedding. Each line is the slow removal of a false skin. The poem is not about the dummy—it is about what remains after the dummy falls.

The poem's imagery of leaping into fire, awakening from oceanic sleep, and tearing off an old skin all point to one truth: transformation demands danger. In that sense, the poem mirrors the act of translating poetry itself. Every translation must slough off the comfort of the original form and risk its own dissolution in another language. The translator, like the speaker, must enter the flame knowing that what survives will not be identical to what began. Translation becomes its own "Jhuki", a shedding of linguistic skin, an awakening through loss, and a conscious acceptance that the reborn poem will carry both the scars and the freedom of its metamorphosis.

Now, let us see what "Jhuki" has become through the quiet metamorphosis of my translation into English.

The Risk

The one seen so far has been my dummy.

It has rushed into the fire so far on my behalf.

Vaulting outward from one emptiness, it has been flung into another.

ঁুকি

এতদিন যাকে দেখা গেল, সে আমার ডামি

এতদিন আমার হয়ে সে আগুনের ভেতর ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়েছে

এক শূন্যতা থেকে ভল্ট থেয়ে ছিটকে পড়েছে আরেক শূন্যতায়

ঘুমের ভেতর সমুদ্রস্থ আর বোবাধনির ভার নিয়ে মধ্যরাতে সে জেগে উঠেছে

যে পাতার আড়ালে কুয়াশার চেয়ে অস্পষ্ট মেয়েরা পদ্ম ফোটায়

সেই পাতার ওপর অস্থির জলবিন্দু হয়ে আমাকে সে এতদিন আড়ালে রেখেছে

আজ থেকে ডামি সরিয়ে সম্পূর্ণ ঝুকি নিতে চাই।

trapped inside emotion, where sound exists without articulation. This is the gravity of repression, a language that has not yet found its mouth. When the poem reaches "madhyarate se jege uthechhe", that awakening is not gentle but seismic. The dummy rises involuntarily, compelled by the pressure of what it has carried through sleep. Psycholinguistically, this is the moment of passage from affect into speech, from latency into consciousness. The night becomes the porous threshold where silence begins to turn into utterance.

summoning lotuses into bloom. Here, the language enters a dream-topography. Psycholinguistically, the unconscious voice emerges in metaphors that bypass the rational. The dummy becomes a droplet of water, hiding the true self. The translator must learn to listen to the silence inside metaphors. Behind the leaf is not a place. It is a sanctuary of concealment. A secret interior scene. Translation has to protect that intimacy of concealment, because the poem's revelation emerges only from hiding.

Carrying ocean dreams in sleep and the weight of voiceless sound,
It has awakened in the middle of the night.

Behind the leaf where mist-blurred girls summon blooming lotuses,
It has kept me hidden so far as a restless waterdrop upon that leaf.

From today, sloughing the dummy, I want to take the full risk.

Naseef Faruque Amin is a writer, screenwriter, and creative professional.

POETRY

Somewhere but not here



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Tea breaks,
the perks of a bike ride.
A tea stall on the highway
is like the navel of a belly dancer.
The one at Chhaygharia Mor is
famous for its lemon tea,
a steam of lemon leaf and clove
that builds a dam against the
road's long thoughts.
Stopping there, I saw a signboard
pointing toward

Indira Model Govt. Primary School.
What's Indira doing in Satkhira? I
wondered.

I feel a strange urge to visit the
narrow lanes
whenever I come to a crossroad—
these narrow lanes call me to
wander.
Sometimes I go even,
just to discover—it leads me to the
same village
where jealousy fuels the everyday.

For me—it's like an attractive
distant woman
a thousand efforts to draw near,
only to find out—
it's all the same.
And in that moment, a ghost of a
song:
arriving somewhere but not here.

Md Mehedi Hasan teaches English at North Western University, Khulna.

KOREAN OLYMPIANS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Nam Su-hyeon is in full focus as she trains at the Outer Stadium in Paltan on Friday alongside her South Korean teammates. Nam won a team gold and an individual silver medal in women's archery events in Paris Olympics in 2024. She will be looking to spearhead the 16-member Korean team, regarded as the best in the sport and featuring a number of Olympic medallists, as the 24th Asian Archery Championships kick off at the National Stadium in Dhaka today. A total of 209 archers from 30 countries will take part in 10 medal events across recurve and compound categories in this apex continental competition.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'There may be 30 Jahanaras who haven't spoken up'

SPORTS REPORTER

Allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct recently made by former Bangladesh women's team captain Jahanara Alam against team management and support staff has sparked a countrywide uproar. The issue has once again put the spotlight on women's safety in sports -- something often overlooked in this country in spite similar allegations surfacing across disciplines in the past. Former champion shuttler and ex-general secretary of the Women's Sports Association Quamrun Nahar Dana, who is also a vocal advocate for female athlete rights, spoke with **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman** on the issue. Excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star: How do you view the allegations made by Jahanara Alam as a former athlete and current organizer?

Quamrun Nahar Dana: It is very painful. I can't find the words to condemn it. I am sure the accused will deny the allegations thinking that girls are weaker, but we are not.

DS: Similar allegations have come out earlier in other disciplines too, why is this happening time and again?

QND: I think it is happening because of poor management of the respective federations. The top officials of those federations likely have the same mindset as the culprits. If not, then why don't they properly investigate the incidents and give punitive punishment? Their indifference to such allegations encourages the culprits to repeat their action, as there is no fear of being punished.

DS: How difficult is it for a player to perform under such circumstances?

QND: For a player, it's really tough to perform

after receiving such a disgusting proposal. Will she perform or protect herself? It also puts a female player under mental pressure because as she can't reveal it, fearing it would turn into a scandal. Jahanara dared to reveal it but not everyone can. In cricket, you may find 30 Jahanaras who haven't spoken up.

DS: Do you think such incidents discourage girls from taking up sports?

QND: Of course, the guardians will be hesitant before letting their daughters enter sports. Do you see any renowned organiser sending their sons or daughters into sports, no. Because they know that this path has no future, no environment and no security. We should be thankful to the families who allow their children, especially girls, to enter sports. If we can't honour and protect these girls, then we will stop getting female athletes in the future.

DS: Some are trying to discredit Jahanara's allegations, questioning why she did it after getting excluded from the side. Is there any justification for such an argument?

QND: She might have not revealed it then out of fear of getting dropped from the national team. But she was clearly mentally disturbed which led to poor performances. I feel that female athletes try to solve a matter like this by herself at first, before disclosing it. I think when an allegation like this arises, there is always some basis to it.



DS: Do you think male-dominated coaching staff and team management is a major cause for such incidents?

QND: It is one of the major reasons. If there were women in both the coaching panel and team management, there will be no scope for such things. I also want to know why federations don't appoint former female players in different roles with the team and don't send female officials with the team during overseas tours?

DS: How can women's sports in the country get rid of this menace?

QND: In line with Olympic charter, every national federation should have 30 percent women representation. But we are not following it. We should strictly follow it to ensure maximum female organisers in national sports bodies. Female coaches and officials have to be included to run the women's wings. The federations also should groom former female athletes as coaches, umpires and officials to ensure all-women staff in women's teams.

We had once convinced former sports minister Biren Sikder to send a circular from the ministry saying only female managers and officials are allowed to travel with the women's team. But it became ineffective after his tenure ended. Now we have to fight for it again.

However, the most important thing is to take firm action as soon as such allegations emerge and hand those people a life-time ban from sports.

Women's NCL T20 starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Women's National Cricket League T20 gets underway today with four opening round fixtures scheduled at the BKSP.

