



5.7 quake kills 10

Several hundred injured; over a dozen buildings damaged; many areas faced temporary outages

WASIM BIN HABIB

At least 10 people, including two children, were killed and several hundred injured after a 5.7-magnitude earthquake shook Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh yesterday morning, cracking buildings, sending debris crashing down, and driving residents into the streets in fear.

The quake struck at 10:38am, with its epicentre in Madhabdi of Narsingdi, about 13 kilometres east of the seismic station in Dhaka's Agargaon, said the Bangladesh Meteorological Department. Families were jolted at home on their weekly holiday.

Prof Syed Humayun Akhter, former chair of Dhaka University's Geology department, estimated the epicentre at a shallow depth of about 10km. "Bangladesh has not felt a tremor of such magnitude in recent times. Buildings were shaking like trees," he told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh has experienced several earthquakes, especially in the Sylhet region, in recent years, but none of them caused so many casualties or damage.

On this day, November 21, in 1997, which was also a Friday, several deaths were reported after a building collapsed in Chattogram due to a quake epicentred in India's Mizoram.

Reports have emerged of minor cracks appearing in buildings across the capital. Residents described the tremor as unlike anything they had experienced before, with many taking to social media to share photos and videos of cracked walls, damaged floors, and furniture scattered across their homes.

Four of the quake-linked deaths occurred in Dhaka, five in Narsingdi, and one in Narayanganj. Several hundred others were injured across the country as people ran down staircases or jumped from buildings in panic.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



DHAKA

4 killed, buildings damaged

NARSINGDI

5 killed, walls collapse

NARAYANGANJ

1 killed, walls collapse

GAZIPUR

100 injured



A 5.7-magnitude earthquake, the strongest to hit Bangladesh in recent memory, jolted Dhaka and nearby districts yesterday morning, damaging buildings and sending panicked residents rushing into the streets. Tragedy struck Dhaka, Narsingdi and Narayanganj as at least 10 people lost their lives during the disaster. The quake struck at 10:38am with its epicentre in Madhabdi of Narsingdi.

PHOTO: STAR

The struggle to cope with rising salinity, depleting sweet water, and diminishing livelihoods continues on the frontlines of climate change in Bangladesh's rural south west all the while negotiators struggle for a fairer agreement at the UN summit in Brazil's Belem. The Daily Star's Wasim Bin Habib visited towns and villages, tea stalls and paddy fields in Khulna and Satkhira in mid-October, speaking with homemakers, farmers, fishers, and experts to find out what climate change actually means to people on the ground. This is the first of a five-part series.

SALINITY puts lives, livelihoods at risk in the South

WASIM BIN HABIB, back from Satkhira, Khulna

As dawn breaks over the muddy banks of the Kholpetua river in Satkhira's Shyamnagar upazila, a pale orange glow spreads across the horizon, lighting up mangrove trees and fishing boats at anchor.

Mohammad Gafur, a small trader in Burigoalini union, walks slowly along the embankment, his worn sandals sinking into the damp, uneven

years of hardship.

Then, changes came quietly. Shrimp farms replaced paddy fields, causing salt to seep into groundwater.

"This is no longer the land our forefathers knew," says Gafur. Around him, the silence of the morning is broken by the lapping of the Kholpetua, which carries the sting of saline intrusion.

Across the southwestern

- Salinity-hit land increased from 83.3m hectares in 1973 to 105.6m in 2009
- 62% of coastal land affected by varying degrees of salinity
- Shrimp farms replaced paddy fields, causing salt to seep into groundwater
- Excessive extraction of groundwater led to depletion of freshwater



earth. The morning breeze brushes against his face as he pauses, gazing at what was once his father's farmland. Life, he recalls, used to be simple.

"We would drink straight from tubewells, and two rice harvests a year were certain," says the 60-year-old man, his face bearing the marks of

districts of Satkhira and Khulna, millions like Gafur are witnessing the gradual intrusion of salinity into their lives. The concentration of salt in water and soil has become one of the gravest environmental challenges for Bangladesh's 19 coastal districts, threatening

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Shrimp enclosures have replaced farmland in Dakkhin Kalikapur village of Khulna's Koyra upazila.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Quake leaves trail of grief

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

What began as a happy weekend morning unfolded into a day of grief for several families, each caught unprepared by the sudden shudder of the earth.

At Armanitola in Dhaka, a mother and a son stepped out together to buy some groceries, just like they always did. On any other Friday, they would have come back home, cooked a meal, and shared a moment of happiness. But this time, the earth shook suddenly, and the family's life was changed forever.

When the son, Rafiul Islam, 22, a student of the 52nd batch of Sir Salimullah Medical College, mentioned he was craving beef, his mother Nusrat Jahan Mita checked the refrigerator and found none yesterday morning. Wanting to fulfil his request, she went to a butcher shop in their neighbourhood, accompanied by Rafiul.

As they were buying beef, a 5.7-magnitude earthquake hit Bangladesh, causing bricks and plaster from a rooftop railing collapse.

Passersby rushed four injured people, including the mother and son, to Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital.

Rafiul, who had been preparing for his second-year final exam, just days away, was among three people declared dead on arrival.

His mother suffered a head injury and now fights for her life.

Brigadier General Md Mazharul Islam Khan, director of the hospital, said doctors would need at least 72 hours before they could determine her condition. "We have not disclosed her

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Too close to ignore, Dhaka must act now

Experts urge strict building code enforcement to avert disaster

HELEMUL ALAM

No recent quake has been felt as strongly in Dhaka and its surrounding areas as yesterday's tremor. The shallow 5.7 magnitude earthquake, with its epicentre in Madhabdi just around 13km from the capital's Agargaon, forced residents onto the streets, fearing aftershocks.

However, no aftershocks were reported.

Some experts have suggested that yesterday's quake might have been a "foreshock", a warning of a potentially larger earthquake to come. Its location also surprised seismologists.

Professor Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of Buet's Civil Engineering Department said historical trends indicate that earthquakes of magnitude 7 on the Richter scale tend to recur every 100-125 years, while magnitude 8 quakes occur every 250-300 years in Bangladesh and the surrounding region.

"There has been no major quake in this area for the past 100 years," Ansary told The Daily Star. "Based on that trend, a major event could be imminent. I believe yesterday's earthquake is one of those foreshocks - smaller quakes that occur before a larger one."

Professor Munaz Ahmed Noor, vice president of the Bangladesh Earthquake Society, said the epicentre's proximity to Dhaka was unexpected.

"We always assumed major quakes would originate from the Madhupur fault, but this shows that magnitude 5 or 6 earthquakes

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

- Madhabdi epicentre surprises expert; Madhupur fault thought to be of major concern
- Another expert says yesterday's earthquake a foreshock, prelude to a big one
- Urban sprawl, construction on land-filled wetlands continue to increase Dhaka's seismic risk



PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday at a meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia during a reception at Senakunja in Dhaka Cantonment on Armed Forces Day. Story on page 2.

Ensure smooth, festive election in Feb next year

Yunus urges Armed Forces

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said that the upcoming national election, scheduled for February next year, will mark an important chapter in Bangladesh's democratic transition.

He called upon members of the Armed Forces to carry out their duties with skill and professionalism to ensure a smooth and festive election.

The chief adviser made the remarks at a reception marking Armed Forces Day at Senakunja in the afternoon.

As a peace-loving nation, Prof Yunus said, Bangladesh believes in respectful cooperation with all friendly countries.

“However, we must always remain

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



Prof Muhammad Yunus laid a wreath at Shikha Anirban at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday, honouring the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War on Armed Forces Day.

PHOTO: PID

Yunus, Khaleda meet at Armed Forces Day event

UNB, Dhaka

On the sidelines of the Armed Forces Day reception at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus held a meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and exchanged pleasantries.

The chief adviser inquired about the former prime minister's health and wished her well, said Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, deputy press secretary to the chief adviser.

Khaleda thanked him and asked about the health of his wife, Afrozi Yunus, extending her good wishes in return.

Syeda Shamila Rahman Sithi, the youngest daughter-in-law of Khaleda, was present during the interaction.

Khaleda reached Senakunja around 4:00pm and was received by Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman and senior officials of the Armed Forces.

The BNP chairperson left the venue around 5:27pm.

The Armed Forces Division, under the Office of the Chief Adviser, had earlier sent formal

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

5.7 quake kills 10

FROM PAGE 1

In Old Dhaka's Kasaituli area, a brick-built rooftop railing collapsed, killing Sir Salimullah Medical College student Rafiul Islam, 22; fabric trader Abdur Rahim, 48; and Rahim's 12-year-old son, Abul Aziz Remon. At least 10 others were injured, many of whom had gathered to buy beef at a butcher's stall.

Brig Gen Md Mazharul Islam Khan, director of Mitford Hospital, said the three were brought dead. Twenty others were treated there and 13 of them were admitted.

In Mugda, Md Maksud, a 50-year-old security guard, died when part of a wall collapsed at an under-construction building in Madina Bagh. Police said he was trying to flee when debris from an upper floor struck him on the head. He died at Mugda Medical College Hospital around noon.

In Narsingdi, five people were killed and about 100 injured in Sadar, Palash, and Shibpur upazilas, said Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Anwar Hossain. Four were injured when construction materials fell from an under-construction building in Gabtoli of Chinishpur union in Sadar upazila.

Two of the seriously injured were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where an eight-year-old child, Hafiz Omar, was declared dead. His father Delwar Hossain Uzzal, who was also admitted to DMCH in a critical condition, also died. The deceased were from Kishoreganj.

Kazem Ali Bhuiya, 75, from Malita West Para in Charsindur union of Palash upazila died on the way to the district hospital after his mud house collapsed on him.

Another man, Nasiruddin, 60, of the same upazila, died after jumping off the side of a road in panic while fleeing his farmland during the quake, the DC said, quoting local residents. His family did not take the body to the hospital.

In Shibpur, Md Forkan, 40, a resident of Gajkila village, fell from a tree during the tremor. He was first taken to Narsingdi District Hospital and then referred to DMCH, but died on the way to Dhaka.

In Rupganj of Narayanganj, a 10-month-old girl, Fatema, died when a boundary wall collapsed on her. Her mother, Kulsum Begum, 30, and neighbour Jasmin Akter, 35, were critically injured and are undergoing treatment. “Fatema was in her mother's arms when the wall came down,” said neighbour Imtiaz Bhuiyan.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus expressed shock and sorrow at the deaths and injuries, saying in a condolence message that the government was monitoring the situation and assessing damage. Authorities earlier urged citizens not to heed rumours and to

remain cautious.

Hospitals in Dhaka saw a surge of patients after the tremor. Some inpatients rushed out during the quake, still wearing cannulas.

Dr Alimul Haque of DMCH's casualty department said most of the injured victims were elderly people who lost balance and children who were injured while running in panic. By night, DMCH had treated dozens of quake-injured patients. Fifty-nine were still receiving treatment at night while the rest received primary care.

Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum, after visiting DMCH, said all government hospitals had been instructed to provide proper care. At least 90 injured people sought treatment at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation. It admitted 18 patients, and several will require surgery, said its Director Prof Md Abul Kenan. Some suffered shoulder dislocations from the force of the tremor.

In Gazipur, more than 152 people, mostly workers, were rushed to different hospitals. Of them, 116 were admitted for treatment, the district administration said.

Multiple power plants, including Bibiyana-2 (341MW), Ashuganj 55MW and 50MW units, and one 600MW SS Power unit, tripped during the quake, causing outages in many areas, officials of the Power Development Board said. The situation became normal hours later.

‘DHAKA HAS NEVER SHAKEN LIKE THIS’

Across Dhaka, panic rippled through homes and neighbourhoods.

Saiful Alam Shameem, 60, paralysed on one side and bedridden for two years in Pallabi, said, “It was terrifying. I had no option but to stay where I was. I have never felt such a powerful jolt.”

Eleven-year-old Jaiyan Hasan of Adabor was asleep and initially thought she was dreaming when her bed shook violently. “I thought the building was about to collapse. The glass window beside me was rattling loudly.”

Ashna Fabiyaana of Indira Road, who was alone at home, ran downstairs as soon as the shaking stopped. “Suddenly, the floor started swaying and the whole building began to shake,” she said.

Residents across the capital shared similar accounts, while social media filled with videos of rattling windows and shaking furniture. “Dhaka has never shaken like this before,” a user wrote.

In Dhanmondi, Shabnur Sultana huddled her children under a beam as they screamed. In Kosaituli, Masuma Akter said the weekly holiday may have saved dozens of lives. “If it had been any other day, more than 100 people could have died,” she said.

Mehedi Hasan of Narayanganj said

850,000 buildings, claiming more than 200,000 lives and injuring another 200,000.

Noor stressed the importance of enforcing building codes. “The message is simple: everyone must strictly follow current regulations. In the past, enforcement was weak.”

tenants panicked when they found their collapsible gate locked on the fifth floor of a seven-storey building. “When it finally opened, everyone rushed out.”

Residents of Narsingdi, the epicentre district, described the same terror. “Loud noises shook the house...even two hours later, I'm still traumatised,” said 34-year-old Kawsar Mahmud. Sohrab Hossain, a college lecturer on the sixth floor of a building, said, “When the building began to sway, I kept calling on Allah. I thought this might be the end.”

CRACKS IN BUILDINGS

Three Dhaka University students were injured after jumping from dormitory buildings in panic. Several halls, including AF Rahman Hall, Mohsin Hall, Kabi Jasimuddin Hall, Mokarram Bhaban, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Hall, and Shamsunnahar Hall, reported cracks and falling plaster.

According to CA's Press Wing, at least 14 buildings and structures were damaged in Dhaka's Maligbagh, Armanitola, Swamibagh, Banani, Kalabagan, Bashundhara, Narda, Dakkhin Banasree, Mohammadpur, Khilgaon, Badda, Sipahipara of Khilgaon, Madhubagh of Magbazar, and one building of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

This newspaper also received reports of cracks in buildings in Baridhara, Kallyanpur, Mirpur-1, Bhuiyapara, Sipahibagh, Dakshin Khan, West Rampura, Niketan, and Arambagh, while two buildings in Shanir Akhra and Mugda's Madina Bagh suffered visible structural damage.

Experts have repeatedly warned that Bangladesh is ill-prepared for high-magnitude earthquakes, which could result in widespread devastation. The capital, home to approximately 21 lakh buildings, is particularly vulnerable, with many structures located in densely populated areas. In many cases, building codes have been ignored, further increasing the risk of significant damage.

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan said while newer structures were built following building codes, many older buildings remain unsafe.

“RAJUK says 90 percent of buildings do not follow the code. What will happen to the residents if earthquakes like this keep occurring? This is worrying,” she told reporters after stepping out of a Mirpur building during the tremor.

“In the last five years, there have been several earthquakes, but I never felt any as strong as today's. We are being warned again and again,” she added, stressing that long-overdue planning and preparedness must now begin without delay.

[Our correspondents in Narsingdi, Narayanganj and Gazipur also contributed to this report]

Too close to ignore, Dhaka must act now

FROM PAGE 1

can originate closer to the city. A magnitude 6 quake could spell disaster for Dhaka,” he said.

Madhupur fault is around 60km from the city.

Noor explained that shallow earthquakes, like yesterday's, are common in Bangladesh. “These quakes occur close to the surface, so the energy reaches the surface strongly, causing more damage to structures.”

The Comprehensive Disaster Management Plan (CDMP) identifies five major fault zones in Bangladesh – the Madhupur Fault, Dauki Fault, and three Plate Boundary Faults – each capable of generating quakes of magnitude 7-8.5.

Both Ansary and Noor warned that unregulated urbanisation, weak enforcement of building codes, and rampant construction on land-filled wetlands have significantly increased Dhaka's seismic risk.

“Mainly, 4-8 storey buildings are most vulnerable. Dhaka doesn't have many tall buildings. Shallow earthquakes usually have short frequencies, which affect mid-rise buildings more. Taller buildings are impacted by longer waves from distant earthquakes, and we don't have many of those near Dhaka,” Noor said.

Ansary added that a magnitude 7 earthquake within 100 km of Dhaka could cause 100,000-300,000 deaths and flatten roughly 35 percent of the city.

A RAJUK study, based on surveys from 2018-2022, estimates that a 6.9-magnitude quake along the Madhupur Fault could destroy over

YEAR	LOCATION	MAGNITUDE
1762	Arakan quake (Chittagong-Arakan coast)	8.5 to 8.8
1869	Cachar quake (near Jaintia hills/Sylhet region)	7.5
1885	Bengal/Manikganj earthquake	7.1
1897	Great Indian quake (Assam)	8.2 to 8.3
1918	Srimangal quake	7.6
1930	Dhubri (Assam) quake	7.1
1934	Bihar-Nepal quake	8
1950	Assam quake	8.6

He also criticised Dhaka's real estate regulator. “RAJUK was supposed to check building designs, but they don't. It's time to follow Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, requiring third-party verification of designs before approval.”