The tournament, which runs until November 17, is expected to serve as crucial preparation for the Bangladesh women's national team ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifiers in Nepal next January. Each team will play the others once -- seven in total after which the league leaders will be adjudged the winners.

However, concerns have emerged among players regarding the tight scheduling and organisation of the event. Speaking to **The Daily Star**, one of the participating cricketers expressed frustration over what they described as an unnecessarily compressed fixture list.

"If you're going to squeeze so many games into nine days, there is no point in arranging tournaments in such a rushed manner," the player said. "Even the DPL was organised like that, and it couldn't provide proper playing conditions or adequate preparation for us."

Cafu to come to Dhaka on Dec 11

SPORTS REPORTER

Brazilian football legend Cafu is set to visit Bangladesh in December as part of promotions for a football tournament.

The visit is tied to the AFB Latin-Bangla Super Cup 2025, a friendly international football tournament jointly organised by AF Boxing Promotion International Limited and partners from Latin America and Bangladesh. The tournament will be held at the National Stadium in Dhaka from December 5 to 11.

Cafu, a two-time World Cup-winning captain with the Selecao, remains the only player in football history to have featured in three consecutive FIFA World Cup finals. He is expected to be joined by another iconic star from Argentina, with organizers currently in discussions with Gabriel Batistuta, Juan Sebastian Veron, and Claudio Caniggia.

According to event insiders, negotiations with Caniggia are at an advanced stage, and an official announcement is likely within the next few days.

Cafu, meanwhile, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on December 11 at 8:00 am, confirmed M.D. Asaduzzaman, Managing Director of AF Boxing Promotion International Limited.

The organisers have already released a video message from Cafu, where the Brazilian icon said, "Hello Bangladesh, I am Cafu. I hope to see you in Dhaka next month."

He also confirmed the names under consideration: Veron, Batistuta, and Caniggia, adding that at least one of them will definitely come.

SHORT CORNER

Emon six-for in vain as Afghanistan U-19s go 2-1 up

Afghanistan under-19s went up 2-1 in the five-match series against their Bangladesh counterparts with a match left to go, following a 47-run win at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium on Friday. After batting first, the visitors posted 218 all out before restricting the hosts to 211 in 50 overs. The series-deciding fifth and final one-dayer will be played on November 9.

Bellingham and Foden back for World Cup qualifiers

England head coach Thomas Tuchel recalled Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham and Manchester City's Phil Foden when naming his squad on Friday for next week's World Cup qualifiers at home to Serbia and away against Albania. Both players missed out last time as England sealed their passage to next year's finals in North America with two games to spare following a 5-0 victory over Latvia.

Bangladesh-India tickets release Saturday afternoon

The tickets for Bangladesh's upcoming home match against India will be available online from Saturday at 2:00 pm via Quicket. The penultimate fixture for Bangladesh and India in the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifiers will be held at the 22,400-capacity National Stadium in Dhaka on November 18, with an 8:00 pm kick-off.

Mosaddek, Akbar help Bangladesh beat SL in Hong Kong Sixes

Bangladesh ended the group stage of the Hong Kong International Sixes with a 14-run win over Sri Lanka at Mong Kok on Friday. Earlier in the day, their match against hosts Hong Kong was abandoned due to rain.

*Read the full reports on **The Daily Star** website

United look to end winless run at Tottenham

STAR SPORTS DESK

After being booted off the pitch following their dismal 1-0 defeat to London rivals Chelsea in the Premier League last weekend, Tottenham Hotspur issued an emphatic response in midweek, sweeping aside Copenhagen 4-0 at home in the Champions League.

Thomas Frank's side sit sixth in the league table, just a point behind Liverpool in third, and head into Saturday's home fixture against Manchester United with an opportunity to win three consecutive league games against the Red Devils for the first time since the 1959-60 season. After completing the double over United last campaign.

Yet Tottenham's form at home in 2025 remains a concern. They have lost nine Premier League home matches this calendar year -- more than any other side. Only in 1994 and 2003 (10 defeats in each year) have Spurs recorded double figures for home league losses.

Manchester United, meanwhile,

turbulent start to their season. A humbling 3-1 loss at Brentford in late September was followed by three straight league wins and a 2-2 draw with Nottingham Forest last weekend.



up the Player of the Month award. However, recent meetings offer little encouragement for the visitors. United are winless in their last seven matches against Spurs in all competitions (D2 L5), losing each of the last four, including last season's Europa League final. The last side to beat United five times in a row was Liverpool between 2000 and 2002.

Spurs beat United 1-0 in last season's Europa League final, denying the Red Devils a Champions League berth. For 19-year-old defender Leny Yoro, the match represents a chance to "rewrite the narrative."

"Everyone knows what happened in the final," Yoro said. "This game can be a good game for us to prove that maybe the final could have had another result." Despite the disappointment of missing out on Europe, Yoro believes the lighter schedule has helped United refine their approach. "We have more time to work now... We're still in good momentum," he said. "This game will be important for us to stay near the top."

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STAR SPORTS 1

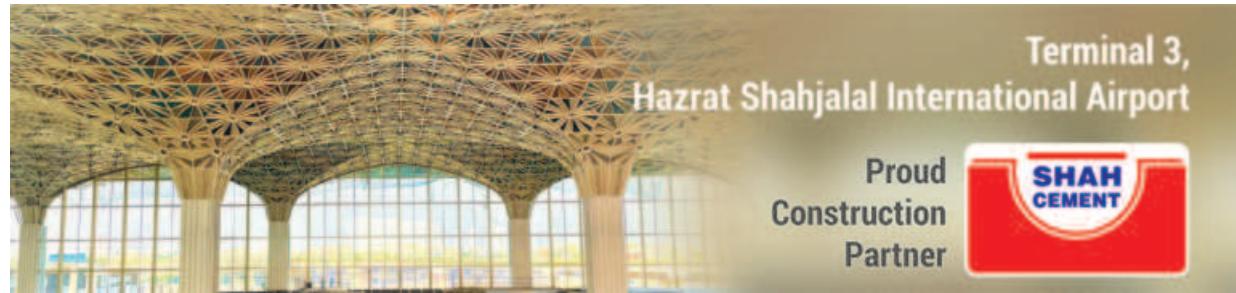
Australia vs India
5th T20I
Live from 2:15 pm
T SPORTS
Pakistan vs South Africa

3rd ODI

Sunderland vs Arsenal
Live from 4:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
Premier League
Tottenham vs Man Utd

Live from 6:30 pm

Sunderland vs Arsenal
Live from 11:30 pm
Chelsea vs Wolves
Live from 2:00 am
(Sunday)



NOMINATION ROW 23 hurt as BNP factions clash in Boalmari

STAR REPORT

At least 23 people, including three policemen, were injured yesterday in a clash between supporters of two BNP nomination aspirants in Faridpur's Boalmari upazila.

Meanwhile, 15 people were injured on Thursday night in a clash between supporters of BNP and Gono Odhikar Parishad over nominations in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila.

In Faridpur, the nearly two-hour-long violence erupted around 4:00pm near Wapda intersection during a programme marking the November 7 Revolution and Solidarity Day.

Khondakar Nasirul Islam, vice president of Krishak Dal, and Shamsuddin Mia, former joint secretary of Boalmari BNP, are both vying for the party's nomination for Faridpur I, a seat for which the BNP has yet to name a candidate.

According to locals, around 3:00pm, supporters of Shamsuddin and Nasirul -- both armed with sticks -- gathered separately at Wapda Mor

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Palestinians walk past rubble of destroyed buildings amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Onion prices soar by Tk 30 per kg in a week Traders point to supply crunch

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The retail price of onions in Dhaka has jumped by up to Tk 30 per kilogramme in just a week, driven by a sharp drop in supply.

Traders attributed the sudden spike to dwindling imports and the end of the local harvest, warning that prices could climb further if new shipments do not



arrive soon. Some also accused unscrupulous traders of hoarding onions to cash in on the shortage.

They said the market has been heavily reliant on domestic production this year as imports have remained unusually low.

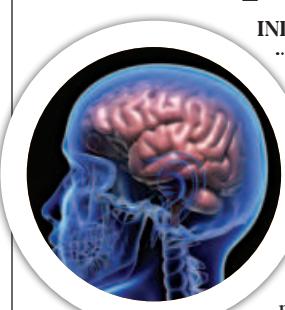
Sajib Sheikh, proprietor of Messrs Matri Bhandar at Karwan Bazar, said supplies had been normal until October but have since shrunk.

"We bring onions from Faridpur and Pabna. Since the beginning of the week, wholesale prices there have been rising, reaching up to Tk 28 per kg," he said.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Scientists reveal the first atlas of a developing brain

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Scientists have achieved a significant milestone in an ambitious project to map the intricate development of brain cells from early embryonic stages through to adulthood.

This groundbreaking research, which has produced a preliminary atlas of the developing human and mammalian brain, holds promise for unlocking new approaches to conditions such as autism and schizophrenia.

The initiative primarily focused on human and mouse brain cells, with additional insights drawn from monkey brain tissue.

Researchers meticulously charted how various brain cell types are formed, differentiate, and mature, acquiring their unique functions. Crucially, they also monitored the dynamic activation and deactivation of genes within these cells over time.

Researchers have found more than 5,000 cell types in the mouse brain. It is thought there are at least that many in the human brain.

The findings were detailed in a collection of studies published in *Nature* and related journals. The research is part of the US National Institutes of Health's BRAIN Initiative Cell Atlas Network, or BICAN, an international scientific collaboration to create a comprehensive atlas of the human brain.

Int'l stabilisation force in Gaza 'very soon'

Says Trump; Israel vows to destroy all Hamas tunnels as truce violations go on

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump said Thursday he expects a US-coordinated international stabilization force to be on the ground in Gaza "very soon," following two years of war in the territory between Israel and Hamas.

The multinational force -- likely to include troops from Egypt, Qatar, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates -- is part of Trump's post-war governance plan for Gaza.

"It's going to be very soon. And Gaza is working out very well," Trump said at a White House function with Central Asian leaders. "You haven't been hearing too much about problems, and I'll tell you, we've had countries that have volunteered if there's a problem with Hamas."

The force is supposed to train and support vetted Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip, with backing from Egypt and Jordan, reports AFP.

It also will be tasked with securing border areas and preventing weapons smuggling to Hamas, which triggered the conflict with its October 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

Meanwhile, Israel's defence chief ordered the army to "destroy all terror tunnels in Gaza" as air strikes and artillery fire pounded southern Khan Younis despite the US brokered truce.

‘Gaza is working out very well’, says Trump

Child hurt as Israeli forces fire a bomb from a drone

16,500 people in Gaza need urgent medical care: WHO

Israel's military kills 2 Palestinians in West Bank raid

Israeli forces have fired a bomb from a drone in Gaza City's Shujaya neighbourhood, wounding a child, reports the Wafa news agency. The child has been hospitalised at al-Ahli Arab Hospital.

In the occupied West Bank, Israel's military said its forces shot and killed two Palestinians whom it claims threw Molotov cocktails towards a road near the village of al-Judeira, between East Jerusalem and Ramallah.

The military shared footage on X appearing to show the incident, which it

said occurred Thursday night. It said its forces sustained no injuries, reports Al Jazeera online.

More than 16,500 Palestinians in war-battered Gaza are in urgent need of medical care, the World Health Organization chief said, pleading with the international community to immediately take them in for treatment.

"We urge more countries to receive patients from Gaza as over 16,500 people still need urgent medical care that is not available in the Strip," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

He also called for all evacuation routes -- particularly those from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem -- to be opened to facilitate the transfer of patients in need.

The WHO recently evacuated 19 critically ill patients and 93 companions from Gaza to Italy for medical treatment, he noted, expressing his gratitude to the Italian government for its solidarity and support.

In a separate development, Israel's military said yesterday it shot down a drone carrying weapons that crossed from Egypt into Israeli airspace.

The drone contained three assault rifles, according to the military.

The seizure comes a day after Defence Minister Israel Katz said he had ordered the military to designate the area around the Egyptian border a closed military zone because of alleged smuggling operations.

‘BNP strayed from Zia’s ideology’ Alleges Jamaat leader Taher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders have forgotten the ideology of its founder Ziaur Rahman, the proponent of multi-party democracy in the country, Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, nayeb-e-ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, said yesterday.

He said the BNP is no longer practising democracy and can't understand the people's sentiments about reforms.

"The BNP doesn't want reforms, but the people do. If you fail to understand the people's sentiment and continue doing politics the way you are now, you may face the same fate as the Awami League," Taher said while addressing a discussion as the chief guest.

A referendum on July charter reforms must be held before the national election, the Jamaat leader said at the event organised by its Dhaka South City unit at the Paltan office, marking the National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

"There's no point in wasting time. No matter how cleverly someone tries to delay the referendum, it must come first, then the national election," he said, urging the government to issue an order to implement the July charter.

"Those who oppose holding a

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



An illegal battery-run van, loaded with metal pipes, drives down the middle of a thoroughfare, posing a risk to surrounding vehicles and their passengers. In the event of a collision, the unsecured cargo could cause severe damage or fatal injuries. The photo was taken yesterday on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Five killed in Afghan- Pakistan cross border fire Says Afghan hospital official; six hurt

AFP, Kabul

Five people were killed and six were wounded in brief cross-border fire between Afghanistan and Pakistan on Thursday afternoon, a hospital official on the Afghan side told AFP, in an incident both countries blamed on each other.

The violence was likely to complicate ceasefire negotiations underway in Turkey, which intended to finalise a truce aimed at ending deadly clashes between the South Asian neighbours.

Security issues are at the heart of their dispute, with Islamabad accusing Kabul of harbouring militant groups, particularly the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), that launch attacks in Pakistan. The Taliban government denies these allegations.

According to the anonymous official at the Spin Boldak district

SEE PAGE 5 COL 7

**THE MAGIC OF RAS UTSAB****A NIGHT OF**
dance, music and devotion

As the moonlight slowly fades over the festival grounds and the final drumbeats echo through the early dawn, Ras Utsab leaves behind a lingering melody – a bridge between art, faith, and tradition. It's not just a festival; it's a reminder of how culture keeps our hearts connected to our ancestors.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

MINTU DESHWARA

As the full moon of Agrahayan rises, the Manipuri community in greater Sylhet prepares to celebrate its most cherished festival – Maharas Leela, or Ras Utsab. What began centuries ago as a spiritual observance has evolved into one of Bangladesh's most vibrant cultural events, drawing thousands of devotees and tourists from across the country and abroad.

For 183 years, the Ras Utsab has been celebrated with grandeur at Joramandap in Shibbazar, Madhabpur of Kamalganj upazila, and for nearly four decades in Tetaigaon, Adampur.

Rooted in devotion and dance, the festival revolves around the divine love story of Lord Krishna and Radha, brought to life through enchanting Manipuri dance, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of drums, cymbals, and conch shells.