Ansary called for immediate inspections. “We must identify buildings that need urgent repairs. Some may already have cracks but are still salvageable.”

Adil Mohammad Khan, president

changes to building plans to serve commercial interests. “Even rules on minimum space between buildings are altered whenever developers want,” he said.

Khan cited global examples. “In Chile, strict regulations meant minimal damage during strong quakes. In Haiti, where rules were ignored, destruction was massive. Turkey saw deadly consequences from compromised standards.”

Salinity puts lives, livelihoods at risk

FROM PAGE 1

livelihoods and habitability of the region.

Once confined to the fringes of tidal rivers, salinity is now steadily seeping deep into soil and groundwater due to stagnate within polders during high tides. Instead of preventing salinity, many embanked areas became prone to waterlogging and soil degradation.

Upstream diversion of freshwater, especially through the Farakka Barrage opened in 1975 and other control structures, reduced freshwater flow into Bangladesh's southwestern rivers during the dry season, weakening the natural flushing mechanism that once pushed saltwater back towards the sea.

Climate change and sea-level rise are amplifying the threat, while cyclones and tidal surges push saline water farther inland.

Sea-level rise may displace nine lakh people in southern Bangladesh by 2050, jeopardising their livelihoods and homes, according to a report by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development published last year.

By the end of the century, the situation is likely to worsen, as rising seas are projected to submerge between 12 and 18 percent of the coastal region, it said.

Sharmind Neelorme, an expert on climate change, explained that tidal movements and wind currents push seawater inland during high tide, leaving salt on land. Normally, river currents and rains carry the deposited salt back into the Bay of Bengal.

“But global warming has intensified tidal surges, making them stronger and higher. As water levels rise, the surges spread farther inland, flooding areas that were previously unaffected,” said Neelorme, a professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University.

SHRIMP FARMING PARADOX The unchecked and unregulated expansion of shrimp farming that began in the 1980s has deepened the crisis, according to experts and locals.

Over the last few decades, vast tracts of paddy fields have been turned into shrimp enclosures – locally called ghers – for which farmers illegally cut through embankments to bring in saline water.

Such breaches in coastal embankments to fill ponds have allowed salt to travel farther inland, contaminating both soil and groundwater. Now, many people in the area are trying their luck with crab farming, using a similar method.

While the shift from agriculture to aquaculture brought fast money for some, it systematically altered the landscape and destroyed the freshwater ecosystems that had sustained traditional farming for centuries.

“Shrimp has brought money, but we've lost the soil's fertility, crops, and the sweetness of water. We're trapped,” said former rice farmer Liaqat Ali, who not return home, and Rahim was unreachable on phone despite repeated calls, Rahim's brother Golam Mostafa rushed to Mitford Hospital. His worst fears were confirmed when he saw the bodies.

“Rimon wanted to have some beef today [yesterday]. My brother took him to Kasaituli bazar just so they could have some good beef. They never made it back home,” he said, breaking down in tears.

Rahim, originally from Lakshimpur's Chandraganj, had been running a fabric business in Sadarghat for the past 15 years. He lived in the capital's Suritola area with his wife, three sons, and daughter.

IN THE MOTHER'S ARMS In Narayanganj's Rupganj, Abdul Haque and Kulsum Begum lived a quiet, hopeful life with their two young children, dreaming of sending them to madrasa one day. But the earthquake shattered those dreams in an instant.

Their daughter Fatema, aged only 10 months, died instantly when a boundary wall beside their home collapsed during the tremor. Kulsum, 30, and neighbour Jasmin Akter, 35, were critically injured.

“Fatema was in her mother's arms when the wall came down,” said neighbour Imtiaz Bhuiyan. “We removed the bricks and pulled out the child. Her mother was unconscious.”

When the father and son did

embankments disrupted the intricate drainage and sediment systems of the delta. Over time, sedimentation raised riverbeds, reducing drainage capacity and causing saline water to stagnate within polders during high tides. Instead of preventing salinity, many embanked areas became prone to waterlogging and soil degradation.

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“Shrimp has brought money, but we've lost the soil's fertility, crops, and the sweetness of water. We're trapped,” said former rice farmer Liaqat Ali, who

is now struggling with a small shrimp enclosure in Burigoalini.

The production of shrimp, locally known as “white gold”, has been in decline because of various aquaculture diseases. “We cannot go back to agriculture either, as the land here is no longer suitable for growing rice or any other crop,” he said.

Regarding unregulated shrimp farming, Neelorme said, “When shrimp exports began in the 1980s, we never questioned why we were deliberately allowing saline water into our lands.”

While export volumes have remained static, many marginal farmers have since lost their land to excessive salinity, she added.

Shrimp farming also changed the social fabric, concentrating wealth in the hands of a few landowners. Many small farmers and day labourers are now forced to survive on meagre wages, often under precarious and exploitative conditions.

“I used to grow Aman and Boro. Now I sort shrimp for Tk 300 a day... It's not a life anyone wants,” said 53-year-old Mohammad Rejaul from Shyamnagar in Satkhira.

HUMAN COST

Rising salinity is now impacting everyday life. In many coastal villages, access to safe drinking water has become a daily ordeal. Tubewells pump out saline water, and women and girls must travel miles to fetch potable water from distant sources.

Skin diseases and waterborne illnesses are common due to prolonged exposure to saline water. Pregnant women face additional health risks, as the consumption of water with high salinity is linked to various health complications.

“While we collect potable water from faraway places, we have no alternative but to use the brackish pond water and saline water from tubewells for bathing, household chores and even cooking. The water damages our skin and leaves rashes that don't heal easily,” said Rahima Khatun, a homemaker from Burigoalini.

In many households, income loss and water scarcity have pushed families into debt. Young men migrate to towns for work, leaving behind elderly parents, while women manage homes under hostile conditions.

As the dry season approaches, villagers in Satkhira and Khulna brace for another year of hardship. Women and girls will walk farther for water and farmers will gamble on uncertain harvests.

While weighing the costs, the people in the area remain resilient.

“We've lived here for generations fighting salinity... If we get support, we'll fight back. But we can't do it alone,” said Gafur.

[Our Khulna and Satkhira correspondents also contributed to the report]

A CITY LEFT IN PANIC

4 die in Dhaka; residents in fear over cracks, tilted structures after yesterday's quake

DIPAN NANDY

The KP Ghosh Street in Dhaka's Kasaituli area is usually bustling.

The narrow lane, home to two schools and the Bismillah butcher's stall — known on social media for selling camel meat — was quieter than usual due to the Friday holiday.

Yet four pedestrians walking through the lane lost their lives instantly when a building's brick-built rooftop railing collapsed due to the strong earthquake yesterday morning.

Three of the victims were identified as Rafiul Islam, 21, a student of Sir Salimullah

Medical College; Abdur Rahim, 48, a fabric trader; and Rahim's son Abul Aziz Remon, 12. At least ten others were injured, most of whom had gathered to buy beef from the butcher's stall.

Brig Gen Md Mazharul Islam Khan, director of Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital, confirmed that the three were brought in dead and one of them died while undergoing treatment.

During a visit to Kasaituli, bloodstains were still visible in front of the building. Police had cordoned off the area, yet crowds of curious onlookers continued to gather despite repeated attempts by both the army

and police to disperse them.

Nayon Ahmed, owner of Bismillah butcher's stall, said, "My shop is always crowded. Twenty people work here. Allah saved them all. There was a thick tarpaulin over the shop, so when debris fell from above, it landed on that cover. Only one person was slightly injured."

Nearby shopkeeper Md Ali Adnan recounted, "My elder brother and I were inside the shop during the quake. My brother fell, and while helping him up, we suddenly heard a loud noise. I rushed there — only to see that a building's railing had collapsed on people."

Local resident Shaheen Hossain said the building was roughly 20 to 25 years old. It originally had six storeys, but two additional floors were added about four years ago. "A portion of the newly built balcony railing on the eighth floor collapsed," he said.

Another resident, Masuma Akhter, noted the timing spared greater tragedy. "Since it was Friday, the area was less crowded. Allah saved us. On a regular day,

more than 100 people could have died."

Including these four, at least ten people were killed and several hundred were injured after the earthquake jolted Dhaka and surrounding districts.

Across the capital, the Fire Service and Civil Defence reported several incidents.

In a press statement, Anwarul Islam, inspector at the fire service media cell, confirmed the details.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Quake jolts country, causes widespread damage

STAR REPORT

The 5.7 magnitude earthquake that shook the country yesterday left a trail of damage, including causing cracks in numerous buildings, triggering fires, affecting infrastructure, and damaging shops in several districts.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the tremor was recorded at 10:38am with epicentre in Madhabdi of Narsingdi, about 13km east of the Seismic Centre at Dhaka's Agargaon.

In Narsingdi, the quake triggered a fire at Ghorashal Thermal Power Plant's sub-station and caused disruption of electricity supply to the national grid for over four hours, said Md Enamul Haque, the plant's chief engineer.

The blaze erupted at 10:38am yesterday, damaging key components of the national grid sub-station and disrupting electricity supply, said Palash Fire Service and Civil Defence's Senior Station Officer Md Abdul Shahid.

He added that two firefighting units rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control.

Md Enamul Haque said the electricity supply was resumed at around 3:00pm.



In Narsingdi's Ghorashal Bazar area, many shops were left in disarray, with items scattered on the floors.

Alam Mia, 43, a footwear trader in the market, said, "My shop had various types of shoes and other items. When the quake started, everything fell off the shelves. The furniture was damaged as well. I have suffered losses of nearly Tk 6 lakh."

Aslam Mia, 40, a grocer in the same market, said many glass items in his shop were shattered.

Mufti Sala Uddin Ansari, director of Markasul Sunnah Tahfizul Qur'an Sunnah Madrasah on

Eidgah Road, said cracks had developed in four to five spots of their six-storey building.

In Gabtoli area of Sadar upazila, bricks falling from a building injured two people, said Saifur Rahman, a local.

At least two persons were killed and over 100 injured in the quake's aftermath in Narsingdi.

In Narayanganj, three buildings were tilted, and cracks developed in 10 other buildings, said fire service officials.

The tilted buildings are located in the Ati Housing area, while the 10 other buildings are in Hirajheel Residential Area, Al Islam Nagar, and Ronny City, said Miran Mia, station officer of Adamjee Fire Station.

Besides, a cotton warehouse was gutted following an electric short-circuit after the quake in Kuripara area under Bandar upazila, said Abdullah Al Arefin, deputy assistant director of the Narayanganj Fire Service and Civil Defence.

In Rajshahi University, a portion of the Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haque Hall was tilted after the earthquake, said the hall's Provost Prof Md Shariful Islam.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

WHAT TO DO WHEN EARTHQUAKE STRIKES

Stay calm. Protect yourself. Act fast.



DURING THE SHAKE

- Drop, cover, hold
- Stay away from glass
- Protect head and neck
- Stay indoors
- Move to open space, away from buildings and poles
- In a vehicle: Stop safely and stay inside

RIGHT AFTER QUAKE

- Check for injuries
- Avoid lifts
- Turn off gas and electricity
- Expect aftershocks

HELP OTHERS

- Assist children, elderly, and persons with disabilities
- Warn others about cracks, loose balconies, fallen wires
- Keep calm and guide people away from risky spots

DOS & DON'TS

- Don't panic. Keep an emergency kit
- Keep a power bank
- Follow Met office and Fire Service updates
- EMERGENCY NUMBERS**
- Fire Service & Civil Defence
- Nearest hospitals
- City corporation hotlines

Preparedness saves lives. Know the steps. Stay alert.

Late referrals driving dengue deaths at DMCH

HELEMUL ALAM

Fourteen-year-old Akash Khan has been lying in critical condition in the dengue ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) since November 18.

A resident of Shariatpur, Akash was first admitted to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital that morning. Doctors later referred him to DMCH due to his worsening condition.

His parents brought him to Dhaka by bus because they could not afford an ambulance.

"It cost around Tk 1,000 for the three of us by bus. An ambulance would have cost eight to ten thousand," said his father, Farhad Khan. The journey took three hours.

Farhad said Akash had abdominal pain and nosebleeds, and his platelet count had dropped to 15,000, rising to 20,000 by Thursday morning.

Similarly, Mohammad Arafat, 13, from Barishal's Muladia, was admitted to the DMCH dengue ward on Wednesday after a seven-hour journey from his local hospital.

"I was treated at my upazila hospital for three days, and the doctor advised my parents to take me either to Barishal Medical College or a larger hospital in Dhaka," said Arafat.

Their stories reflect the situation at DMCH, which handles the country's most critical dengue cases.

According to DGHS, 353 dengue

patients have died and 88,893 have been hospitalised nationwide this year as of yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, among hospitals, DMCH recorded the highest number of deaths — 84 — treating 3,275 patients. The DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital in Mohakhali treated the most patients — 5,183 — but recorded 30 deaths.

Experts say delayed hospitalisation is a major contributor to the high death toll, as many critically ill patients are referred from outside districts.



Naznin Naher, in-charge of a DMCH dengue ward, said most critical cases come from outside Dhaka. "Patients often wait at home after the initial fever and arrive three or four days later, when their condition has already become severe."

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said many dengue patients arrive in extremely critical condition.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Activists form a human chain near the southern gate of the parliament in Dhaka yesterday, demanding the release of renowned baul singer Abul Sarkar who was arrested on Thursday in connection with a case filed over hurting religious sentiments.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Volunteers clean up a portion of dying Batiaghata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

The Batiaghata canal in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila has long been choked with silt and water hyacinth. Once vital for irrigation and transport, the 200-foot-wide, 8km canal had lost its natural flow and had been near dead for nearly 15 years.

Yesterday, more than 600 volunteers from BD Clean, supported by local development organisation LoCOs, launched a clean-up drive to restore it. In the first phase, they cleared a 1.5km stretch.

Ahmed Ziaur Rahman, former Batiaghata UNO and now deputy secretary at the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, coordinated and funded the initiative using a research grant from his PhD studies.

"While working here, I saw how essential the canal was and how neglected it had become," he said.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, the canal's revival will help several thousand farmers by improving irrigation in the dry season and storing freshwater during monsoon. Restored flow is also expected to ease seasonal water shortages.

Batiaghata UNO SM Mustafizur Rahman, along with local residents, officials, and police, supervised the effort.



Over 600 volunteers from BD Clean, supported by local development organisation LoCOs, launched a clean-up drive to revive a portion of the dying Batiaghata canal in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

RABNABAD RIVER IN PATUAKHALI

Sand lifting spree worsens erosion

Move to lease out three container terminals protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A coalition of different political, social and cultural organisations yesterday afternoon staged demonstration at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka in protest against the government's actions to lease out Laldiya Char, Pangaon and New Mooring container terminals to foreign companies.

The protesters also held rally and torch procession as a part of Bondar Rokkha o Corridor Birodhi Andolon (Port Protection and Anti-Corridor Movement).

They demanded cancellation of long term lease agreements involving major port facilities.

The demonstrators called for scrapping the 33-year lease of Chattogram's Laldiya Char and the 22-year lease of Pangaon Container Terminal in Keraniganj to a Danish company. They also demanded reversal of the decisions to lease out the New Mooring Container Terminal and the Bay Terminal of Chattogram Port.

The rally was presided over by Dr MA Sayeed, former president of Doctors for Health and Environment.

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Potuahali*

Illegal sand extraction continues unabated along the Rabnabad River in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila, accelerating erosion and putting embankments and nearby settlements at grave risk.

Although the government has designated "Khajura" in the Andharmanik estuary as the only legal sand quarry, influential groups have long been lifting sand from other parts of the river, particularly at night.

Locals say the unauthorised dredging, ongoing for nearly eight years, has earned these groups crores of taka while depriving the state of significant revenue.

The impact has been severe. Homesteads, croplands, mosques and roads have disappeared as the river continues to consume its banks.

Nearly half of a 10-kilometre

stretch of embankment from Debpur to Karamjatola has already collapsed.

Multiple emergency protection measures using

embankment.

Md Rezaul, a shopkeeper in Karamjatola Bazar, said around 400 feet of embankment, including recently installed



PHOTO: STAR

geo bags and geo tubes have failed within months, and over 400 families have lost their homes and agricultural land. Residents fear there is no land left to construct an alternative

geo-tubes, were washed away four months ago.

"Water is now entering through the broken embankment and we are in danger again," he said, blaming

continuous sand lifting for the worsening erosion.

The Water Development Board's Kalapara office confirmed that the entire 54/A polder embankment along the Rabnabad River is eroding every year.

Despite the ban, sand continues to be transported for various projects. Md Auwal, a staffer of the vessel MV Hojrat Ali, said they have been unloading sand near Dhankhali since September 17 for a Payra Port Road project, with each trip carrying about 3,000 cubic feet of sand.

Kalapara Assistant Commissioner (Land) Md Yasir Sadek said, "Khajura is the only permitted quarry, generating around Tk 68 lakh annually. Any sand extraction elsewhere is illegal."