Each year, the festival transforms Madhabpur and Adampur into vibrant fairgrounds – alive with music, light, and celebration. Thousands of men, women, and children, along with artists, writers, officials, and foreign visitors, gather to witness the night-long Maharas Leela, a spectacular fusion of faith, art, and heritage.



Hill. Following this divine vision, he discovered the tree, had an idol carved from its wood, and inaugurated the first Ras Leela festival to mark its installation.

Bhagyachandra also established four classical Ras traditions – Maharasa, Vasantara, Kunjarasa, and Bhangipareng – which continue to define Manipuri cultural identity today.

Sadhan said Manipuri settlers brought the Ras Leela tradition to the Sylhet region in the early 18th century. It quickly took deep root in Moulvibazar, Habiganj, and Sunamganj.

The first recorded Ras Leela in present-day Bangladesh was held in 1842 (1289 Bangla year) at Madhabpur's Joramandap, organised by the Bishnupriya Manipuri community with support from the Meitei Manipuris.

In later years, the two communities began holding separate celebrations: the Bishnupriya Manipuris at Madhabpur and the Meitei Manipuris at the Sana Thakur Mandap in Adampur since 1986. Despite this division, both groups continue to uphold the same spiritual and cultural essence that defines Ras Utsab.

This festival unites people from all walks of life, irrespective of caste or religion, said Shyam Singh, general secretary of the Manipuri Maharas Leela Seba Sangha. "It's not just a ritual, it's a celebration of art, devotion, and harmony."

This year marks the 183rd Ras

Festival at Madhabpur Joramandap, organised by the Manipuri Maharas Leela Seba Sangha. The Bishnupriya Manipuris staged Gosthali or Rakhal Nritya at the Shibbazar open stage, while the Meitei Manipuris hosted their parallel celebration in Adampur's Manipuri Cultural Complex.

The festival unfolds in two phases: Rakhal Ras during the day and Maharas Leela through the night.

Rakhal Ras depicts Krishna's

pastoral childhood, his adventures with

companions, and his affectionate bond with his mother.

Known as

Gosthali Nritya, the daytime

performances

are filled with

expressive dance,

soulful music,

and spiritual

symbolism.

"As night falls, the Maharas Leela begins – the retelling of the divine love between Krishna and Radha," said Dhirendra Kumar Singh, a Manipuri dance teacher. From 11:00pm until dawn, dancers perform intricate sequences to Raslila songs inspired by Vaishnava poets like Jayadeba, Bidyapati, and Chandidas.

Traditional costumes remain central to the performance's visual splendour. The Gopis wear white veils (Meikum) and long necklaces (Thareng), while their silk blouses

and anklets (nupura) add to the grace and rhythm of the dance. Though steeped in ancient customs, modern influences – from electric lighting to occasional gold ornaments – have subtly enhanced the spectacle.

Local resident and journalist Salahuddin Shuvo said, "We have been celebrating the Ras festival since our childhood. During this time, our family and friends all gather together. Many distant relatives also

return home, and the whole house becomes lively with guests and relatives."

The Maharas Leela, the main religious celebration of the Manipuri community, begins with the traditional Rakhal dance. Sadhan added that the Ras festival of the Manipuri people is not just a community event – it is an essential part of Bangladesh's rich cultural diversity.

Tourists and locals alike were mesmerised by the performances, said Sajjad Hossain, a visitor from Dhaka. "I've heard stories about the Ras dance since my childhood – from my grandparents and elders who used to describe its beauty – but seeing it unfold before my eyes was truly magical. The moment the dancers entered the arena, dressed in vibrant

traditional Manipuri costumes adorned with shimmering ornaments, the entire atmosphere changed."

"The rhythmic sound of the pung (Manipuri drum) and the gentle chime of the anklets created a sacred harmony that seemed to pull everyone into a different world. Each movement of the dancers – graceful yet full of devotion – reflected centuries of tradition and spiritual depth. It felt as if time itself had paused, allowing us to witness a living piece of history."

Makhan Chandra Sutradhar, upazila nirbahi officer of Kamalganj upazila, said, "For this year's event, comprehensive safety measures were implemented, with personnel from the Army, police, Rab, and BGB deployed to maintain law and order throughout the celebrations."

During the festival, which started Wednesday morning and ended Thursday morning, a special discussion meeting was also held, where the Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Mohd Israil Hossain attended as the chief guest. "The main focus of the discussion was on the spirit of contemporary Bangladesh – its heritage, harmony, and cultural resilience," he said.

As the moonlight slowly fades over the festival grounds and the final drumbeats echo through the early dawn, Ras Utsab leaves behind a lingering melody – a bridge between art, faith, and tradition. It's not just a festival; it's a reminder of how culture keeps our hearts connected to our ancestors.



The origins of Ras Leela date back to 1759 AD, when Pamheiba (Maharaja Bhagyachandra) of Manipur introduced the Maharas Leela on the full moon night of Agrahayan.

According to Maibam Sadhan, a writer from the Manipuri community, the king had a dream in which Lord Krishna appeared to him in the form of a jackfruit tree on Bhanumukh



WHY BANGLADESH still believes teachers should be poor

In Singapore, a secondary school teacher earns the equivalent of Tk 650,000 per month. True, Singapore is one of the most expensive countries in Asia, but even after adjusting for living costs, the income guarantees dignity and financial security. In China, a teacher earns around Tk 220,000—fourteen times higher than in Bangladesh—even though China's cost of living is roughly twice ours.

KAMRUL HASSAN MAMUN

In Bangladesh, we live with a peculiar complacency when it comes to teachers' pay. Many of us casually argue, "Since our teachers are not good enough, their pay is fair." Others add, "They already earn from private tutoring and coaching, so why should we pay them more?" These statements, so casually uttered in drawing rooms and Facebook threads, are far from harmless. They reveal a deep national malaise—our failure to distinguish between the causes and the symptoms of a broken education system.

A recent comparison of secondary school teachers' minimum salaries across seven leading Asian countries exposes the scale of that neglect. In Singapore, a secondary school teacher earns the equivalent of Tk 650,000 per month. True, Singapore is one of the most expensive countries in Asia, but even after adjusting for living costs, the income guarantees dignity and financial security. In China, a teacher earns around Tk 220,000—fourteen times higher than in Bangladesh—even though China's cost of living is roughly twice ours.

It is not difficult to see why China advanced so rapidly. The Chinese



Teachers demonstrate in front of the National Press Club in Dhaka on October 12, 2025, demanding an increase in house rent allowance.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

overall quality of education. This is not a mere coincidence; it is causality. Our neglect of teachers has corroded not only classrooms but the very fabric of civic life. Look around: the indifference, impatience, and lack of civic responsibility visible in our streets and marketplaces are the social echoes of decades of intellectual neglect.

In Bangladesh, schoolteachers are officially classified as third class employees. The very phrase is an insult to human dignity. To regard any group of citizens as "third class" is to institutionalise humiliation. To pay them a pittance on top of that only deepens the insult. Behind this arrangement lies a deeply unhealthy psyche. Our politicians want teachers to remain submissive—dependent on them for every favour. They want to be able to summon teachers at will, confident that they will obey.

The creation of politically influenced school management committees has made this control more systematic. Two decades ago, it was the headmaster who ran the school. Today, the president of the managing committee—often a politically connected figure—holds real authority. Through these committees, local politicians and bureaucrats have

effectively captured the governance of schools. Teachers, deprived of status and voice, have become functionaries serving the whims of others rather than the needs of students.

I once came across a job advertisement from a well-known school in Dhaka offering a salary so low it bordered on insult. When I later asked a member of the school's management about it, he explained, without irony, "Even with this pay, we get plenty of good applicants. They earn enough from coaching anyway." That single remark captures our national mindset perfectly: we have normalised systemic underpayment, accepted exploitation as efficiency, and conveniently outsourced teachers' dignity to the private coaching market.

This distortion has profound consequences. When a teacher learns to survive at the cost of self-respect, the student learns that survival—not integrity—is the key to success. When the education system rewards side hustles over sincerity, the values of an entire generation are quietly rewritten.

Over time, deprivation normalises itself. Teachers' demands today are so modest that they almost reflect their learned helplessness. Recently, they

requested a 20 percent increase in house rent allowance. The government responded with 5 percent, then revised it to 7.5 percent. The message could not be clearer: those who shape the next generation are valued less than the bureaucrats who merely administer the system.

Predictably, many still ask, "Would higher salaries really solve the problem?" The answer is an unequivocal yes—provided that the policy is part of a broader structural reform. A well-paid profession is an attractive profession. Once teaching becomes dignified and rewarding, talented young people will choose it as a career. Recruitment standards will rise, accountability will follow, and over time, both classroom quality and public trust will improve.

Right now, teaching is so poorly compensated that bright graduates shun it altogether. Those who do enter the profession often do so out of necessity, sustained by income from private coaching. This arrangement commodifies education and undermines its moral foundation.

And yet, as a society, we spend millions on private tutoring and overseas education for our children—while fiercely opposing any proposal

to raise teachers' pay. Beneath that contradiction lies a dangerous cultural myth: that a "true" teacher must be self-sacrificing, poor, and humble, as though comfort and dignity somehow dilute their virtue.

History proves the opposite. No nation has risen without first dignifying its teachers. Teachers' honour and remuneration are not administrative matters—they are matters of national survival. If we truly care about education, we must repair the cause, not the effect. No amount of training workshops, flashy "education projects", or donor-funded reforms will make a difference as long as teachers live without dignity or security. Governments may continue launching bureaucratic initiatives, but these will remain cosmetic if the core issue—teacher compensation—is ignored.

UNESCO recommends that each country allocate at least 5.5 percent of its GDP to education, with a separate and protected allocation for research and development (R&D). This is because education and R&D are inseparable. A nation that invests in research invests in the creative and intellectual capacity of its people. Without that foundation, even the most modern infrastructure or digital classroom remains hollow.

Yet Bangladesh continues to underinvest in both, spending far less than the regional average on education. Instead of nurturing minds, we pour funds into administrative overheads, projects, and brick-and-mortar expansions that add little value to learning outcomes. The result is predictable: a disillusioned teaching force, a coaching-dependent education system, and a generation that learns to chase grades rather than knowledge.

Raising teachers' salaries is not an act of generosity—it is an act of national investment. Singapore and China did not transform their education systems by chance; they did so by placing teachers at the heart of national policy. We, on the other hand, continue to justify low pay with hollow logic, effectively selling our children's future at a discount.

Until Bangladesh recognises that education begins with the teacher—not the classroom, not the curriculum, and certainly not the project file—our dream of progress will remain just that: a dream.

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

understood early that a nation's progress is bound by the quality of its teachers. They invested accordingly. Teacher recruitment there is competitive, well-paid, and deeply respected. The result is not merely better schools, but a stronger, more disciplined, and intellectually confident society.

Bangladesh, by contrast, stands at the bottom of South Asia—not just in teachers' salaries, but also in the

overall quality of education. This is not a mere coincidence; it is causality. Our neglect of teachers has corroded not only classrooms but the very fabric of civic life. Look around: the indifference, impatience, and lack of civic responsibility visible in our streets and marketplaces are the social echoes of decades of intellectual neglect.

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RMG's automation and green growth have a gender problem – Don't ignore it

SYEDA ZEENAT KARIM

Fatema (pseudonym), a 27 year-old line operator in a garment factory outside Dhaka, has spent nearly a decade behind a sewing machine. Her hands move with mechanical precision, her daily output closely tracked by production targets. But last year, her factory introduced semi-automated sewing lines. Productivity improved. Jobs did not. Several of Fatema's colleagues—mostly women—were quietly laid off. "I didn't understand the new machine," she said. "No one asked if I wanted to learn."

Her story offers a glimpse into the deeper transformation sweeping across Bangladesh's ready-made garments (RMG) sector—one that is becoming more efficient and environmentally conscious, but risks becoming less inclusive if women are not actively supported in this transition.

The RMG sector has long been central to women's employment in Bangladesh. In the 1990s, over 80 percent of garment workers were women, many from rural areas with few other options for formal work. These jobs offered not just wages but a pathway to visibility, mobility, and social agency. Today, women make up around 56 percent of the RMG workforce. While demographic shifts contribute to this trend, much of it reflects structural challenges—most notably, automation and changing workplace dynamics.

This is not unique to Bangladesh. In Vietnam, women still constitute about 75-80 percent of the garment workforce and remain a dominant part of the industry, with limited evidence so far of a gendered decline due to automation (International Labour Organization 2025; World Bank 2021). In Cambodia, women have historically accounted for over 80 percent of garment workers and continue to dominate the sector, though longitudinal data on automation's gender impact remain limited (Heintz 2007; ASEAN 2024). In India, by contrast, women comprise a smaller share—around 35-40 percent of garment workers—and their participation has shown modest growth rather than decline, suggesting different structural dynamics at play (International

Labour Organization 2021; International Labour Organization 2022). Across all contexts, women remain concentrated in low-paid, repetitive tasks that are among the first to be mechanised.

In Bangladesh, the impact of automation is already evident. A 2024 study by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre found that technological upgrades have triggered a 30.58 percent reduction in overall employment in several factories, with women hit hardest due to their predominance in easily mechanised roles such as sewing and trimming. The

orders, noting that women constitute the majority of those displaced. These combined factors demonstrate that while automation boosts productivity, it is also accelerating labour contraction and deepening gender vulnerability in the sector.

The green transition introduces another layer. With increasing pressure from global buyers to meet Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) benchmarks, factories are installing solar panels, upgrading wastewater treatment systems, and embedding sustainability reporting into operations.

can effectively transition into new green jobs. These findings are supported by research from LightCastle Partners (2025), which emphasises that women, when supported by inclusive training environments, contribute meaningfully to sustainable factory operations.

There are promising examples worth building upon. In several pilot initiatives, women operators trained in green practices—such as safe chemical handling and recycling-process management—were subsequently promoted to roles supporting environmental compliance. While these efforts have been limited in scale, they clearly demonstrate that gender-responsive upskilling is both viable and effective. The next step is not innovation, but commitment—to scale and institutionalise these practices across the sector. Yet persistent barriers continue to hold women back.

Despite comprising the majority of line workers, women represent only about 9 percent of production supervisors. A GIZ study (2024) found that promotion decisions were often shaped by gendered assumptions around leadership, assertiveness, and flexibility—qualities still too frequently attributed to men. Even when women exceed performance expectations, they are routinely passed over due to perceived limitations tied to family responsibilities or emotional disposition.

Other challenges—such as lack of childcare, safe transportation, and unequal domestic responsibilities—continue to limit women's full participation and progression in the sector. Many factories lack grievance mechanisms to address harassment or bias. As a result, promising women talent often drops out of the workforce, leaving the sector poorer in skills, diversity, and resilience.