UNO Kawsar Hakim said he has instructed the AC (land) to take action against those extracting sand beyond the leased area.

Late referrals driving

FROM PAGE 3

"Some die within hours of arrival. They often come in profound shock -- almost no blood pressure, no pulse, cold limbs, and fluid in the chest. By then, treatment makes little difference," he said.

He said patients from districts like Barishal, Pirojpur, and Barguna often begin travelling in pre-shock and reach Dhaka in full shock due to the long journey.

That is why deaths are highest at the DMCH, where many such patients are referred, he added.

Nazmul also pointed to a lack of proper dengue management training for doctors outside Dhaka, leading to fluid mismanagement and preventable deaths. Limited resources in smaller hospitals add to the challenge.

Public health expert Mushtuq Hussain stressed the need for early detection and decentralised healthcare.

"If people could test for dengue near their homes at low cost, cases would be identified earlier," he said. "Patients now have to come to large hospitals and wait long hours. By the time they arrive, the fever often subsides -- but the critical phase begins after the fever ends."

He suggested offering dengue tests at community clinics, similar to COVID-19 testing, to reduce pressure on large hospitals.

"Dhaka has almost no primary or secondary care -- only tertiary hospitals. Rural facilities exist but are poorly equipped. Strengthening care across the country is essential," he said.

PRAYER TIMING					
NOVEMBER 22					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN	5-05	12-45	3-45	5-21	7-00
JAMAAT	5-40	1-15	4-00	5-24	7-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

Man abducted near Rohingya camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Misceants attacked a house near the Rohingya camp in West Leda of Hnila union, Teknaf, and abducted a man named Nurul Islam, 50.

According to police, armed locals and Rohingyas stormed Nurul Hasan's home around 9:00pm on Thursday. Police exchanged heavy gunfire with the attackers as they fled.

Inspector Shahiul Islam Raju, APBn in-charge of camp 24 in Leda, said, "APBn fired about 61 rounds. The attackers eventually escaped."

Kamal Hossain, Nurul's son, said miscreants fired shots when they found the door locked, then they broke through the roof and door, dragged his father out, and took him towards the hills. "They carried heavy weapons, and the shell casings recovered at the spot appeared to be from foreign-made guns," he said. The attackers also beat up family members and looted valuables.

As of last evening, APBn and Teknaf police were conducting a joint operation to rescue Nurul.

Quake jolts country

FROM PAGE 3

Later, RU authorities decided to relocate the students to another dormitory, he added.

In Noakhali Science and Technology University, a chunk of plaster in a student dormitory fell off the roof following the earthquake.

However, no one was injured, said the university's Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Mohammad Ismail.

In Chattogram city, a six-storey building -- Mostafa Hakim Star Bhaban -- in Mansurabad area tilted and leaned onto adjacent Ashraf Mansion following the quake, triggering panic among residents and prompting an immediate response from fire service

officials.

Abdullah Ashraf, owner of Ashraf Mansion, said, "The Star Bhaban was old and already slightly tilted. The quake caused its top three floors to lean onto my building. We informed the fire service and police immediately."

Fire service official Md Hanif Mia said, "We are inspecting the structure. About 10-12 families live in the tilted building. We will provide further details after the assessment."

[Our correspondents from Narsingdi, Narayanganj, Noakhali, Rajshahi University, and staff correspondent from Chattogram contributed to the report.]



Authorities conduct a drive against illegally operated battery-run auto-rickshaws in Dhaka's Science Lab area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A city left in panic

FROM PAGE 3

In Dhaka's Khilgaon, a brick from an under-construction building fell onto a nearby two-storey structure, injuring one person. Locals assisted, and fire service units did not need to intervene.

A fire broke out at a residence in Baridhara Block-F, Road-5. Two units from the Baridhara Fire Station were deployed to extinguish the blaze. It remains unclear whether the fire was related to the earthquake.

In Swamibagh, an eight-

storey building near Mitali Bidiyapith was reported to have leaned against another structure. A fire service team from the Sutrapur station went to inspect the site.

There were also reports of damage at the office of the Chief Adviser. A team from the Satellite Fire Station visited but found no significant damage.

At Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), plaster from the driveway in the departure area fell off during the tremor, HSIA Executive Director SM Ragib Samad told The Daily Star.

In Kalabagan, residents reported that a seven-storey building had tilted.

One unit from the Mohammadpur Fire Station responded. Officials later confirmed the building was structurally sound, and no injuries were reported. Residents had called the force in panic after the quake.

Residents across the city also shared their experiences in replies to a post on The Daily Star's Facebook page.

According to readers, a building tilted in the Mugda

Madina Bagh area, and another in Shanir Akhra was also reported to have tilted.

Readers additionally reported cracks in buildings in Kalyanpur, Bonoful Housing on Road No 1, Kusumbagh in Mirpur-1, the NAC building of North South University, a house on New Eskaton Road, several buildings near Bashhtala Mosque in South Badda, Bhuiyapara, Sipahibagh, Banasree, Boishakhi Mor in Dakshin Khan, West Rampura, Niketan, and multiple locations in Arambagh.

Food supply in Gaza improving, but long way to go
Says UN as winter rains risk spoiling delivered foodstuffs

REUTERS, Geneva

More food supplies are getting into Gaza since the October ceasefire but are still falling short of huge humanitarian needs as winter rains risk spoiling delivered foodstuffs, the UN World Food Programme said yesterday.

“Things are better than before the ceasefire, but we have a long way to go. Sustained support is an important endeavour to help families rebuild their health, their nutrition and their lives,” WFP spokesperson Martin Penner told reporters in Geneva via video link from the Gaza Strip.

Hundreds of thousands of people remain in urgent need of food assistance, according to the WFP. In August a global food monitor said at least half a million people were experiencing famine in parts of the coastal enclave.

Earlier this week, Gaza was hit by heavy rain that spoiled and washed away some food supplies that residents had



been storing, senior WFP spokeswoman Abeer Etefa said. It was a sign of the challenges for families as winter sets in, she added.

Since a fragile Israel-Hamas ceasefire took effect on October 10 after two years of war that demolished much of the highly urbanised territory and caused a humanitarian disaster, the WFP has brought 40,000 tonnes of food aid into Gaza.

But it has met only 30 percent of its target for food parcels - reaching around 530,000 out of 1.6 million people, due to logistical issues getting supplies into the enclave earlier this month. However, it said it is now starting to catch up.

Though Gaza's markets are reviving, food prices remain high for Palestinians, many of whom lost their income during the war, with a chicken costing \$25, meaning many are reliant on food aid, the WFP said.

It said a woman had told the WFP in Khan Younis that she did not take her children to the market so they would not see all the food that's available, but unaffordable.

“If they go near the market, she tells them to cover their eyes,” Penner stated.

Medecins Sans Frontieres said yesterday that its medical teams in Gaza had treated Palestinian women and children this week for injuries from Israeli airstrikes and gunfire, almost six weeks into a fragile Israel-Hamas ceasefire.



People hold placards during a nationwide shutdown organised by the advocacy group Women for Change, calling on the government to declare gender-based violence and femicide a national disaster, ahead of the G20 summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Negotiate ‘now’ or lose more territory

Kremlin presses Zelensky on US peace plan requiring concessions to Russia

AGENCIES

The Kremlin yesterday warned Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky to enter negotiations “now” or lose more territory after the US sent Kyiv a peace proposal heeding to many of Moscow's demands.

“The effective work of the Russian armed forces should convince Zelensky: it is better to negotiate and do it now rather than later,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

“The space for the freedom of decision-making is shrinking for him as territories are lost during offensive actions by the Russian army,” he added, while saying Moscow had not officially received the US plan.

Zelensky said after talks with a top US Army official on Thursday evening he was ready for “honest”

- » Ukraine would give up a swathe of eastern territory to Russia
- » Kyiv would pledge to cut army size, never join Nato

work with Washington on the plan to end the war in Ukraine, while European allies pushed back against punishing concessions to Russia.

According to the US-backed plan, Ukraine would give up a swathe of eastern territory to Russia and slash the size of its army under a sweeping 28-point peace plan backed by US President Donald Trump.

Kyiv would also pledge never to join Nato, and would not get the

Western peacekeepers they have called for, although European warplanes would be stationed in Poland to protect Ukraine. A US official told AFP the draft plan includes a powerful security guarantee for Kyiv, modelled on Nato rules.

“This plan was drawn up immediately following discussions with one of the most senior members of President Zelensky's administration, Rustem Umerov, who agreed to the majority of the plan, after making several modifications, and presented it to President Zelensky,” a senior US official said. Zelensky, who met US Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll in Kyiv alone, agreed to move quickly towards agreement and the signing of a plan, said Colonel Dave Butler, US army chief of public affairs.

MESSAGE TO MILITARY
Trump floats death penalty for ‘seditious’ Democrats

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump suggested on Thursday that Democratic lawmakers who urged the military to refuse illegal orders could be executed, calling them traitors and accusing them of “seditious behavior.”

Democrats immediately slammed Trump's “absolutely vile” threats against the six senators and representatives, who made the comments in a video posted on X on Tuesday.

“This is really bad, and Dangerous to our Country. Their words cannot be allowed to stand. SEDITIOUS BEHAVIOR FROM TRAITORS!!! LOCK THEM UP???” Trump said on Truth Social.

He then added in a later post: “SEDITIOUS BEHAVIOR, punishable by DEATH!”

The 79-year-old also reposted a message from a user urging him to “hang them” and saying that the first US president, George Washington, would have done the same.

India’s anti-terror force raid Kashmir news office

AFP, New Delhi

Indian counter-terrorism units raided the office of The Kashmir Times over its alleged role in a “criminal conspiracy”, police said, with the news website calling the accusations “baseless” yesterday.

The State Investigation Agency (SIA) said the search late Thursday was part of an investigation into the Kashmir Times over their alleged involvement in a “criminal conspiracy with secessionist and other anti-national entities operating within and outside Jammu and Kashmir”.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947, and both claim the Himalayan territory in full. The outlet rejected the allegations, and said the office that was raided has been shut for the last four years and “out of operation”.

The Kashmir Times, which started in 1954, became an online-only publication after one of its other offices was raided and sealed in 2022.



Yunus, Khaleda BNP in dilemma

FROM PAGE 2

Invitations to Khaleda, BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman, the secretary general and other senior leaders on the occasion of Armed Forces Day.

Professor Muhammad Yunus attended the reception as the chief guest.

Armed Forces Day was observed yesterday with various programmes, commemorating the formation of Bangladesh's Army, Navy and Air Force during the 1971 Liberation War.

Khaleda also attended the Armed Forces Day reception at Senakunja last year, marking her first appearance at the programme in 12 years.

Draft text

FROM PAGE 12

However, it did not specify whether this money would be provided directly by wealthy governments, or other sources.

That may disappoint poorer nations who want stronger guarantees that public money will be spent on this area.

Investments in adaptation - like improving infrastructure to cope with extreme heat, or reinforcing buildings against worsening storms - is often vital for saving lives but offers little financial return, making it difficult for such investments to attract private finance.

The draft deal would also launch a “dialogue” at the next three COP climate summits on trade, involving governments and other actors including the World Trade Organization.

That would be a win for countries including China who have long demanded that trade concerns be part of the world's climate summit. But it may be uncomfortable for the EU, as demands for such discussions have often focused on the EU carbon border levy.

Suspect dies

FROM PAGE 12

Mokter's son, Mridul, said he too had been picked up by DB with his father on Thursday. He was released after his father's death.

“They detained both of us and took us to the conference room of Pallabi Police Station, where they tortured my father,” he alleged.

He added that when Mokter was taken to DMCH on Thursday night, doctors advised the cops to bring the patient to the hospital without delay.

“My father fell asleep in DB custody while writhing in severe stomach pain, and later DB members found him dead,” he added.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner (Media) Talebur Rahman said a three-member committee has been formed to investigate the death.

Kibria was shot dead by armed assailants in Dhaka's Pallabi area on Monday. His wife later filed a case with Pallabi Police

for the “yes” vote and the national election together.

Several parties have already begun printing leaflets and preparing online and offline strategies dedicated to promoting the “yes” vote.

Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, assistant secretary general of Jamaat and head of its publicity wing, said, “If ‘yes’ wins, the proposals in the July charter will be implemented. We want the people to take the side of ‘yes’, and we will campaign for it. Other parties in the movement will also do the same.”

Maolana Yunus Ahmad, secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, said, “Our candidates will campaign for the ‘yes’ vote while conducting election campaigns.”

Ensure smooth, festive election

FROM PAGE 2

ready and determined to protect the country's sovereignty from any aggressive external attack,” he added.

To this end, he said efforts are underway to modernise the army, navy and air force, enhance training, and integrate modern technology into the forces in line with developed countries.

Recalling the joint operation of the Army, Navy and Air Force on this day in 1971, Prof Yunus said their combined efforts against the Pakistani occupation forces paved the way for Bangladesh's final victory in the Liberation War on December 16, 1971.

He said the contribution

of the Armed Forces during the 1971 Liberation War will be inscribed in bold letters in Bangladesh's history.

Prof Yunus noted that the Armed Forces have always stood by the people - whether during national disasters or the 2024 student-led mass uprising - and continue to support ongoing reconstruction and reform efforts.

“I believe the Bangladesh Armed Forces, loyal to democratic and disciplined leadership, will continue this tradition of sacrifice and service for the nation, combining professional skills with patriotism,” Prof Yunus said.

Over the past 37 years, he noted, Bangladesh's

peacekeepers have successfully completed 63 missions in 43 countries.

“At present, our peacekeepers are engaged in 10 missions in different parts of the world,” he added.

Prof Yunus also said Bangladesh is now one of the largest contributors of women peacekeepers and has earned global recognition as a responsible and reliable partner in international efforts for peace and security.

He expressed sincere gratitude to members of the Armed Forces and said efforts must continue to provide timely training and necessary equipment to Bangladeshi peacekeepers so they can effectively

operate in challenging and high-risk environments around the world.

He thanked the diplomats stationed in Dhaka and guests from the friendly countries for joining the Armed Forces Day celebration.

“On this occasion, we gratefully recall the contribution of the people of our friendly nations during our War of Liberation. I am also thankful for the excellent training and assistance provided to our Armed Forces by your countries,” Prof Yunus said.

“I must mention that it is a unique opportunity and great experience for our troops to work

together with the global peacekeepers under the umbrella of the United Nations,” he mentioned.

Prof Yunus assured full support to the United Nations in the global peace efforts by the Armed Forces.

Earlier, the chiefs of the three services paid a courtesy call on the chief adviser on the occasion of Armed Forces Day 2025.

During the meeting, Prof Yunus decorated Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman with the Senabahini Padak (SBP).

On the occasion of Armed Forces Day, he also unveiled the cover of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Training Compendium.

Israel hits

FROM PAGE 12

to seize parts of a key Roman-era archaeological site in the West Bank, reports Al Jazeera online.

Large swaths of Sebastia could be appropriated under a plan announced by Israel's Civil Administration, with the anti-settlement watchdog Peace Now saying the site is about 1,800 dunams (180 hectares or 450 acres) in size.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has again reiterated his staunch opposition to a Palestinian state, saying Israel would not shift on the issue even to secure normalisation with Saudi Arabia.

Asked about the prospect during an interview with Israeli news outlet Abu Ali Express, Netanyahu said: “There will be no Palestinian state. As simple as that ... It's an existential threat to Israel.”

However, the Israeli leader said he still has “cautious optimism” about potential Saudi normalisation, which he claims was set back by the Gaza war.

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Green Meadow

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A warning, not a surprise

Will we finally invest in earthquake resilience?

Friday morning’s 5.7 magnitude earthquake, which led to at least ten fatalities (as reported at 8.45pm, November 21) across the country, should serve as a wake-up call. The quake’s epicentre was located in Madhabdi, Narsingdi and strong tremors were felt throughout the country, especially in Dhaka. Several hundred people were injured in the capital and surrounding districts, largely from falling objects and the panic-driven scramble to get outside. Among the injured in the capital, at least six were Dhaka University students, who jumped off their hall buildings in fear.

Residents across the capital rushed onto the streets as the tremors intensified. However, given the density of structures in the city, it is doubtful how safe they would have been had the earthquake caused more infrastructural damage than what has been reported so far. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the quake’s shallow depth likely intensified the shaking, increasing the potential for destruction—particularly in densely populated areas with vulnerable structures, such as those found in Dhaka and other cities of the country. Given these conditions, it is nothing short of a miracle that no large-scale damage has been reported, although some structural harm has occurred.

But the question remains: how long can we continue to rely on such miracles? As we have previously warned, small tremors often signal the threat of a larger quake. Scientific data also show that Bangladesh—particularly the Dhaka region—is seismically active due to underlying tectonics, with the Indian plate pushing into the Eurasian plate and the presence of active fault systems. Against this reality, the lack of preparedness we have grown accustomed to is both reckless and incomprehensible. This daily has repeatedly urged the relevant authorities to learn from examples in our own neighbourhood and take necessary measures to prepare the country for potential earthquakes, yet to no avail. Despite experts’ warnings that Dhaka could face catastrophic consequences in the event of a major quake, the authorities have maintained a nonchalant attitude, putting millions of lives at risk. Proper monitoring and enforcement of the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) 2020 are almost non-existent, while recent amendments to Dhaka’s Detailed Area Plan allow even more high-rise buildings—further increasing population density in an already overcrowded city.