Some global brands have started to address this imbalance, embedding gender equity into responsible sourcing codes. But most still treat gender as a peripheral issue, separate from core metrics like environmental compliance and productivity. If the RMG sector is to remain competitive and socially responsible, gender must be integrated into every level of industrial and environmental policy. This includes mandating gender-inclusive training, tracking promotion pathways, and recognising suppliers who foster equity



FILE PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Business Standard also reported that sweater production lines saw a 37.03 percent labour drop, cutting by 48.34 percent, and sewing declined by 26.57 percent—all heavily affecting women workers. According to Kaler Kantha (2025), over 300 factories across Dhaka, Gazipur, and Narayanganj have closed or suspended operations—either temporarily or permanently—resulting in an estimated 200,000 job losses. The report attributes this downturn to automation, high production costs, and declining international

These efforts are creating new roles in sustainability, but these too are largely inaccessible to women. An ILO survey (2025) found that only 18 percent of workers in sustainability roles were women, with most of them confined to supplementary tasks such as waste sorting.

Despite their experience, women are rarely considered for technical upskilling. However, targeted training in areas such as energy efficiency, textile-waste management, and compliance roles has shown that women

alongside compliance.

Buyers should be required to review gender-disaggregated labour data, insist on gender parity in training, access, and incentivise suppliers who build inclusive cultures. National policy must also respond to this need. A truly just transition requires legal safeguards, budget allocations, and representation of women in dialogue platforms around technology and sustainability.

The role of sectoral organisations such as BGMEA and worker federations is crucial here. They can amplify women's voices and support initiatives that strengthen peer networks, mentorship, and factory-based leadership forums. Multilateral development partners also have a part to play in piloting inclusive business models and de-risking innovation that opens space for under-represented groups.

One often overlooked dimension of this transition is the interplay between automation, decent work, and the care economy. Many women in the RMG sector are also caregivers at home. Without policies that address unpaid care burdens—through subsidised childcare, flexible work arrangements, or support services—the automation-driven restructuring of labour risks intensifying economic insecurity for women. ILO research (2025) underscores that decent work must be understood holistically, ensuring access not only to jobs but to working conditions that reflect workers' realities.

Finally, the narrative itself must change. Stories like Fatema's are not about weakness; they are about exclusion. Women are not passive recipients of progress; they are capable contributors and leaders if the systems around them allow them to participate fully.

Fatema's voice captures what is at stake: "I don't want sympathy. I want skills. I want to work in the future too." A future that is more efficient and sustainable must also be more inclusive. Women like Fatema should not be sidelined by change—they should be helping to lead it.

Syeda Zeenat Karim is a development professional with 10+ years of experience in project management, gender advocacy and strategic communications.

What's holding back Bangladesh's book industry?

Experts urge that the Jatiya Granthakendra be strengthened into a genuinely autonomous body, empowered to coordinate effectively with the education, cultural, and other relevant ministries. In countries such as India and Japan, where publishing has long thrived, strong central institutions have provided the backbone for growth—an institutional foundation that Bangladesh is yet to build.

MIFTAHL JANNAT

Long before the rhythmic clatter of printing presses echoed through Bengal, the story of its literature was written by hand—on palm leaves, burlap, or delicate sheets of parchment. Each manuscript was painstakingly inscribed by scribes whose careful hands preserved the words of poets, scholars, and storytellers.

Before British rule, book printing and usage were virtually absent in Bengal. The colonial rulers reshaped the education system to serve their own interests. With the spread of this new education came printed books—but initially, all publishing activities were concentrated in and around Kolkata. East Bengal, including Dhaka (then a mofussil town), saw this development much later and on a smaller scale, relying largely on Kolkata for books. Consequently, Dhaka's publishing scene grew slowly, lagging behind Kolkata by more than half a century.

writing, according to Dr Sen.

This situation persisted until the end of the nineteenth century. Muslim publishers mostly printed fiction, poetry, and religious books in *Musulmani Bangla*—a term coined by James Long to describe the variation of Bengali then in use, “a mixture of Urdu and Bengali, very popular among the Moslems in Calcutta and Dacca.” One reason for this slow progress was the Muslim community's initial reluctance to embrace Western education.

By 1870, a small yet determined Muslim middle class had entered the book publishing trade. In his article “Printing and Publishing in Dacca,” Graham W. Shaw notes that approximately 3,442 books were printed in Dhaka between 1857 and 1900.

The East Pakistan chapter

In the early years of East Pakistan, Dhaka emerged as the centre of rebuilding efforts, and small presses began to appear, particularly in

such as limited printing technology, scarce quality paper, and government censorship.

The growing assertion of Bengali identity, coupled with mounting tensions between East and West Pakistan, found powerful expression in print. Books became vessels of cultural pride and political defiance, laying the groundwork for what would eventually become the intellectual backbone of Bangladesh's independence movement.

Bangladesh's first steps

When Bangladesh emerged as a new nation in 1971, its presses were as silent as its war-ravaged cities. Yet, as the country began to rebuild, the book publishing industry—an often-overlooked pillar of culture—sought to find its footing amid the ruins. The decade that followed was one of

from maturing collectively.

Foreign assistance, once steady during the Pakistan era, also declined. Programmes such as Franklin Books and USIS, which had supported translations and textbook production, wound down by the early 1980s. Even when foreign aid appeared—such as UNICEF's funding for science books in 1980—it was piecemeal and short lived.

By the end of the 1970s, Bangladesh's publishing industry had certainly survived, but not thrived. It produced valuable work, nurtured readers, and gave rise to pioneers, but failed to progress collectively as a strong, interconnected ecosystem. In many ways, the story of publishing in that first decade mirrored the nation itself: resilient, ambitious, but still searching for structure, direction, and a shared purpose.

1994, and the then Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia formally endorsed it in March. The Ministry of Culture printed and circulated the policy as a guiding framework for all future book-development initiatives. Yet, despite its formal adoption, implementation was slow and uneven, hampered by longstanding structural and financial constraints in the publishing ecosystem.

The challenges now—and the way forward

Despite its long legacy, Bangladesh's publishing industry continues to grapple with many of the same challenges that have plagued it for decades—problems that stubbornly refuse to fade away.

“There is no research in our country on book publishing or the history of publishing, nor is there recognition



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

Towards a national book policy

In the face of decades long challenges in the sector, the National Book Policy of 1994 emerged as a landmark effort to bring coherence and direction to the country's literary and publishing landscape. Drawing on extensive consultations with writers, publishers, and cultural and educational institutions, the policy aimed to address structural gaps, harmonise book-related activities, and promote reading as a national habit.

The state assumed absolute control

over the school textbook business, continuing a practice from the East Pakistan era, but now on a larger scale. This single move upended the ecosystem that had quietly sustained the private publishing industry. Publishers who had long relied on textbook contracts to fund creative works suddenly found themselves cut off from their main source of income.

In the private sector, a few determined ventures defied the odds. Muktaghara, led by Chittaranjan Saha, became the era's defining force. Born in exile during the Liberation

that this sector demands meticulous knowledge—most people simply don't know or care,” said Nazir.

“As an anecdote, I once had a young publisher approach me for advice on starting a publishing house. I asked him, ‘Whom do you want to emulate as a publisher? Books worth crores of taka have been sold in the last 15 years. Do you want to be that kind of publisher, or someone entirely different? Decide that first, and then come to me.’ He never contacted me again.”

According to Afsana Begum, Director of Jatiya Granthakendra (Naitonal Book Centre), our publishing industry currently lacks consistent editorial standards. “One month a publication produces a well edited book, and the next, another appears with little or no editorial oversight. Only a handful of publishers maintain rigorous editorial policies. It is a matter of great regret, because with such a long history and established practices, this industry should have thrived.”

The industry's stagnation reflects a deeper national problem—the absence of a coherent vision, according to Mahrukh Mohiuddin, Managing Director of The University Press Limited (UPL).

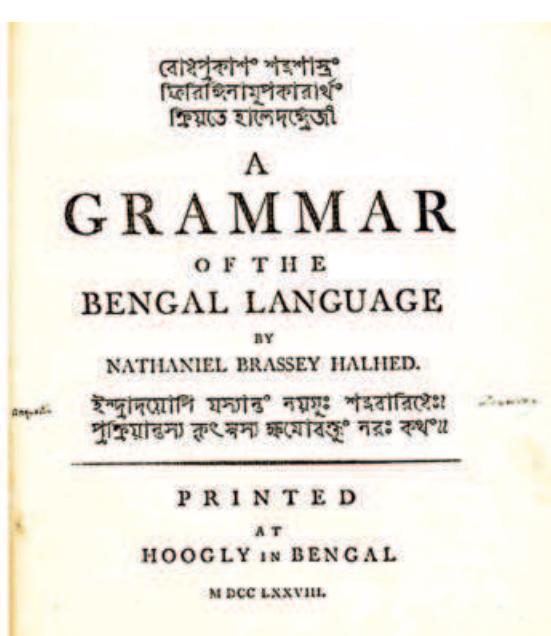
“The publishing industry cannot thrive without a favourable ecosystem,” she noted. “That ecosystem depends largely on government priorities, as education, research, and the country's intellectual atmosphere are closely intertwined with it. Successive governments have offered only lip service, without a unified roadmap for building a society that values expertise and evidence-based knowledge.”

She observed that the industry has long suffered from neglect and politicisation, with government-funded book projects often driven by patronage rather than merit. Compounding the problem, there are no effective mechanisms to curb widespread piracy, both online and offline.

Still, Mahrukh remains optimistic, emphasising that the draft National Book Policy remains “well-prepared, forward-looking, with detailed plans for implementation, which is still relevant today,” and that “just by reviewing and activating the National Book Policy, it is possible to bring about beneficial and necessary long-term changes in the sector.”

Experts urge that the Jatiya Granthakendra be strengthened into a genuinely autonomous body, empowered to coordinate effectively with the education, cultural, and other relevant ministries. In countries such as India and Japan, where publishing has long thrived, strong central institutions have provided the backbone for growth—an institutional foundation that Bangladesh is yet to build.

Miftahul Jannat is a journalist at The Daily Star and can be reached at: miftahul@thedadlystar.net



(L) Sir Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) was an English typographer and Orientalist, notable as the creator—assisted by engraver Panchanan Karmakar—of the first Bengali typeface. (R) Written in 1778 by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed and printed in Hooghly, A Grammar of the Bengal Language was the first grammar book of Bengali, and it also marked the first use of Bengali type in print.

Muslim footprints in publishing
When British rule began, the upper-class Hindus saw in it an opportunity to assert themselves, eagerly embracing the English language and Western education while building connections with the colonial administration. This swift adaptation elevated their social, cultural, and intellectual status and gave rise to the famed Bengal Renaissance.

By contrast, Muslims were late to enter this new intellectual domain. Before 1850, the printing of books from East Bengal was a rare occurrence, according to noted book publishing expert Badiuddin Nazir.

The first Muslim publishers in both East and West Bengal emerged around the 1850s, operating mainly in Kolkata's Battala, Mechua Bazar, Mirzapur, and Sealdah areas. Unlike their Hindu contemporaries, they preserved a distinctive aesthetic in printing, modelled on Arabic and Persian conventions—where books began from the right, and what would normally be the last page served as the first.

According to Dr Sukumar Sen, while Hindu presses had already begun operating in Battala by 1820, the first Muslim press, named *Mohammedi Machine*, was established much later in Sealdah. One of its notable publications was the second edition of *Bahar Dinesh* by Mohammad Miron, published in 1845.

While it is uncertain exactly when Bengali Muslim publishers began operating in Battala, evidence suggests their activity started before 1831. One of the earliest known Muslim publishers in Battala was a certain Safiuddin of Bhurshut. The Darjipara area later emerged as another hub for such presses. Writers and publishers there were primarily focused on a poetic form called *Sayeri*. Their preference for printing styles that followed Arabic and Urdu conventions—starting from the right-hand side—somewhat delayed their entry into modern prose

Bangla Bazar, which would later become synonymous with publishing in Bangladesh. After the Partition, Bangla Bazar became fertile ground for homegrown writers. Publishers like Nawroz Kitabistan and Student Ways lined its winding alleys, and many Bangla Bazar publishers—such as Mohammad Nasir Ali, Borkat Ullah, and poet Mainuddin—were writers themselves.

Essentially, the Pakistan period marked the formative era of our literary and publishing landscape. With the creation of a new nation came a distinct sense of identity. The country needed new textbooks for its education system, as the old ones had become outdated. In addition, the establishment of new government offices and administrative units created further demand for publications. This was, therefore, the defining period when publishing truly began to grow,” Badiuddin Nazir.

The 1960s saw a shift as textbook publishing gained prominence after the establishment of the East Pakistan Textbook Board. Beyond Dhaka, cities like Chattogram, Barishal, and Bogura also contributed, with Quran Manzil Library in Barishal and Sahitya Kutir in Bogura rising to prominence at this time. Institutions such as Bangla Academy, established in 1955, further shaped a distinct East Pakistani publishing identity—one that sought to balance religious and linguistic loyalties.

Publishing in Bangla became a form of cultural resistance, especially after Urdu was declared the state language, sparking the historic 1952 Language Movement. Many presses printed pamphlets, essays, and poetry celebrating Bengali culture and asserting identity. The 1950s and 1960s saw rapid growth in textbooks, political commentary, translations, and literary works, driven by rising literacy and the emergence of a new urban middle class. Some publishers also explored children's books and popular fiction, despite challenges



The cover of Badiuddin Nazir's Banglaeshe Granthapakashana, a seminal work that meticulously documents the evolution of book publishing in this region—from the British period up to 1994.

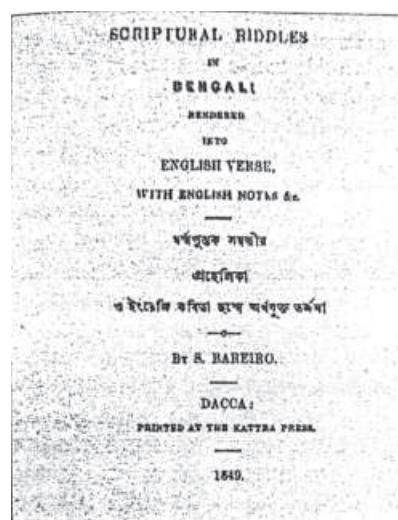
War, it returned to Dhaka in 1972 and went on to publish 620 titles in a decade (between 1971 and 1980)—an extraordinary feat in such adverse conditions. Similarly, The University Press Limited (UPL), founded in 1975, ushered in a new era of professional publishing. By 1980, it had published 22 English treatises and research works, positioning Bangladesh in the global market for scholarly books.

Yet even these success stories could not conceal the industry's deeper problems. Paper shortages, rising costs, and import dependency crippled production. From 1973 to 1980, the cost of printing a book nearly doubled, forcing publishers to scale back output. Books became more expensive, readership stagnated, and enthusiasm faded. Despite the idealism of writers and publishers, the country's economic fragility and lack of coordinated policy kept the sector

The policy highlighted the crucial role of government and semi-government institutions in publishing—particularly in areas unprofitable for private publishers—and in providing textbooks and reference materials at affordable prices.