Undoing the harm caused by years of neglect will take time. However, the work must start. Authorities must ensure that the current BNBC is strictly followed, not only in design but also in reinforcement placement. Existing buildings should be retrofitted or demolished if found unsafe. A comprehensive plan, which should include the recruitment and training of rescue-team volunteers as well as a mechanism to routinely inspect and regulate structures and buildings across the country, must be developed immediately. Additionally, extensive public awareness and training programmes are essential. Regular drills in schools, offices, and other public institutions should be implemented as part of preparedness measures, so that injuries and casualties can be minimised during future earthquakes.

Mangrove forests are not expendable

Sitakunda’s forests must not be sacrificed for a recreational park

It is deeply concerning to learn of the fate of yet another mangrove forest in Chattogram’s Sitakunda upazila, where the district administration has built a recreational park by felling thousands of trees. Reportedly, around 194 acres of land in North Salimpur mauza were officially gazetted as forest land under Section 4 of the Forest Act on January 9, 1986, and later planted with mangroves by the Coastal Forest Division in the 1990–91 fiscal year. Despite this legal protection, the Chattogram district administration constructed the park, claiming the land is recorded in its name in the official *khatian* (record of rights). The forest department and the district administration are now at odds over control of the land.

Under Section 5 of the Forest Act, 1927, land notified under Section 4 and officially gazetted as forest cannot be repurposed. The Supreme Court reinforced this in its October 6, 2013 verdict, emphasising that such forest land must be preserved. Yet, despite repeated objections from forest officials, the district administration reportedly proceeded to develop DC Park, felling at least 5,000 trees and erecting structures, restaurants, seating areas, and pathways. Satellite imagery from 2018 to 2025 confirms the scale of habitat loss.

We have witnessed similar patterns of institutional overreach many times in the past. Just as the Roads and Highways Department sought 174 acres inside a reserve forest to widen a road, and the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (Palli Bidyut) attempted to install power lines through another reserved forest—both ignoring the forest department’s objections—here too a government authority moved ahead without resolving legal and ecological concerns. The question remains: why do state agencies treat forests as vacant land, rather than as legally safeguarded ecosystems essential for the country’s climate safety? Mangrove belts in Sitakunda and Mirsarai have repeatedly proven their value, shielding communities from major cyclones while reducing storm surges and erosion. These forests are frontline protectors of our coastline, sustaining biodiversity and safeguarding human lives. Clearing them removes this vital shield, leaving coastal communities exposed to cyclones, flooding, and irreversible ecological damage. If control of the land is restored to the forest department, it could be transformed into a coastal greenbelt, strengthening natural defences while supporting wildlife, water systems, and air quality. The government must, therefore, resolve the ongoing dispute between the forest department and the Chattogram district administration and act decisively to protect Sitakunda’s mangrove forests.

Our winter is fading, but the world remains indifferent



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Once upon a time, there was a season called winter. It was nicely tucked between late autumn (Hemonto) and spring (Boshonto) in a deck of six seasons. It was a time when nature would drape our cities and villages in a soft white shawl. Glasses of fresh date juice were sold from earthen pots to the early risers. The jaggery (*nolen gur*) made from date juice was the hallmark of the season which would find its way into various pitha and payesh. The golden glow of mustard fields would signal the merrymaking that goes on in the village fairs featuring *lathi khela*, *putul naach*, and *nagor dola*. That time, by 2100, is gone.

The Daily Star cites climate scientists to warn of a time when winter will vanish from our season cycle by 2100. The news sent a chill down the spine; mourning becomes winter. It’s not only a season that is vanishing. It is a feeling that a time of the year that defined who we are is not going to be there. My generation can sense its fleeting years, but to think our next generation will not experience winter is a sobering fact. A pause in the calendar that made the otherwise hot and humid year feel complete is dissolving. And the land of six seasons will feel like one long, unbroken summer.

I may sound poetic, but, as Ezra Pound has put it, “poetry is news that stays news.” And the news is: Bangladesh is warming by roughly 0.16 degrees Celsius per decade, and winter nights in Dhaka are warming at nearly 0.45 degrees Celsius per decade. Bangladesh’s average temperature can potentially rise by up to 4.5 degrees Celsius by 2100. As the unused blanket lies folded near my feet and November nights are drowned out by the drone of ceiling fans, I fear the fearmongering scientists are right.

Winter is more than a season. It is our way of life—a tradition. What happens to the fanfares of winter when the air is no longer cold enough for the dew to set in, fog to rise, the crops to be moist, birds to migrate, or people to gather around woodfires? Warming erases culture as surely as it changes climate. And it will change our agriculture, too: rice, wheat, mustard and winter vegetables need specific low temperatures to grow properly. The change in temperature will confuse the animals that hibernate, impacting the number of insect pollinators. This in turn will affect flowering cycles and stress livestock. The lack of cold

will allow mosquitoes to thrive and worsen vector-borne diseases like dengue and chikungunya. Meanwhile, the steel and glass structures of our cities will continue to trap heat and add to the weather, turning winter into an unending extension of summer. To think of winter-related outdoor activities and outerwear as nostalgic relics of the past will further shape livelihoods. People who depend on these items will have to reinvent their purposes.



With winter gone, what will happen to our rice, wheat, mustard and winter vegetables that need specific low temperatures to grow properly?

FILE PHOTO: STAR

Then again, you might think a lot can happen in the next 20 years to make many of these issues irrelevant anyway. But there is no harm in preparing for what to expect from these changes. Winter is becoming weird. In many places in the global North, winter storms are becoming recurrent. This allows climate change deniers to suggest that global warming is a hoax, as is evident by the severe cold experienced by Europe and North America. But the weather oddities need to be seen against the climate change patterns.

The report, jointly prepared by the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the Norwegian Meteorological Institute, also claims the country may face extreme heat almost throughout the year. “By the 2070s,

coupled with human encroachment can pose an existential threat to the Sundarbans. In short, we are witnessing a slow death of the delta; it is losing its ability to protect, feed, and sustain us.

In the story of a warming world, the Bengal Delta is the frontline, and its wounds are already visible. And yet, at every COP summit, the same question hovers in the air: why are those who contributed the least to global emissions suffering the most? Bangladesh emits almost nothing compared to industrialised nations, but we remain one of the worst victims. During the first phases of industrialisation, when the Western factories belched carbon for centuries, exploiting fortunes of the colonies and building their futures on fossil fuels, no compensation was given. Now, when the winter is not

schools must learn not only the names of Bangladesh’s six seasons but also what threatens their survival. They should understand why trees matter, why plastic chokes our drains, and why heat rises in cities strangled by concrete. Responsibility begins with knowing, and knowing must start early.

We are a small country, but not so in numbers. Our voice needs to be loud and responsible. While we adopt better policies, greener cities, sustainable agriculture, keeping both ethnic and cultural diversity in mind, we need to demand that climate justice is not a charity. We must remind the world that losing winter is not only about losing cool days; it is about losing natural balance, identity, memory, rhythm, and heritage. The chilled glass of date juice today should not be the trace of a dying culture.

Water security demands inclusion of women’s voices



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NAZMUN NAHER

Water sustains life, but it also reflects inequality. In Bangladesh, discussions on water security often centre on floods, salinity, or urban scarcity, while one crucial aspect remains overlooked: gender. Women and girls carry a disproportionate share of the burden in managing water for their families, yet their needs and voices are seldom reflected in policy or planning.

Across the country, women are primarily responsible for the labour-intensive and time-consuming task of collecting, storing, and managing household water. In many rural areas, women walk long distances to fetch water, sometimes waiting hours at crowded water points. According to Unicef, women and children worldwide spend a combined 200 million hours each day collecting water. In developing countries, they may spend up to six hours daily on this chore, walking nearly six kilometres on average. Even in areas where pumps have been installed, women still spend long hours collecting water due to waiting time. A similar situation persists in Bangladesh’s coastal villages and urban slums, where access to safe water remains unreliable

and unequal.

During droughts, floods, or riverbank erosion, the time spent fetching water increases sharply. This extra effort often comes at the expense of girls’ education, women’s resting time, or income opportunities. Beyond the physical strain, the constant anxiety of ensuring safe water for the family creates an invisible psychological burden that rarely appears in official statistics.

Climate change is intensifying these inequalities. Erratic rainfall, rising salinity, and recurring floods have already disrupted freshwater sources across Bangladesh. Women are forced to adapt—walking farther, carrying and storing more, or negotiating with neighbours and local authorities—all while maintaining their regular domestic responsibilities.

Urban areas tell a similar story. Dhaka, Chattogram, and other cities face severe water stress. Irregular supply, low pressure, and contamination compel households to rely on tube wells, shared taps, or informal vendors. Even where piped water exists, women still manage the

household’s daily water use—cooking, washing, cleaning—while resolving issues with landlords or municipal suppliers. When water runs short or becomes contaminated, it is women who bear the immediate consequences and find coping strategies.

The gendered dimension of water insecurity extends beyond household labour. Access to clean water shapes education, health, and livelihoods. Girls often miss school when sanitation facilities are inadequate or when fetching water conflicts with class hours. During menstruation, lack of access to water and privacy exacerbates absenteeism and poor hygiene. Many women reduce or forgo paid work to manage household water needs, losing valuable income and autonomy. Yet, despite their central role, women remain underrepresented in decision-making—from community water user groups to national policy platforms.

While Bangladesh has made progress in water access and climate adaptation, most strategies still treat water scarcity as a technical or environmental issue rather than a social one. Policies often overlook the gendered realities of who collects, stores, and manages water. Without a deliberate gender lens, such programmes risk reinforcing the very inequalities they aim to solve.

Encouragingly, there are examples that show what inclusive approaches can achieve. Women-led water committees, gender-sensitive WASH programmes, and participatory planning initiatives have improved both efficiency and sustainability. Where

women are involved, water systems are better maintained and hygiene practices are stronger. These initiatives demonstrate that empowering women in water governance strengthens entire communities.

To create lasting change, gender equality must be built into every level of water management from infrastructure design to disaster preparedness. This includes collecting sex-disaggregated data, conducting gender-responsive research, ensuring women’s representation in decision-making bodies, and promoting technologies that reduce their workload. Recognising the unpaid labour women perform in managing water is also essential to designing fair and effective policies. Simple measures, such as reducing the distance to safe water points, ensuring privacy in sanitation facilities, or involving women in planning, can significantly reduce burdens while improving health and education outcomes.

Bangladesh’s journey toward water security cannot succeed without closing the gender gap. Women are not passive victims of scarcity; they are central actors in water management and adaptation. Listening to them, addressing their needs, and valuing their contributions will not only promote gender justice but also enhance national resilience to climate and environmental challenges. Therefore, recognising and responding to the hidden gender gap in water security is no longer optional; it is essential for building a more sustainable and just Bangladesh.

Time for a salt policy that serves the sector’s needs



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MOHIBBULLAH AL MARUF

The commercial salt production in Bangladesh began in Cox’s Bazar in 1961. Since then, the sector has expanded gradually through the support of government agencies and development partners. The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) has remained central to this growth, shaping policies, managing production, and supporting producers. In 2024, the sector reached its highest output in 62 years, producing 22.34 lakh tonnes of salt, helped largely by an unusually long and intense heatwave. Currently, it provides livelihoods for 41,355 farmers and more than 2,100 mill workers. Nearly 50 lakh people depend directly or indirectly on the salt production value chain.

Despite its scale and significance, the sector remains informal in nature. Most workers in the sector, particularly in production fields and mills, continue to work in unsafe environments without any formal legal protection. They are not covered under the Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006. In addition, the sector suffers from low production efficiency, outdated techniques, significant post-harvest losses, unstable market prices, and weak regulation. The national salt policy was last revised in 2022. It is set for revision in 2026. This presents a timely opportunity to address the sector’s most pressing concerns.

Recently, a policy review based on a scoping study of the salt sector as part of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO’s) project was undertaken by Innovision. The review identified the rising cost of production as one of the most pressing issues. The cost of production of one mound (40 kilograms) of salt has increased from Tk 250 to Tk 400 in recent times, primarily due to a rapid rise in land rent. A 2020 report from the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission estimated the average rent for one *kani* (about 0.6 acres) of land at Tk 25,000. Current data shows this has more than doubled to Tk 54,375. In the same period, the market price of salt has declined from Tk 526 per mound in 2023 to Tk 380 per mound in early 2024 and to Tk



FILE PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO

A grounded, data-driven, and inclusive policy can transform the salt sector into a stable source of rural employment.

247 per mound in 2025. This price is well below the average cost of production and has pushed many producers into a loss.

The situation is made worse by limited access to formal credit and the absence of secure land leasing systems. Most small-scale producers depend on advance payments from informal lenders, which weakens their ability to negotiate prices and often

methods.

Processing is another critical challenge. Despite producing 95 percent of the country’s raw salt, Cox’s Bazar lacks advanced processing mills, forcing product transportation to Dhaka, Chattogram, and Narayanganj, which adds costs and reduces quality. A few large firms operate vacuum evaporation mills requiring heavy investment

gap in the current salt policy. The 2022 policy divides demand into edible, fisheries, livestock, and industrial, but the categories lack clarity. Edible demand is based on a per capita intake of 14 grams, a figure that lacks empirical support and exceeds the World Health Organization’s recommended limit of five grams. It is also unclear whether fisheries include fish feed and fish processing, or

if livestock covers both feed and leather processing. Our study identified 14 distinct salt-consuming sectors, where human consumption accounts for only 26 percent of total demand, fisheries and livestock together represent 42 percent, and the industrial sector accounts for 32 percent. The industrial growth projections, drawn from the 2020 Tariff Commission report, assume growth rates of five percent in 2021, 10 percent in 2022, and 15 percent from 2023 onward, but these estimates are not backed by evidence.

The issue of imports adds further complexity. Although domestic production is more than sufficient to meet edible salt needs, Bangladesh continues to import over 10 lakh tonnes of salt and raw materials annually. These imports peak during the off-season, especially between July and December, raising the possibility that imported salt enters the edible market and pulls prices down. In many cases, these imports are necessary because certain industrial sectors require higher-grade salt that local producers cannot supply. Yet, gaps in documentation, weak customs verification, and opaque supply-chain arrangements create opportunities for misdeclaration and exploitation by influential business interests.

As the 2026 salt policy review approaches, addressing structural gaps in the sector is critical. Rising production costs, insecure land access, and reliance on informal credit have squeezed small-scale producers, while inadequate infrastructure and limited processing technologies constrain productivity. Market distortions from a few large firms and high processing losses emphasise the need for accurate data. Clear demand estimation, identification of salt-consuming sectors, and updated growth projections are essential for effective planning. Persistent imports add pressure to the market, emphasising the need for stronger monitoring and regulation. Strategic interventions, including secure land leasing, affordable finance, targeted infrastructure, decentralised processing, and strengthened governance, can improve efficiency, equity, and resilience. Enhancing working conditions, safeguarding labour rights, and supporting micro and small enterprises in product diversification are also vital.

Although often overlooked, salt remains vital to both livelihoods and industry in Bangladesh. A grounded, data-driven, and inclusive policy can transform the sector into a stable source of rural employment, a driver of industrial growth, and a model for market system reform.

Powering Bangladesh’s future with young entrepreneurs



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The image of a young Bangladeshi sitting behind a laptop running their own startup or toggling between commissions, freelance tasks, and fleeting gig contracts is no longer marginal: it is fast becoming the reflection of the country’s youth aspiration.

In a nation where the median age hovers around 27 years, the choice for many young people is shifting: less the long slog of a formal job, more the flexibility of entrepreneurship or gig economy and promise of building something of their own. If this moment is seized, Bangladesh may convert its demographic bulge into a lasting entrepreneurial dividend. However, if it is left unmanaged, a generation could find itself adrift, their potential and ambition undercapitalised.

The appeal of gig-work in Bangladesh is real. The remote platform economy (cloud-work) generates \$100 million annually, according to a report. Simultaneously, around 20 lakh young Bangladeshis currently face the harsh reality of unemployment. The “not in education, employment or training” (NEET) rate for youth is still high, which is compounded by weak formal job creation and rising expectations.

These trends point to an obvious phenomenon: for Bangladesh’s youths, traditional employment is no longer the sole option.

Gig work is not the same as building scalable businesses. The gig economy offers flexibility, immediate earnings, and entry-level autonomy, but many young workers are often trapped in precarity. They lack, as evidence shows, financial protection, such as no insurance, benefits, and income security, while facing remittance restrictions and infrastructural challenges. In short, the state of gig work in Bangladesh can only be a stepping stone for its youth.

What Bangladesh must aim for then is the next step: converting the gig mindset into entrepreneurial momentum. That means enabling youth to move from simply surviving on short-term tasks to launching small businesses, joining outsourcing value chains, building startups with growth potential, or innovating in sectors that are globally connected.

The country is already fertile, as there are 38 lakh young entrepreneurs (aged 18-35) across Bangladesh. With the right policy, education, and bridge-building, that number can move from running micro-enterprises to running larger, more impactful, and sustainable businesses.

There are three especially promising domains. One, outsourcing and digital platforms, as Bangladesh sits amongst the top freelancing countries in the world. Young people fluent in English and accustomed to digital communications can plug into global value chains in freelancing, remote software design, content creation, translation, data-entry, and so on. Two, startups and small business innovation: the startup ecosystem is nascent but accelerating. An increasing number of IT graduates can launch ventures in agritech, edtech, fintech, and other sectors. These ventures have global relevance and scalability if supported properly. And three, enterprise innovation in traditional sectors: youth-led small business innovation, such as combining digital tools with agriculture, logistics, and manufacturing, can unlock new pathways in sectors long considered low tech.

For youth entrepreneurship to scale up, one critical bridge remains to be built: between industry and academia. Many young Bangladeshis graduates have theoretical knowledge but lack an entrepreneurial mindset, mentorship, networks, or exposure

to business realities. According to labour market data, only 6.4 percent of formal firms in Bangladesh offered structured training programmes in 2022, far below the regional average of 28 percent.

Data suggest that technical and vocational education and training institutions (TVET) enrolments have grown, but the link to actual business creation remains weak.

If universities, polytechnics, research

are required. Skills upgrading and certification for digital economy readiness are a must. Beyond literacy and primary schooling, youth must be equipped with market-relevant skills: coding, digital marketing, remote collaboration, data analytics, and business planning. Access to seed capital and risk-tolerant financing for youth enterprises should be widely available. Young startups often fail not for lack of



FILE VISUAL: ZARIF FAIAZ

institutes, and training centres can partner with industry, not merely to supply labour, but to launch venture labs, mentorship clinics, internships-to-entrepreneurship pathways, a new pipeline of youth entrepreneurs could emerge. Industry can provide real-world exposure, seed-funding, business links, and regulatory know-how. As we know, academia provides the research, networks, and space for risk-taking. Together, they can close the “valley of death” that so many young ideas hit after launch.

In order to coax Bangladesh’s youth entrepreneurial energy into sustainable growth, the following strategic imperatives

idea but for lack of finance and networks. A targeted youth-entrepreneur fund, perhaps with government matching or blended public-private financing, would unlock more ventures.

Simplified business registration, mentoring networks, and support hubs also have a crucial role to play. According to the World Bank’s *Doing Business 2020*, Bangladesh was ranked 168th out of 190 countries. Young entrepreneurs are especially hampered by regulatory friction. Support hubs must offer mentorship, legal-business advisory, and networking opportunities.

If formal recognition and enablement of gig-to-startup transitions are made smooth, many youth who start with gig work would graduate into full business owners. Policy must recognise this pathway: provide tax-friendly regimes for micro-entrepreneurs, offer business incubators targeted at former gig workers, and build a clear and supportive pathway.

In addition, a deeper industry-academia collaboration will expedite innovation and economic growth, and develop a highly skilled workforce. To reap the benefits, universities and technical institutes need to embed entrepreneurship modules, industry internships for business teams, startup incubators on campus, and collaboration with established companies for spin-outs. Industry must commit to taking on interns as entrepreneurs-in-residence, provide business challenges for student teams, and co-invest in youth ventures.

If Bangladesh fails to harness youth entrepreneurship, two risks loom. First, the demographic dividend will slip into a demographic liability: youth labour will swell informal sectors, job frustration will heighten, and the impetus for migration (or worse, societal disaffection) will grow. Second, Bangladesh will lose its chance to climb the value-chain ladder. Low-cost factory work cannot be the growth story indefinitely. To break into higher-value services, innovation, digital exports, and small business ecosystems, youth entrepreneurship is critical.

Conversely, if Bangladesh amplifies this shift wisely, it could dramatically reshape its economy: a generation of young Bangladeshi business owners, globally connected freelancers, and local innovators, creating jobs for others, exporting services, and reducing dependence on one-dimensional sectors. Time is of the essence because the young workforce is large, mobile, digitally literate, and increasingly impatient for meaningful opportunity.

If Bangladesh is to capitalise on its youthful population, it must not only give them jobs but also give them platforms, networks, and licences to invent. Youth entrepreneurs are not the marginal option: they are the essential route to a more resilient, diversified, and future-proof economy. Let us build the bridges now.



PHOTOS & DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

CREATIVE NONFICTION

OF JASMINES, departure, and desire for a déjà vu

I went to my window as I always do. Or perhaps, I do not do it regularly, sometimes I do. On other days, someone from the support staff would do it before I come to my office. But I imagine performing this ritual regularly, every morning, during the weekdays I mean—go by the window, pull the curtains aside, open the glass shutter and then look at the tree. A lush shiuli tree full of leaves, but not flowers in this season. That day, I went by the window and the tree was cut down at the base, with a few inches remaining, muddy brown colour, resembling an abstract sculpture emerging from the earth.

MANOSH CHOWDHURY

Shell shocked, I talked to the office staff. They all looked sad, a little perplexed too, perhaps seeing my very unusual, distressed face. They claimed it was done by the dean's office, the office in-charge of the surrounding trees, and was done a few days back, not yesterday. I was in shock of losing my tree, my comforting window view, and then was in denial that I do not look at my window daily. But why would they do that? My non-teaching colleagues told me in unison, "Termite, sir! The tree was all eaten by the termites in the base."

I called Badrul shaheb, the admin at the dean's office, a very down-to-earth, clarifying officer, a rare kind in Jahangirnagar University as I have experienced over the years.

"What happened, Badrul shaheb? Why did you cut the shiuli tree down?"

"Sir! Termite. The tree was all eaten at its base. Ui-e pura khaya felsilo."

"But I didn't keep any serious documents under the tree. Then what was wrong with waiting till it died. At least there was no sign of any ill-health in the tree." I kept on expressing my frustrations.

"Sir! With this creature, you should never take a chance."

"Don't tell me, please. I have been a victim of these creatures many times. But not with a living tree. And it was my window, my view. Didn't you ever think of asking me before executing your decision?"

"I understand, sir. It looks empty when you lose a tree beside the window." Badrul seemed to find some reasons to become empathetic. Still he didn't sound accepting of my 'right' to define or design my window view. He was rather matter of fact about it.

"This is utterly disturbing, and I am very shocked by your action." I was still looking for words to express what I was feeling.

"Sir, I know you planted this tree. So I should have consulted with you before this. I am sorry. I will plant a new one very soon."

It was interesting. Badrul found a very strong reason to be sorry for. I was a bit unsure whether to be sad that he didn't care about anyone's window view or be happy that he found a reason to believe that I had a right considering the tree's origin. He recalled that I had planted it. Well, not literally. It was under my supervision.

It all began about 12 years back. I took over the chairperson role from my predecessor, as this is a regulation job in some public universities, with a rotation policy of chairperson. Like many others, I tried to be a creative admin to stamp something new. Eventually I decided to plant shiuli trees by every window of the teachers' room. We are in the ground floor, a fate decided years back by the relatively powerful and older officials of the university, and not much liked by the department of anthropology professionals. Yet, I found that the decision played well in

envisaging my creative trick. I talked to the designated gardener and planted those trees. Except for three or four, all survived. Some of them didn't get any sunlight, because of their position. During the autumn, all the trees are in bloom. You can see shiulis lying on the grass, blossoming on the branches. My desire didn't end. I thought of two jasmine trees-jui or juthika in Bangla—beside the building gate we use most. I started consulting with our gardener again.

That shiuli is also jasmine in English is not something I ever liked. Well, night jasmine, to be precise. Not that I have always been aware of their English names. Back then, I needed to check this in a dictionary, and now I need to Google it. I am very bad at English proper nouns. Or in a more candid expression, I am

I look at the window. I look at this young plant. Almost every morning. I keep on doing it now regularly. But I do not always see this young plant. I see the older one. The bigger one. The fuller one. The one that was cut down. I would have loved to let this young plant know. "Look, I look at you. But I don't see you. I am here to see the tree that was in the past. And it has nothing to do with your future appearance or beauty. It is about my past."

very bad in English in general. More so in using the proper nouns, with the names of vegetables, flowers, or fruits. If I ever utter 'brinjal', you must not be sure that I am referring to a brinjal or eggplant. I could very well mean an 'okra' in my visualisation. It happens with utensils too. I know the English names of the items I have to buy from the shop quite easily. After all, you don't ask for a screw-driver in Bangla, even in a Bangladeshi shop.

My dislike resurfaced again when all the shiuli plants started growing and I was trying to grow two jasmine vines. For some inexplicable reason, I never forgot jasmine for jui. Or maybe because there have always been some jasmine scented toiletries in the market. I just wanted to know the English name of shiuli, once again

I mean. I hated that no specific English word was assigned for this flower. It was not fair, I felt.

Those two jasmine vines died long back. Partly because of some construction work and carelessness from the constructing team, partly because unlike shiulis, jasmines needed a lot of care. And jasmines grow slowly. I had to give up my desire of seeing two vines coming close to each other from both sides of the gate. Shiulis, though, kept on occupying my mind. As days went by, I gave up my habit of checking on every tree, beside all my colleagues' windows. I only look at my window, see the plant, full of flowers. When autumn is over, I still look at it. There is no flower left. All the leaves then look more distinct, more attractive. I do it every morning, on the weekdays. Or perhaps I do not do it regularly. I imagine doing it. And this is why I didn't know that the shiuli tree was cut down a few days back.

Badrul kept his words. I didn't even need to remind him. Actually, I lost my enthusiasm. I was not there to see a tiny plant by the window. Hardly had I looked at the window anymore. But Badrul called me right after planting a young tree. I had just reached my office that morning. His voice was full of tenderness, empathy, and laughter.

"Did you see, sir?"

"No! So you kept your word." I tried to be as generous as possible.

"Go to the window. I was just waiting for the right season to come."

I thanked Badrul, and didn't mention at all that I was not feeling any good about it. All I tried was to match up with the energy and goodwill Badrul showed. I ended the call and didn't go to the window immediately.

Within two or three days, I started looking at the window. A young shiuli plant, 18 inches or maybe 20, needing a pole to stand firm. It's been more than two months. It still needs the pole. It is still very thin. It has no distinction of a shiuli, rather like any unknown wild plant, insignificant and waiting for your pity. Nonetheless, I started to look at it. Every morning, well, almost every morning on my weekdays. That day, I saw flowers—three or four. The plant is yet to stand on its own. I couldn't be sure if it felt good, if it felt awkward. I still am unsure.

I look at the window. I look at this young plant. Almost every morning. I keep on doing it now regularly. But I do not always see this young plant. I see the older one. The bigger one. The fuller one. The one that was cut down. I would have loved to let this young plant know.

"Look, I look at you. But I don't see you. I am here to see the tree that was in the past. And it has nothing to do with your future appearance or beauty. It is about my past."

Manosh Chowdhury is a professor of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University. He has written extensively in Bangla across genres, including fiction.

REFLECTIONS

Moon, memory, manifesto: A PERSONAL, LYRICAL ESSAY ON ATRAI

AZFAR HUSSAIN

These two things—the river and the train—continue to haunt and fascinate me. Their sounds—and their silences—are deeply woven into the texture of my daily life. I keep hearing the river streaming by—and the train whizzing past—in my head and even in my dreams. I'll never forget that full moon hanging like a brimming bowl of milk, tilting gently to pour its light over the River Atrai—the river of my childhood—where the fresh eternity of silver danced with the tiny infinitudes of ripples: cadenced, luminous, mud-colored. Nor will I forget the sight of a train getting wet and glistening in the afternoon rain in Atrai.

How could I forget you, Atrai—my river, my place? Atrai is both the name of a river and of a rural region in Bangladesh. I spent part of my childhood in a landless peasant community there—a place that, at the time, was an explosive site of Maoist activism and was even declared an "independent zone" during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. And when I was barely 13, one gray afternoon, it was a Maoist from Atrai—my uncle's friend—who placed in my hands a soiled copy of *The Communist Manifesto* in a Bangla translation and urged me to read it.

He did not, I recall, hand me the little red books that were circulating with a vengeance at the time. So, at 13 years old, I puzzled over and struggled with many ideas in the manifesto but ended up clinging to two words at least: 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat'. I made only a feeble sense of them, forming only a vague idea of what a class struggle might mean. Even as a child, however unclear my ideas were at the time, I immediately identified with the proletariat, imagining that we must combat the bourgeoisie to build a better world.

Still, the river and the train—and that full moon, an abundant fountain of silver, cascading over the river Atrai—never ceased to enchant me. Yet it's also true that I saw the same river—Atrai—drenched in blood and swollen with corpses and saw the moon bleed heavily in the prison-cell of the sky. I heard the train groan as it passed, packed with nothing but disposable numbers—the brutal faceless anonymity that the powerful multiply effortlessly. I also watched the rain morph into a raging gust, a violent burst of dark petals in the



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

I made only a feeble sense of them, forming only a vague idea of what a class struggle might mean. Even as a child, however unclear my ideas were at the time, I immediately identified with the proletariat, imagining that we must combat the bourgeoisie to build a better world.

night, ripping apart peasants' mud huts in and around Atrai. I remember—with brutal, burning clarity—how my grandfather's thatched roof fell apart, as if it was a forced offering to the swollen clouds. By no means did the damn rain seem beautiful then.

And guess what? By 14, I began to see the river, the train, the rain, and the moon themselves shimmering in the pages of the *Manifesto* itself. I realised—through my fumbling, half-formed ideas—that even the moon, too, must be liberated from the bourgeoisie, from the oppressor.

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On the auspicious occasion of the 4th Convocation of Stamford University Bangladesh, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the esteemed graduates, respected faculty members, proud families, and all members of the university community.

Dear graduates, as you step into the wider world, I urge you to carry forward the core values that Stamford University Bangladesh has diligently instilled in you. Your true success will be measured by your ability to create a positive and lasting impact on society and your ability to contribute meaningfully to the progress of your communities and the nation as a whole.

I encourage you to face challenges with resilience, to embrace setbacks as opportunities for growth, and to approach every endeavour with purpose, integrity, and accountability. I expect you to be proactive in acquiring new skills, embracing change, and seeking innovative solutions to the pressing issues of our time.

May your journey ahead be illuminated with purpose, enriched with achievements, and guided by a deep sense of responsibility to make the world a better place for living.

I wish you all continued success, happiness, and fulfilment in your future endeavours.

Professor Muhammad Yunus



A Brief Overview

With the concept of global standard education, Stamford College Group started its journey in 1994 with a view to providing quality higher education to local and global students. However, after a long planning and preparation Stamford University Bangladesh was established in 2002 with the legitimate approval of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. At that time there were only ten private universities in Bangladesh. Stamford University Bangladesh earned recognition of the ninth among the top ten "grade-A" universities of the country for its academic and infrastructural excellence. It has been the first and the only ISO-9001-2000 certified university in Bangladesh. The University, fulfilling all the requirements, been a member of AACSB, ACBSP, and other professional bodies like BELTA, TESOL BD, etc. However, from the very beginning, the University has been following American syllabi and curriculum aligning with pioneering local public universities keeping in mind both the local and global needs with a motto of 'bring out the best in you' for students. Since the entire academic and other activities of the University are carried out in peer-reviewed standard manner, our students come out successful in their professional life at home and abroad. With updated knowledge and skill our alumni are getting employment in public and reputed private organizations.

At present Stamford University Bangladesh has 29 academic programs under 14 departments. Degrees currently offered under various departments are: Bachelor of Architecture, B.Sc. in Civil Engineering, B.Sc. in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, B.Sc. in Computer Science and Engineering, M.Sc. in Computer Science and Engineering, Master in Computer Application, Bachelor of Environmental Science, M.Sc. in Environmental Science, B.Sc. in Microbiology, M.Sc. in Microbiology, Bachelor of Pharmacy, Master of Pharmacy, Bachelor of Law (LL.B-Hons), Master of Law (LL.M, Final), Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Master of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Arts in English (Honors), Master of Arts in English (Final), Master of Arts in English (1 year & 2 years), B.S.S. in Economics, M.S.S. in Economics, B.S.S. in Journalism for Electronic and Print Media, M.S.S. in Journalism and Media Studies (Final), M.S.S. in Journalism and Media Studies (Preliminary & Final), Bachelor of Arts in Film and Media, Master of Arts in Film and Media (Final), Master of Arts in Film and Media (Preliminary & Final), Theatre Studies, Applied Nutrition and Food Technology, Genetic Engineering and Bio Technology have got approval from UGC and would soon start their operations. At present there are 209 full-time and 47 part time faculty members who are either part-time or adjunct, among whom 33 have obtained Ph.D. degrees, who are teaching in different departments of the University.