Key challenges identified included inefficiencies in textbook development, weak research infrastructure, poor printing and binding quality, uneven distribution systems, and insufficient focus on fostering reading habits, particularly among children and adolescents. The policy also called for specialised research into the mental, cultural, and educational needs of young readers, recommending dedicated initiatives through institutions such as the Shishu Academy.

Following extensive review, the cabinet approved the draft in February



Title page of Prahelika (Scriptural Riddles in Bengali)—the first Bengali book ever printed in Dhaka, published in 1849 by Katra Press.
Source: Dhaka: Smriti Bismriti Nagari by Muntassir Mamoon.

HOME SWEET HOME

Carpenters at Louhajang upazila in Munshiganj build full wooden homes, ready to travel by truck or trawler from riverside workshops to faraway districts



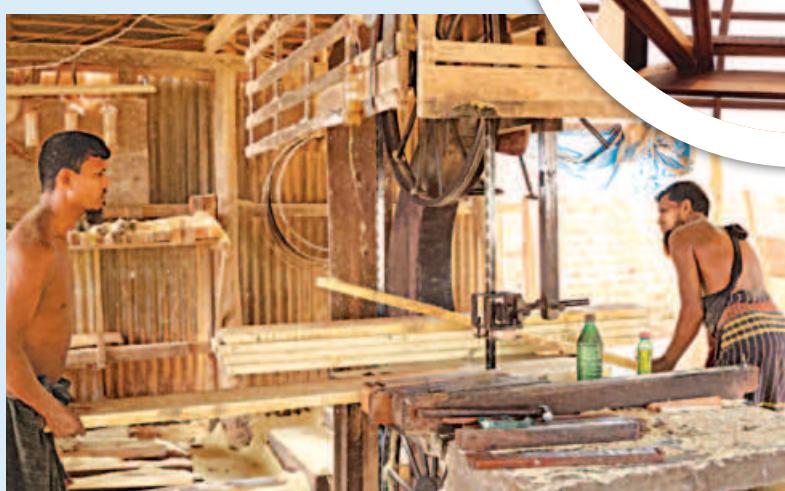
AHSAN HABIB

No one is quite sure who first came up with the idea. Locals believe it emerged from life on the banks of the Padma, where the mighty river often devoured land and homes. They say someone might have wondered: what if houses could move?

That thought gave birth to an entire sector at Louhajang upazila of Munshiganj district. Over the past few decades, carpenters here have been building fully ready-made wooden houses, complete with doors, windows and tin roofs, that can be transported and set up wherever the buyer wants.

Around 100 traders now work in the upazila, where the Ghor Dour Bazar has become the best-known hub in the country for these portable houses. Each shop sells between two and five houses a month.

A HOUSE WITHOUT THE HASSLE
These structures appeal to people who want to avoid the hassle of collecting materials, supervising masons and



wood generally last 20 to 25 years.

Designs vary from small single-story homes to duplex-style builds. Some come with verandas, attached bathrooms or kitchens. Custom designs are also available, with delivery in 20 to 25 days.

THE CRAFTSMEN BEHIND THE WALLS

Each trader maintains several groups of carpenters, usually three to six workers per team. They take 15 to 25 days to complete a house depending on design and earn Tk 40,000 to Tk 60,000 per project. Individual monthly income ranges from Tk 10,000 to Tk 30,000, based on skill and contribution.

Shahid Mia, a mason who was working at one of the sites, said he has been doing this for the past 35 years. "At first, I used to work on a daily basis. Now, I work on a contract basis."

The job takes a lot of labour, but modern tools such as drills, routers and jigsaws have made it faster and more accurate. "It is a lot easier now," he said.

The reputation of the industry has drawn skilled carpenters from nearby districts. Some, like Narayan Madhu from Gopalganj, moved permanently after receiving job offers.

"People keep coming because they see others

buying houses at a low price but with good design," he said. "So, we try to make every house better."

Md Sazzad Hossain Baig, a shop owner whose family has been in this trade for 50 to 60 years, said his grandfather started the business. In earlier times, carpenters built wooden houses directly on buyers' land, often for families dealing with river erosion. "Now the houses are going everywhere."

"This is not a business where we make a sale every day. If we can sell four or five units in a month, that is good for us," said Baig.

In recent years, the industry got a good boost from social media promotions. The unique idea has attracted

attention, and content creators often feature it in their videos.

"Thanks to advertisements and video content makers, people all over the country know that they can buy this type of house at a low price. So, the houses are now going to almost every district either by truck or trawler," he said.

"Selling of readymade houses started mainly in the last one decade, which has become increasingly popular in the last five years," said Sakib Sardar, owner of Sardar Enterprise.

Abdur Rob, another experienced trader, said that several decades ago, they used to buy second-hand wood

more instead of making high profits from each sale. There is a huge competition, so everyone wants to sell more, even at lower profits. Additionally, wastage of wood is also very low in our process," he said.

Meanwhile, Sardar said profits have dropped in recent years because the prices of wood, tin and wages have risen sharply. People are also more cautious with spending in the current economy.

He claimed that wood prices have gone up by nearly 70 percent in four years, while tin prices have almost doubled. With strong competition, raising prices is difficult.

Apart from making, selling and



PHOTO: IBRAHIM KHALIL IBU



and build houses on buyers' sites. "As this area was a river erosion-prone area, two or three decades ago carpenters started to build houses so that these can be transferred if the river gets close to an area."

"Now, people want to build a house which is easy to build, and they do not want to take the hassle of building a house in their own place. So, we have started to build this type of transferable house in the last several years," he said.

Sellers say the houses are cheaper because they buy wood, tin and other materials in bulk and build in one place, which reduces wastage.

According to Abdur Rob, a house sold for Tk 7 lakh in Munshiganj would cost a customer about Tk 10 lakh to build on their own, along with time and constant supervision.

"We are focusing on selling

delivering the houses, Sardar added that carpenters also offer after-sale support. "If people need, we give after-sales services. If the houses suffer any damage during or after the delivery, we provide maintenance and repair services."

He also offered advice on how to keep the houses in good condition so that those last longer.

"There is a way of keeping these houses well. The enemy of this house is intense, direct long-term exposure to sunlight as it can bend the wood."

"My recommendation is to swipe motor oil once a year in the winter to keep the houses intact and good for more years," he said.

What began as a response to a shifting river has grown into a business built on convenience and affordability. Traders, workers and buyers agree on one thing. It solves a problem many want to avoid, the time, cost and oversight needed for conventional construction.

Standing among rows of completed houses, Ahadullah said he was hopeful about finding the right one.

"If I like something, I may even tell my friends," he said. "We could purchase it together and use it to spend our vacations on the farmland."



Tourism operators, farm owners and recreational land buyers are among the main customers. They use the houses as cottages, guest rooms or weekend retreats because they cost less than brick buildings and are pleasant to look at.

dealing with rising and unpredictable construction costs.

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When this correspondent visited the area last month, a house was being loaded onto a truck heading for Manikganj. Nearby, Md Ahadullah, a prospective buyer, was looking at options within his Tk 10 lakh budget.

"Me and my friends have a plan to build a house in our farmland in Madanpur of Narayanganj so that we can stay there for a couple of days during holidays. If we went for a brick building, the cost and the hassle would be much higher. Besides, the cost always goes higher than the initial estimation," he said.

"These wooden houses look beautiful and the price is reasonable, too. They are perfect for spending a vacation. It gives a natural vibe," he added.

Prices of those readymade houses range from Tk 2 lakh to Tk 50 lakh, depending on size, wood quality, thickness, design and interior features. Houses priced between Tk 4 lakh and Tk 5 lakh are the most popular. Those built with imported ironwood cost more but can last 50 to 60 years. Houses made from local