Each year Stamford University Bangladesh offers over five crore BDT as tuition waiver or merit scholarship to its deserving students. In this university, 50% discount is offered to students having GPA 5 in H.S.C. and 10%-20% to students with GPA 4 or more, and one sibling student from a family gets 25% discount if two or more of them study at Stamford. Besides, children of freedom fighters and children from poor families are offered special waivers based on their needs. Students of the university are not only engaged in academic pursuits, but also get involved in various research initiatives under the supervisions of the experienced faculty members. The University hosts different forums, where students get involved in club and co-curricular activities throughout the year.

Some key achievements of Stamford University Bangladesh:

Stamford University Bangladesh has achieved the distinction of ranking 14th among all universities in the country and 6th among all private universities in the QS World University and QS Asia Rankings 2025. In addition, according to the QS World University and QS Asia Rankings 2024, the university was ranked 15th among all universities and 7th among all private universities in Bangladesh.

In the Alper-Doger (AD) Scientific Index Ranking 2024, a total of 46 faculty members from various departments of Stamford University Bangladesh have secured their positions in the list of the world's top researchers. The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) reviewed two engineering programs (EEE & Civil Engineering) and gave highly positive reports with an initial indication of a six-year approval. However, the official confirmation is still in progress.

The Department of Business Administration has been recognized by UNIVERSAL, an International educational and research institute, as one of the first 1000 schools of business of the world.

Scopus, the storage place of Elsevier, surveyed among 150 private universities and research centers in 2014 where Stamford University Bangladesh achieved 24th place in the combined list of excellence and became 4th among the private universities. Stamford University Bangladesh became 10th in a similar survey conducted in 2017.

On August 19, 2023 the first Inter-Private University Debate Competition, organized by Raju Debate Angan, was held at Stamford University where the host Stamford University Bangladesh team became the champion, while Southeast University secured the runner-up position.

On December 17, 2022, on the occasion of International Migrants' Day, the debate competition held on 'Safe Migration is the Best Strategy to Overcome the Impacts of COVID-19' both Stamford University Bangladesh and Cumilla University teams became jointly champions.

On July 11, 2022, at BFDC, in a debate competition on "Measures to Overcome the Crisis in Sri Lanka," the team from Stamford University Bangladesh became the champion by defeating Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University.

On January 2, 2022, at BFDC, in a shadow parliament debate organized by Debate for Democracy on "Government Preparedness to Tackle the Challenges of LDC Graduation," Stamford Debate Forum defeated Daffodil International University and became the champion.

On December 29 and 30, 2021, a team from English Department from Stamford University Bangladesh became the champion at the 7th Inter-University Student Conference and Cultural Competition, organized by University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), marking the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence under the theme "Fifty Years of Bangladesh's Independence: Language, Literature, and Culture."

On November 12, 2021, at BFDC, in a debate on "The Role of World Leadership in Addressing Climate Risks organized by ATN Bangla and Debate for Democracy," Stamford Debate Forum (SDF) defeated Southeast University and became the champion.

On February 20, 2020, in the Bangabandhu ULAB Fair Play Tournament, Stamford University Bangladesh became the champion, defeating University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) by 7 runs, winning the title for the second consecutive winner time.

Two teams of Stamford University Debate Forum participated in the 15th Asian Interuniversity Debate Competition and won in 5 debates in its first phase/episode. Stamford University Bangladesh won the 3rd position in the 10th ULAB Fair Play CupT-20.

Cricknet Tournament-2017, held in February, 2017, Stamford University Bangladesh became champion by beating the team of State University Bangladesh in the final match of the ULAB Fair Play CupT-20 Cricket Tournament-2017.

A team from the Department of Computer Science of Stamford University Bangladesh participated in the NCPD Preliminary Contest 2017, held at the Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology. By solving 4 problems among 7, our team achieved 198th place among 1066 participating teams.

Stamford University has a large alumni network of 36,000 former students, a valuable asset for any institute to engage with for networking and career opportunities. While 4,000 students are currently pursuing their tertiary education at the University, some 1400 graduates are attending the 4th convocation ceremony on November 22, 2025.

In order to ensure that practical education is conducted at the highest possible standard alongside theoretical studies, Stamford University has already established 37 well-equipped, department-based laboratories. These include Electrical and Electronic Laboratories, Pharmacy and Microbiology Laboratories, Civil Engineering Laboratories, Computer Science Laboratories, and 10 Architecture Design and Studio Laboratories. Furthermore, the Department of Film and Media is equipped with five video editing panels and eight professional cameras, enabling students to gain practical experience with professional-grade equipment.

Stamford University's library provides services using the world-renowned Koha automation software and D-space digital library software. There are five libraries and five seminar libraries that remain open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. everyday. The library houses 48,000 books and 3,500 journals and magazines. In addition, it contains research reports, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, manuals, NGO publications, and a vast collection of electronic resources (e-resources).

Users can read and download e-books, e-journals, and e-magazines from student portals using the wide library network. Through the Koha automation software, students can search for any books by title, author, call number, keyword, publisher, or year of publication without having physical access to the University library.

In January of 2015 an Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) was formed under the direction of University Grants Commission and the Late Founder and President of Stamford University Bangladesh, Dr. M.A. Hannan Feroz. Under the guidance of the then Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Feroz Ahmed, Professor Dr. Md. Shahidul Kabir and Associate Professor M. Azizul Haque worked as the Director and Additional Director of the Cell subsequently and won a World Bank project amounting 2,91,00,000 BDT which directly contributed to academic excellence of the University. In this university apart from academic programs there are three Language Learning Centers: English, Japanese and Russian. The Japanese Language Learning center started its program in 2009 and the English Language Learning Center in 2016 and Russian Language Learning Center in 2025. Each year students' admission opens for two separate sessions: January-June and July-December.

In its pursuit of excellence in higher education and the holistic development of students, Stamford University places equal emphasis on academic learning and extracurricular engagement. To support this objective, a total of 18 clubs and organizations actively operate on campus, fostering students' personal growth, leadership, and diverse talents. All clubs are run under the supervision of the Steering Committee of Stamford Forum (SCSF) headed by Prof. Dr. Farhanaz Feroz, Chairman, Board of Trustees.



ADVISER
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

I am delighted to extend my heartfelt greetings and warm congratulations to the graduating students of Stamford University Bangladesh on the occasion of the Convocation 2025. This milestone reflects years of hard work, perseverance, and dedication, and today you stand prepared to contribute to the progress of our nation and the wider world.

Education is the strongest foundation for building a prosperous society. As graduates, I urge you to embrace lifelong learning, uphold ethical values, and serve humanity with integrity and compassion. Your knowledge, skills, and creativity will play a vital role in advancing Bangladesh's journey toward sustainable development and global recognition.

I also take this opportunity to commend the leadership, faculty members, and guardians for their invaluable guidance and support in shaping the future of these graduates.

May this convocation inspire you all to pursue excellence and to contribute meaningfully to the progress of our beloved country.

Professor Dr. Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar



CONVOCATION SPEAKER
ADVISER
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the graduating students on the momentous occasion of the 4th Convocation of Stamford University Bangladesh.

This day marks not merely the culmination of your academic journey, but the triumph of perseverance, intellectual curiosity, and unwavering commitment to excellence. Convocation is a bridge between the world of learning and the vast expanse of real-life challenges and opportunities that await you. It is both a celebration of what you have achieved and a call to purpose for what you are yet to accomplish. The degrees you receive today are far more than formal recognitions of merit they are solemn affirmations of responsibility, ethical leadership, and the enduring pursuit of truth. As you step forth into society, I urge you to uphold integrity, nurture empathy, and embrace innovation. Let courage be your companion, critical thinking your guide, and compassion your constant strength.

The world stands in need of minds that are wise, inclusive, and just individuals who will build bridges rather than walls, protect the planet rather than exploit it, and lead with humility rather than hubris. The education you have received at Stamford University Bangladesh has empowered you with knowledge; now let your wisdom and values give it meaning. True success lies not only in personal advancement but in your ability to uplift others, to inspire change, and to contribute meaningfully to your nation and to humanity at large. Remain lifelong learners responsible citizens and compassionate souls who embody the spirit of excellence and service. May you continue to soar ever higher, illuminating the path of progress and hope for Bangladesh and the world beyond.

With warmest regards and best wishes for a future filled with purpose and promise.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan



CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STAMFORD UNIVERSITY
BANGLADESH

It is with immense pride and heartfelt joy I welcome you all to the 4th Convocation of Stamford University Bangladesh. This convocation marks a significant milestone in the lives of our graduates as they celebrate their hard-earned success and prepare to embark on new journeys. It is also a proud moment for the university as we witness the fruition of our mission and vision through the achievements of our students.

The mission of Stamford University Bangladesh has always been to provide and facilitate a global standard education to students from all walks of life, irrespective of gender, religion, caste, creed, color, age, time, or place. Our goal is to prepare our students for leadership and service in multicultural, global, and technological societies, while helping them succeed academically and transition from university life to a productive and meaningful life. Today, as we celebrate your graduation, you stand as living testimony to this mission.

Dear graduates, your degree is not only recognition of academic excellence, but also a responsibility to contribute positively to society. I urge you to uphold the values of integrity, compassion, and innovation as you step into the world. Let the education you have received at Stamford inspire you to embrace challenges, seek solutions, and serve humanity with vision and dedication.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I extend my warmest congratulations to you, your proud families, and our committed faculty members. May you continue to shine as ambassadors of Stamford University Bangladesh.

Prof. Dr. Farhanaz Feroz



VICE CHANCELLOR
STAMFORD UNIVERSITY
BANGLADESH

With great pride and joy, I welcome you all to this memorable Convocation of Stamford University Bangladesh. Today is not just a ceremony—it is a celebration of dreams fulfilled, challenges overcome, and new journeys waiting. To our graduates, I offer my heartfelt congratulations. You have worked tirelessly, and this day stands as a testament to your perseverance, commitment, and resilience. Stamford University Bangladesh believes that education goes beyond textbooks and examinations. It is about nurturing curiosity, shaping character, and instilling values that will guide you throughout life. All our academic Departments—Business Administration, Pharmacy, Microbiology, English, Economics, Journalism & Media Studies; Public Administration Computer Science & Engineering, Law, Public Health, and different clubs and forum activities have played a vital role in preparing you for the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The achievements of our students and faculty members, ranging from academic research and innovation to debate, robotics, and community service, remind us that learning is the most meaningful when it contributes to the needs of society.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated faculty members whose guidance has shaped the minds and hearts of our graduates. Guided by our motto "Moving educational excellence from good to great," our teachers have gone beyond instruction, inspiring generations to think critically, act ethically, and embrace lifelong learning. To the parents and guardians, whose steadfast support and sacrifices have been indispensable, this day stands as a testament to your dedication and commitment.

Dear graduates, as you step into the future, remember that true success is not measured only by titles or wealth, but by the positive difference you make in the lives of others. Please carry with you the values of integrity, compassion, and responsibility. The world needs leaders who are not only skilled but also kind, not only ambitious but also ethical.

Wherever life takes you, let Stamford remain a guiding spirit in your journey. Strive for excellence, but never forget the humanity within you. May your future be bright, purposeful, and full of achievements.

Prof. Dr. Md. Younus Mia

CHANCELLOR'S GOLD MEDAL



Taijul finds his ‘own place’ in Bangladesh cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

In his 11 years as a Test cricketer, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam has carved out a great career, especially in the context of Bangladesh cricket.

As a left-arm spinner who always played within himself, Taijul has put up effective performances especially in favourable home conditions for a long time and as of Friday, is the country's joint highest wicket-taker alongside Shakib Al Hasan.

Taijul bagged four wickets on Day 3 of the second Test against Ireland in Mirpur, equaling Shakib as the highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh in Tests with 246 scalps. Shakib achieved the feat in 71 Tests while Taijul is playing his 56th.

"It's difficult to say," Taijul said at the post-day press conference about when he first thought he could become Bangladesh's highest wicket-taker in Tests.

"When I became consistent, and gained experience, I grew a conviction that maybe Bangladesh cricket will afford me opportunities for a long time. That's when I first thought that one day I could amass a lot of wickets"

It's ironic that Taijul currently shares the top spot alongside Shakib, a fellow left-arm spinner who has overshadowed his career for years. Taijul started receiving his deserved praise only when Shakib gradually began to step away from the red-ball format.

At the press conference, the 33-year-old said that he wants to leave behind the 'underrated' tag often used in the media especially because of comparisons to Shakib.

"Whenever I face the press, the word underrated is brought up repeatedly. I

➤ Bangladesh's top order produced three century opening stands in 2025, the most in a single calendar year, and, for the first time in their history, two came in successive matches and in the same Test series.

➤ It was also only the second century opening stand in a second innings this decade, and the sixth overall in Bangladesh's Test history.

➤ Taijul Islam claimed four wickets in Ireland's first innings, taking his career tally to 246, joining Shakib Al Hasan as Bangladesh's joint-highest Test wicket-taker.

think it would be better if it didn't come up frequently. Because this issue is not raised for anyone else."

The left-arm spinner has quietly become one of the most successful spinners going around in Test cricket in the past few years without anyone really taking notice.

In the last three years, Taijul is the

fifth-highest wicket-taker amongst spinners in Tests with 88 wickets in 19 matches. Australia's Nathan Lyon tops the list with 124 wickets but has played 11 more matches. India's Ravindra Jadeja, second in that list, has 100 wickets and has played nine more Tests.

In the last 12 months, he is the highest wicket-taker among all spinners in Test cricket. In eight Tests, he has bagged 37 wickets. Lyon, second in that list, has 32 wickets and has played three more Tests than Taijul.

Amongst all bowlers, in the space of 12 months, Taijul is the sixth highest wicket-taker. Indian pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj have been phenomenal with 59 and 57 wickets respectively but the former played three more matches than Taijul and the latter has played seven more.

With his numbers speaking for themselves, Taijul is now more assured about where he stands as a senior player and is eager to give back to the team.

"Taijul is in his own place... When you become a senior player, there are many things you can give back to the team. Just talking about your experiences helps a lot of junior players or upcoming players. We got this from Shakib bhai.

"The name Taijul will only come up in discussions if I perform. The main thing is my performance. When I stop performing, maybe, my name will stop coming up."



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

U-17 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Bangladesh face unknown Timor-Leste

SPORTS REPORTER

Hoping to reach the finals after 19 years, the Bangladesh are set to begin their AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign when the men in red and green take on the largely unknown Timor-Leste in the Group A opener in China today.

The match will kick off at 12:00pm Bangladesh time at the Tonglianglong Stadium.

This time placed in a tough group alongside hosts China, Bahrain, Brunei, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste, Bangladesh have previously failed to reach the final round in the last nine editions since their breakthrough qualification in 2006.

However, the SAFF U-17 Championship runners-up team are optimistic this time, boosted by a three-month training camp and participation in two tournaments ahead of the qualifiers.

"We are here to qualify for the finals. China and Bahrain have strong structures, but the rest of the teams, including Bangladesh, are improving," said coach Golam Rabbani Choton at the pre-match press conference.

"Probably we have never played Timor-Leste at age-group level and, despite many attempts, we could not find any video footage of them. So we have very little idea about their playing style. Still, we will take the field looking for a win by sticking to our game plan," Choton added.

No Gill, Rabada as second Ind-SA Test starts today

AFP, Guwahati

South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma struck a confident tone despite seeing fast bowler Kagiso Rabada ruled out of the second and final Test against India on Saturday in Guwahati because of injury.

The World Test champions won the first match and are chasing a first series win on Indian soil since Hansie Cronje's team triumphed there in 2000.

They must again do without Rabada, who also missed the victory in Kolkata with a rib injury.

"Lungi Ngidi has been added. In terms of starting XI we will finalise that tomorrow once we take one last look at the wicket," Bavuma said on Friday.

The tourists won a low-scoring opener at Eden Gardens inside three days after they bundled out India for 93 while chasing 124.

"The mood is buoyant amongst the boys," Bavuma said.

"We're excited to try and replicate our performances as we did in the first Test."

He added: "Everyone is looking forward to it, looking at where the series is at, the whole narrative around it all.

"We'll just try and make sure that we lock in for the next five days."

Meanwhile, India skipper Shubman Gill will miss the must-win second Test because of the neck injury he sustained in the opening match. The hosts will be led by wicketkeeper and deputy Rishabh Pant.



Opening-day meltdown rocks Ashes

STAR SPORTS DESK

Nineteen wickets tumbled on a chaotic opening day of the Ashes in Perth yesterday, with England holding a narrow advantage after both sides crumbled against high-class fast bowling. Opting to bat first, England were blown away for 172 as Mitchell Starc produced a career-best 7-58, striking in the first over, dismantling the top order, and returning after lunch to finish off the tail. The hosts' reply, however, unravelled even faster. Jofra Archer removed Jake Weatherald for a second-ball duck and bowled Marnus Labuschagne for nine, before Ben Stokes tore through the lower order with a fiery 5-23. Australia closed on 123-9, still 49 runs behind.

HIGHLIGHTS

19 wickets: most on an Ashes opening day in 100 years

Starc 7-58: best Test figures of his career

Starc reaches 100 Ashes wickets; first left-arm seamer to do so

24th first-over wicket for Starc in Tests

England's 1st innings lasted just 197 balls – third shortest in Ashes in Australia



NATIONAL FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Dinajpur, Sirajganj battle for maiden title

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Football Championship reaches its climax as Dinajpur district and Sirajganj district clash in the grand final at Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Dhaka today.

The high-stakes encounter caps a long home-and-away tournament that saw 64 districts battle across 112 matches, involving nearly 1,500 players over three-and-a-half months.

Despite ongoing financial hurdles in developing district-level football, the Bangladesh Football Federation secured Tk 10 crore in funding from the Youth and Sports Ministry and the National Sports Council, enabling the smooth organisation of this year's championship.

Excitement is at fever pitch in Dinajpur and Sirajganj, with supporters from both districts travelling to Dhaka in hired buses to cheer their teams. Both sides are eyeing their first-ever title in the tournament, which has been held 25 times previously under the banner of the Sher-e-Bangla National Football Championship.



e-Bangla National Football Championship.

"Initially, assembling the squad and arranging proper training was a challenge, but reaching the final for the first time is a huge achievement," said Dinajpur coach Shamim Ahmed at a pre-match press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

"We are confident of lifting the trophy with our youthful side, which features seven to eight players from the Dhaka Senior Division Football League."

Sirajganj coach Mahbubul Alam added: "This is our first national championship final, and we want to make it memorable. While we do not have current Dhaka Senior Division players, six to seven of our squad have previous experience playing in Dhaka."

AFC president Salman Bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa was due to attend and distribute prizes, but his four-day tour was cancelled due to personal reasons. Youth and Sports adviser Asif Mahmud will now grace the occasion as chief guest.

Bangladesh ‘A’ overcome Akbar’s brain fade to reach final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh 'A' team captain Akbar Ali was a relieved man after his brain fade moment did not lead to a heartbreaking exit for his side, who defeated India in the semifinal in a Super Over and booked their place in the final of the Asia Cup Rising Stars in Doha, Qatar on Friday.

Defending a target of 195, Bangladesh were left with only 21 runs in the tank with two overs to go.

Pacer Ripon Mondol then bowled a brilliant 19th over, where he conceded just five and also claimed the wicket of Ramadeep Singh (17 off 11), leaving 16 runs in the final over for Rakibul Islam.

The left-arm spinner conceded 12 off the first five deliveries, which included a dropped catch which went for four and the wicket of Ashutosh Rana (13 off 6).

With four needed off the final ball, he bowled it just outside off, and Harsh Dubery mistimed the slog as the ball went straight to long-on.

The throw from fielder was off



the mark but by the time Akbar collected it, Harsh had only started for the second run, while Nehal Wadhwa was still at the striker's end.

Rather than keeping the ball in hand to ensure India does not take more than two runs, Akbar aimed for the stumps, missed and allowed the batters to run a third run on the overthrow to level the scores.

"I should apologise to everyone

supporting us. I knew the equation but I don't know what happened in my mind and I threw the ball," the skipper explained his massive gaffe at the post-match presentation.

"In the Super Over, when we were going in with the ball, I just said whatever happens, I take responsibility," he added.

Akbar's assurance perhaps did the trick as Ripon, who was declared the player-of-the-match, bowled

a searing yorker to uproot Jitesh Sharma's middle-stump first ball and then got Ashutosh Sharma caught the next ball to set up a one-run target.

However, the drama did not end there, Yasir Ali, instead of pushing Suyash Sharma's first delivery to long on to complete the chase, tried to hoick it over the ropes but was brilliantly caught by Ramandeep.

Skipper Akbar then came to the crease to finish the chase, which he didn't have to, as Suyash bowled the next delivery down the leg side for a wide and Akbar breathed a sigh of relief.

Earlier, Habibur Rahman Sohan's 46 ball 65 and a brisk 18-ball 48 not out from SM Meherob powered Bangladesh 'A' to 194-6.

"Still trying to soak it in. Of course, we'll take some rest and go back to the drawing board tomorrow," Bangladesh will face the winner of Friday's second semifinal between Sri Lanka 'A' and Pakistan 'A' in the final on Sunday.



UN, US express solidarity after earthquake jolts country

BSS, Dhaka

The United Nations and the United States yesterday expressed deep sympathy and solidarity with those affected by yesterday's earthquake in Dhaka, as authorities continued assessing the tremor's impact.

In a statement shared on social media, the UN in Bangladesh said it was closely monitoring the situation and extended its solidarity and deepest condolences to all who have been affected. The US Embassy in Dhaka, in a separate message, expressed its deepest sympathy to all those affected by the earthquake.

At least 10 people were killed and many injured as a 5.7-magnitude earthquake rattled Dhaka and several adjoining districts yesterday morning.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department said the tremor struck at 10:38am, with its epicentre located at Madhabdi in Narsingdi, about 13 kilometres east of the BMD Seismic Centre in Agargaon, Dhaka.

The United States Geological Survey later reported the epicentre to be 14 kilometres west-southwest of Narsingdi at a depth of 10 kilometres.



Bangladesh pacer Abdul Gaffar Saqlain is pumped as his teammates run in to join in celebration following the dismissal of India's star opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi during the first semifinal of the Asia Cup Rising Stars at the West End Park International Cricket Stadium in Doha yesterday. The topsy-turvy match went right down to the wire as the 20-overs affair was tied before Bangladesh clinched a thrilling victory in the Super Over to book their berth in the final.

PHOTO: ACC

KIBRIA KILLING Suspect dies in DB custody

Wife alleges foul play; probe body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man arrested over the killing of Jubo Dal leader Golam Kibria died yesterday while in the custody of the Detective Branch (DB) of police.

According to police, Moktar Hossain, 40, was declared dead by doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 11:00am, shortly after he was taken there from the DB office.

Moktar was arrested in a raid on Thursday. Police said he tried to flee, but was caught with the help of locals, who also beat him. He was taken to the DB office, where he reportedly fell ill around 1:30am yesterday. He was then taken to DMCH, examined, given medication, and discharged before being brought back to the DB office.

Around 10:00am, Moktar was found unconscious in his cell and was again taken to DMCH, where doctors pronounced him dead, police said.

However, Mukta Sikder, wife of Mokter, alleged, "My husband died due to torture in DB custody".

Speaking to journalists at DMCH, she also rejected the police account of his arrest and the claim that locals beat him up while Moktar tried to flee.

"Mokter was detained by DB officers from a tea stall. There were no locals involved," she added.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Intensify efforts to safeguard migrant workers UN rights experts urge Bangladesh, Malaysia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN human rights experts yesterday voiced renewed alarm over the exploitation and debt bondage of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia.

"Fraudulent recruitment and exploitation remain widespread and systematic," they said in a statement from Geneva. The experts include Tomoya Obokata, Gehad Madi, Pichamon Yeophantong, Damilola Olawuyi, Fernanda Hopenhaym, Lyra Jakuleviciene and Robert McCorquodale.

They are independent rights experts appointed by the UN.

They noted that some 800,000 Bangladeshis work in Malaysia, of whom nearly 500,000 migrated between 2022 and 2024 under a syndicate of 101 agencies, with many left jobless after Malaysia halted recruitment in May 2024.

They cite reports of exorbitant fees of \$4,500-\$6,000, passport confiscation, false job promises, and contract discrepancies.

The experts urged Bangladesh to strengthen oversight of recruitment agencies and Malaysia to enforce safeguards against exploitation. Both governments were called to investigate abuses, provide remedies, and ensure accountability.

REFERENDUM ON JULY CHARTER BNP in dilemma as Jamaat pushes for 'yes' vote

MAMUNUR RASHID and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has yet to decide whether it will campaign for a "yes" or "no" vote in the July charter referendum. The party says it is observing the situation and will make its decision later.

On the other hand, the Jamaat-e-Islami and seven like-minded parties say they will urge the public to vote "yes" to give the charter a legal basis.

Although the BNP objects to the referendum question, it is keeping a soft stance for now, as its demand to hold the referendum alongside the national polls has been met. Senior leaders said confrontation now could distract attention from the polls and benefit opponents.

The Jamaat and its partners are taking a completely different approach, launching street programmes to demand that a "proper referendum" be held.

To press home their demand, they have announced rallies in seven divisions, starting on 30 November.

Asked about the party's demands, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad told The Daily Star that holding the referendum properly means they are demanding it must be held before the national polls.

Leaders of the parties said their programmes aim to put pressure on



the government and the BNP over the referendum issue, while also keeping their leaders and activists energised on the ground.

On November 13, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus announced in an address to the nation that a referendum on the implementation of the July charter will be held on the same day as the upcoming election in February.

The referendum ballot will present a single, comprehensive question to voters, who must cast a "yes" or "no" vote to express their opinion on four collective constitutional reform

proposals derived from the charter.

The BNP welcomed the decision, while Jamaat accused the chief adviser of creating confusion by this declaration that both the votes will be held on the same day.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, BNP Standing Committee member and former health minister, said, "BNP has not yet decided whether it will support the 'yes' or 'no' vote in the referendum. We will take more time to make this decision. Right now, we are trying to understand the direction of public opinion."

However, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said his party and seven other like-minded ones have agreed to take a collective stance in favour of the "yes" vote and work in persuading the nation.

BNP'S STANCE

BNP leaders say they stick to the objections to the proposed four-part referendum question and are not in a hurry to decide.

Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the referendum should be held on the signed charter alone, as voters have no option to cast their votes on the four questions separately.

"It is a complicated and impractical process," he said, adding that the party prefers a simple yes-or-no question on whether people agree with the July charter.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

COP30 CLIMATE SUMMIT Draft text omits fossil fuel transition plan

AGENCIES

COP30 summit president Brazil released a draft text for a proposed deal for this year's UN climate summit early yesterday, dropping a proposal to develop a global plan to shift away from fossil fuels that had been included in an earlier version.

The issue has been one of the most contentious at the two-week conference of nearly 200 governments in Brazil's Amazon city of Belem.

For days, nations have wrangled over the future of fossil fuels, whose burning emits greenhouse gases that are by far the largest contributor to global warming.

On Thursday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told negotiators "the world is watching" and urged them to reach an "ambitious compromise."

A first version of the draft deal earlier this week had contained a set of options for language on the subject.

Dozens of nations including Germany, Kenya and low-lying island states have been pushing hard for a "roadmap" laying out how countries should follow through with a promise made at COP28 two years ago to transition away from fossil fuels.

Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing nations were opposing this, negotiators at COP30 told Reuters. In the text released before dawn yesterday, all mentions of fossil fuels had been dropped.

The text, which is still subject to further negotiation, would need approval by consensus in order to be adopted.

Brazil's COP30 presidency held consultations with key negotiating blocs on Thursday, after a fire at the summit venue forced an evacuation that disrupted talks for hours.

The conference was scheduled to finish later yesterday, though talks could run overtime into the weekend as is common at the world's annual climate negotiations.

The draft also called for global efforts to triple the financing available to help nations adapt to climate change by 2030, from 2025 levels.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



Israel hits central, south Gaza Five killed; two teenagers shot dead in East Jerusalem

AGENCIES

Israel's military yesterday carried out a wave of attacks across central and southern Gaza, including in eastern Khan Younis, central Gaza's Bureij and Maghazi camps and the southern city of Rafah.

Israeli forces waged artillery attacks near Bureij camp, while firing from aircraft and tanks near Khan Younis, where they also demolished residential buildings.

In Rafah, Israeli military carried out an air strike that killed five fighters who exited a tunnel in an area controlled by Israeli forces.

Israeli forces also killed two Palestinian teenagers in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab, according to the Wafa news agency.

The troops had stormed Kafr Aqab, deployed their foot patrols in its streets, and their snipers climbed onto the roofs of several buildings and opened fire on the young men in the town, which led to the killings.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli settlers carried out several attacks on Palestinians and their property on Thursday night and yesterday morning.

The surge in settler violence has been widely condemned, with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights calling recent settler acts "abhorrent" and reflective of "a wider pattern of increased violence against Palestinians".

A government document has revealed that Israel wants

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



PHOTO: REUTERS

A Palestinian man inspects cars burned in an attack by Israeli settlers in Huwara, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday.

Miss Mexico new Miss Universe

AFP, Nonthaburi

Miss Mexico was crowned Miss Universe in Thailand yesterday, strutting to victory after several dramatic missteps before the final round, including staging a walkout when an organiser of the beauty pageant chastised her.

Contestants from Ivory Coast, the Philippines, Thailand and Venezuela also made it to the final stage, selected from more than 120 women vying for the title in a contest considered one of the "big four" of global beauty pageants.

However, chaos reigned before Miss Mexico Fatima Bosch was crowned, from allegations of an insult to her intelligence to judges quitting and participants falling on and off the stage.

Bosch staged a dramatic walkout this month from a meeting where she was lambasted by Miss Universe Thailand director Nawat Itsaragrisil.





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WEEKEND READ

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



HASAN MEER

There was a time when Dhaka's narrow lanes knew us better than we knew ourselves. Long before the flyovers sliced the sky and long before every passer-by walked around wrapped in earbuds like private citizens of their own worlds, these alleys held entire universes.

They were noisy, affectionate, and annoyingly invested in every detail of your life. They were also comforting in ways we only understand now, when the warmth has thinned and the doors have learned to close.

Back then, it was impossible to cross your own lane without being interrogated by at least five neighbourhood uncles who believed they had been personally appointed as guardians of your moral development.

A simple trip to the corner shop could take half an afternoon because everyone had something to say. And they said it with conviction. Sometimes too

food, medicines, and half the lane's advice.

Children could roam freely because every adult kept an eye out. Every afternoon, all the kids would gather in one house to play; the doors were always open, and people trusted each other in ways that feel almost unreal today.

Those were the days when Dhaka still felt like a patchwork of living rooms rather than a network of private fortresses. Today the alleys are quieter. People walk faster. Eyes down, mind elsewhere. Neighbours slip past each other as if they share nothing but the same footpath.

"I do not recognise half the faces in this lane anymore," said Hasna Ahmad, who has lived in Kalabagan third lane for more than forty years. "We grew up knowing every family. If someone cooked biryani, three houses would get a share. Now doors stay shut. People barely greet each other."

She spoke of Eid

notifications. Festivals are quieter, greetings shorter. Children rarely know the names of the people living next door.

Meanwhile at Khandaker Goli in Siddheswari, shopkeeper Jalil Mia stood outside his small grocery shop that has survived three decades of construction dust and rising buildings. He remembers the lane when it had only one-storey and two-storey homes, when the wind passed freely between houses and neighbours spoke to one another across courtyards.

"Look at that building," he said, pointing to a tall apartment in front of his shop. "Twenty years ago, Mr Khan lived there with his family. Every evening, he would come to my shop and buy something small. Salt, biscuits, a packet of tea. It was not about money. It was the relationship. We talked about everything. His children called me Mama. They grew up in front of my eyes."

Jalil paused and looked at the building



Walk down those same lanes today and you see locked gates, tinted windows, rows of security cameras blinking like strangers. Conversations have been replaced by notifications. Festivals are quieter, greetings shorter. Children rarely know the names of the people living next door.



mornings when children went from door to door collecting salami and blessings without hesitation, moving from one home to the next as if the whole lane belonged to them. "There were no divisions then. Every festival, every sorrow, it belonged to all of us."

Across the city in Mohammadpur, retired professor Shahana Azim of Tajmahal Road shared the same grief. "Once our alley was one big extended family," she said. "When a child had exams, aunts scolded them collectively. When someone bought a new television, half the lane came to watch the nine-o'clock drama together. Now everyone is too busy being lonely."

"People are just into themselves now," Hasna added quietly. "They don't trust anyone outside their little circle. We used to live like a community. Now everyone lives like an island."

In Dhanmondi 8, Afzal Rahman, now in his late forties, said the lanes were once the real guardians of children. "If you tried to bunk school, five uncles would drag you back. If you cried, ten aunts would rush with water. That kind of supervision felt irritating then. Looking back, I realise it made our childhood feel safe."

At Jigatala Bus Stand area, retired banker Motin Sarker described the alley as a giant breathing diary. "Neighbours checked in on each other all the time. If someone was late returning home, people waited. Today nobody notices even if you are gone for a week."

The alley still stands but the rhythm is gone, he said.

But the nostalgia does not come from imagining an old Dhaka that was perfect. It comes from remembering a Dhaka that was personal. A Dhaka where the alley watched you grow, corrected you, fed you, teased you, protected you. Sometimes annoyingly, but always sincerely.

Walk down those same lanes today and you see locked gates, tinted windows, rows of security cameras blinking like strangers. Conversations have been replaced by

again. "After Khan bhai died, his children gave the house to the builders. Now it is all apartments. New people come; new people go. Nobody even knows my name."

But Jalil stays because the small things still matter to him. The few elderly customers who still come by and ask about his health. The rare afternoons when an old resident recognises him and stops for a chat. "Some days you feel the lane remembers," he said.

In Old Dhaka's Nazirabazar, Hasan Ali said community bonds still survive, but not untouched. "We still look out for one another, that much remains," he said. "But commercialisation has surrounded us. There are too many outlets, too many shops. The younger generation has moved to other parts of the city. They seldom visit. Festivals are not the same. They used to be community gatherings. Now they feel like individual events."

He remembered Shah-e-Barat nights when the whole neighbourhood lit up like a single house, and Eid mornings when the smell of shemai drifted from home to home. "Now the lights are there, the food is there, but the feeling is not the same. People live close but not together."

These voices echo the same truth. The city has grown taller and faster, but the alleys that once held its soul have grown quieter. The warmth has thinned and relationships have become lighter.

Yet the memory of the old lanes lingers. The way children once ran from one home to another without hesitation. The way aunts discussed everything from test marks to someone's suspicious new hairstyle. The way uncles held entire symposiums on someone's cricket scores at the corner tea stall. The way neighbours borrowed salt as if it were a shared resource owned by the entire block.

Back in Kalabagan, Hasna Ahmad looked at her lane and said, "Maybe cities grow. But when alleys lose their warmth, it feels like the city shrinks."

Through the fading hum of old neighbourhoods, one thing feels certain. The alleys have not forgotten us. It is we who stopped listening.



Why is secondary education becoming unaffordable?

MIFTAHUL JANNAT

For decades, we have proudly pointed to our near-universal primary enrolment as a symbol of progress. Yet government investment has long fallen short, pushing families to absorb rising costs, especially in secondary schooling. While there has been a slight increase in allocation in this year's budget, it is still too small to ease the crushing out-of-pocket expenses that parents continue to bear.

Only 12.1% of the budget is allocated to education, with just 6.02% for secondary and higher education—barely 3% even if half of it reaches secondary schools. Families now shoulder rising costs to keep children in school, making what was once accessible a struggle for survival.

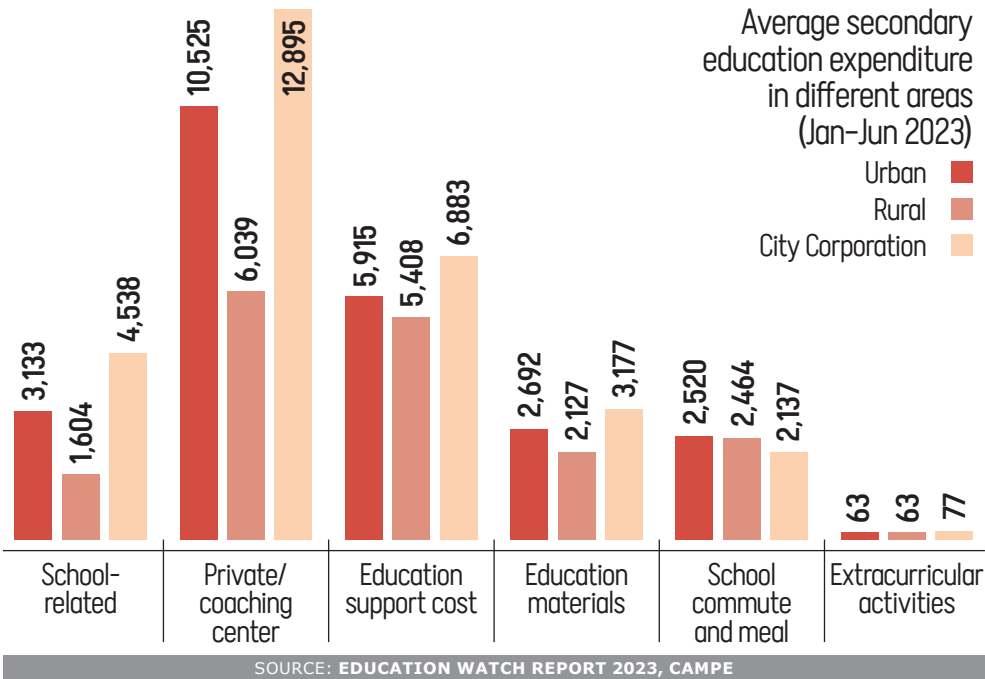
Why the cost keeps rising

According to the UNESCO 2021/2022 Global Education Monitoring Report, families bear 71% of the total education cost out of pocket in Bangladesh.

"Even in government-supported schools, families pay various fees — administrative charges, education materials, and more," explained Dr Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus at BRAC University and adviser



FILE VISUAL: AFIA JAHIN



to the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). He pointed out that the lion's share of out-of-pocket expenses is caused by private tutoring, which is considered almost compulsory due to inadequate classroom learning.

Dr Mahboob Morshed, Associate Professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Education

and Research (IER), noted, "When students don't receive proper instruction in school, parents turn to coaching centres. This has become one of the biggest expenses for families at the secondary level."

Transport, lunch, uniforms, and guidebooks — often pushed by tutors — also add to costs. "My driver's daughter, who is

only in Class 9, had to spend about Tk 1,200 on books alone at the start of the year," mentioned Dr Ahmed.

Inflation and rising poverty are further pushing secondary education out of reach, according to him. "About 28% of the population lives below the poverty line, and perhaps another 20% is hovering barely above it. For these families, secondary education has simply become unaffordable. Overall, the cost of secondary schooling has become a major concern," he added.

The price we're paying for soaring cost

The soaring costs are turning secondary education into a secondary priority, overshadowed by the daily struggle for survival. To put this into perspective, in 2022 the minimum monthly wage was just Tk 8,000 for garment workers and Tk 3,600 for tea workers. Even after rising to Tk 12,500 and Tk 5,100 respectively in 2023, these wages remain far below what many families spend on a single child's secondary education. And these figures reflect only two low-wage sectors — what about the countless informal workers, day labourers, and low-wage earners who earn even less? How are their children expected to continue schooling?

The consequences are profound. Early school dropout is increasingly common, pushing adolescents into the labour market and many girls to early marriage. Enrolment in general secondary schools is declining

sharply, with many families turning to the less expensive madrasa education, especially to the Qawmi system.

Dr Rasheda K. Choudhury, Executive Director of CAMPE, noted that it's a good thing that the demand for education has been established across all classes, "Even if you ask a rickshaw puller he will tell you that he'd like to educate his children. But the question now is where and how, given the rising costs?"

Many madrasas offer meals and boarding, providing an alternative for families priced out of general schools. However, experts suggest that a balanced mix of religious and mainstream education, with proper coordination, is essential.

Is nationalisation too much to ask for?

The government is obligated to provide free primary education, but no such mandate exists for secondary schooling — an inequity experts say must urgently change. "The cost of secondary education has become simply too expensive, especially for lower-income households. We need a state-managed system. This is already a government commitment under the SDGs, which call for publicly funded education up to Grade 12," said Dr Chowdhury.

Government presence in secondary schooling remains minimal because public secondary schools are few. "Even though the government provides some support to MPO schools, we need long-term thinking here

— more budget, and stronger monitoring," said Dr Morshed. He added that increasing the budget ultimately depends on political priorities: "This is about long-term investment versus short-term gain. If nationalisation is a consideration, the budget obviously needs to increase."

Yet spending efficiently is equally critical. "Even though our education budget is small, a good chunk remains unused. We must spend it impactfully," he noted.

A unified, free, compulsory secondary system, experts say, would reduce reliance on private tutoring and ensure teachers' accountability and financial security. When well-to-do families rely on public schools, they naturally push for higher quality, better funding, and stronger oversight, benefiting all students.

What can we do now?

In October 2025, the Ministry of Education formed a 10-member committee to address persistent challenges in secondary education. "We've held a workshop to pinpoint the problems and may conduct research. Based on our findings, we aim to deliver recommendations within three months," said Dr Ahmed, the committee's convener.

Field visits are planned for December. "We'll meet students, guardians, teachers, and district and divisional education officers to gather ground realities and suggested solutions, and expect to submit the report in January," said Dr Morshed, a member of the committee. Both experts support nationalisation, though no concrete government plan exists yet.

Experts call for the following key measures to address the current challenges:

- Free education at least up to Grade 8 to ease financial pressure on families. Primary education alone is often insufficient, students need access to at least Grade 8 to pursue trades, skills, or higher education opportunities.
- Adopt need-based budgeting, with stronger monitoring and outcome-linked accountability. Prioritise regions where students face the greatest challenges; areas such as the haor or hill tracts may require greater budgetary support than urban districts.
- Recruit trained, qualified, and motivated teachers whose preparation aligns with the psychological and developmental needs of secondary-level adolescents. To attract talent, teaching must offer both social dignity and financial stability.
- Improve monitoring with consistent classroom supervision and feedback loops to strengthen teaching quality.

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DHAKA'S FORGOTTEN GIRLS

Living without safety, identity or rights

YSTIAQUE AHMED

On a typical afternoon in Dhaka, a small girl weaves through a maze of vehicles stuck at a traffic signal, a clutch of flowers in her hand. She leans towards car windows, knocking gently, sometimes met with a quick wave, sometimes with irritation or outright hostility. As soon as the light changes, she sprints back to the pavement to avoid being run over, only to repeat the same ritual at the next signal. For many city dwellers, she and others like her have faded into the urban backdrop — dismissed as pothoshishu or tokai, words that reduce children to categories rather than recognise them as individuals.

Behind these labels lies a crisis that has been building for years.

A growing population, an overlooked minority

In 2015, the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies estimated that there were 1.5 million street children in the country and projected that this number would reach 1.6 million by 2024. That projection now looks painfully conservative. A UNICEF study published in March 2024 found more than 3.4 million children living on the streets without parental care, with Dhaka hosting the largest concentration.

A 2022 survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reported that girls comprised 18 percent of street children, with an average age of 10.5 years — younger than the boys. But these figures are widely seen as underestimates.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Professor Dr Md Golam Azam of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research at Dhaka University traced how girls end up on the street. "The main factors driving young girls onto the streets are poverty, parents' separation or divorce, additional marriage, migration from rural areas to city centres. Most of them have no one to take care of them, as a result they are forced onto the streets." Once in the city, he explained, girls are often steered into domestic work as a survival strategy — work that leaves them vulnerable to long hours, abuse and exploitation, with no contracts or

protections.

Others are deceived from the outset: enticed with promises of jobs, education, or marriage, only to be abandoned or trafficked once they reach the city.

Violence as a daily reality

A 2023 UNICEF study found that 30 percent of street children sleep in open public spaces. Nearly 84 percent experience harassment from strangers, and 72 percent cannot read or write. For girls, the risks are layered and gendered: sexual violence, coercion, trafficking, and the constant anxiety of managing menstruation without privacy, sanitation or support.

Drug use adds another dangerous dimension. A study by the Department of Narcotics Control found that 56 percent of street children are addicted to some form of drug, and 21 percent are used as carriers. For many, substances become a way to dull hunger, fear and trauma — a temporary escape that tightens the grip of exploitation.

ASM Rahmat Ullah Bhuiyan, Deputy Country Director of Save the Children Bangladesh, said, "The violence they face is especially stark in the case of girls." Yet even as these threats intensify, he noted, girls remain both statistically and socially marginalised. "Social stigma pushes them further away from their rights. The state is not able to play the role it should," he added.

Md Julfikar Ali, Programme Coordinator of Aparajeyo Bangladesh, a non-profit organisation working with socially excluded children and youth, described the relentless uncertainty: "Girls face multifaceted problems while growing up on the streets. Firstly, they have accommodation-related problems like — where will they sleep, where and what will they eat, where can they use washrooms."

Adolescent girls, he added, are regularly targeted: "Girls are being targeted for sexual harassment and violence. Many are also being exploited in return for very little money or favour."

Discrimination extends far beyond the family. Forhad Hossain, founder and executive director of LEEDO (Local Education and Economic Development Organisation),



A young girl selling flowers on the streets in Dhaka.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

explained, "This discrimination doesn't just stop at households; schools, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and the wider community behave in the same way. As a result, many girls are discouraged from seeking help or protection, leaving them further isolated from mainstream society and denied equal opportunities for growth and future development."

The desperation is evident in their daily routines. Some beg at traffic signals, some wash dishes in roadside eateries, some

rummage through dustbins for leftovers. Others, stuck in peer groups with no adult support, slide into substance use.

No papers, no protection

One of the less visible but most damaging barriers is the absence of legal identity. A recent Aparajeyo survey in Gabtali found that 163 out of 198 street children had no birth certificate. "Some are orphans, some left home and have no connection to their parents," Ali said.

Without documents, girls are locked out of education systems, health services and legal safeguards. Schools refuse enrolment without papers; courts struggle to recognise them as minors; hospitals may turn them away or treat them last. This lack of identity deepens their vulnerability and reduces their options for escape.

Forhad Hossain sees this repeatedly. "We have struggled to enroll children in schools because no institution accepts a child without proper papers," he said.

What would real protection look like?

There is no single blueprint for change, but those working in the field agree that piecemeal responses are not enough.

Professor Golam Azam argues that solutions must begin at policy level. "We should rethink rehabilitation or reintegration programmes at the intra ministerial level. Government should allocate permanent rehabilitation centres at the district level for the street children, ensure education, decent meals and legal protection. Rich or elites of the society should also come forward. All of these need to be combined into a holistic framework."

Save the Children emphasises community-based integration, warning that large institutions can isolate children from society.

Aparajeyo Bangladesh underlines the importance of safe, structured shelters, particularly for girls facing immediate danger. Its rehabilitation centres offer accommodation, non-formal education and food, and it runs a 24-hour shelter in Mirpur for girls who have survived sexual violence and trafficking, providing counselling and vocational training.

Bangladesh needs a child-protected, safe and friendly environment — not just more shelters, but gender-sensitive counselling, menstrual hygiene support, community protection networks, documentation assistance and practical skills training. Rehabilitation cannot stop at "rescue"; it must centre dignity, agency and long-term stability.

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The Illusion of Change?

Crisis, counterrevolution and elite capture in postcolonial democracies

NILADRI CHATTERJEE

Across South Asia, youth have forced open political time: Sri Lanka's Aragalaya in 2022 unseated a president; Bangladesh's student mobilisation ended Sheikh Hasina's fifteen-year rule in August 2024; and Nepal's 'Gen Z' uprising in September 2025 toppled a government after an ill-judged social media ban crystallised public anger at corruption and patronage. These ruptures were real. The harder question is whether they reordered the distribution of power or merely rotated faces while leaving fiscal, coercive and party machines intact. In this article I argue that in postcolonial democracies, the horizon of transformative change is repeatedly foreshortened by a triad that activates after victory: first, elite recomposition around patronage and wealth defence; second, coercive continuity through militaries, police and courts that movements do not control; and third, austerity governance that translates crisis into technocratic necessity and narrows distributive options (Winters, 2011; Bermeo, 2016; Bayat, 2017). This claim foregrounds the afterlives of the postcolonial state, including civil, military and bureaucratic complexes and legal regimes that outlast rulers, and the order setting phase when budgets, appointments and policing rules are written (Skocpol, 1979; Tilly, 2004). Nonviolent campaigns excel at disruption yet often enter this phase organisationally thin and fiscally cornered, which exposes them to capture (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

lower the costs of participation and broaden morallegitimacy. Yetpreciselybecause they are not steered by embedded revolutionary actors with cadres, programmes and institutions ready to govern, they enter the moment after victory with a thin organisational core. The very features that make them formidable on the streets, including speed, spontaneity and horizontalism, leave them underequipped for the slow and transactional work of writing budgets, rules and appointments once the square empties (Tufekci, 2017; Beissinger, 2022). Read through Hannah Arendt's lens, these youth revolts bear the marks of moments in which the social question overwhelms the work of founding: economic precarity, scarcity and injury energise mass participation, but the instruments that convert moral urgency into durable authority remain weak (Arendt, 1963). This helps explain why horizontally networked coalitions, otherwise so adept at ejecting rulers, struggle in the order setting phase, where constituting power must be channelled into rules over budgets, appointments and coercion. Bayat names the same dilemma from another angle: crowds can seize visibility and extract concessions, yet without cadres, programmes and institutional insertion they reach a tactical ceiling. In South Asia, need driven mobilisation achieves rupture and then the familiar grammar of the state reasserts itself. In practice, three dynamics repeatedly assemble the settlement after victory. First, elite recomposition accelerates: party cartels, oligarchic business networks and senior bureaucrats that are already wired

of elite recomposition, coercive continuity and austerity governance travel across cases. Many recent revolutions are best understood as "revolutions without revolutionaries", that is, crowds of ordinary citizens propelled by economic and political shocks and coordinated through diffuse networks rather than disciplined organisations (Bayat, 2017). They achieve visibility and moral authority quickly, yet they reach the order-setting phase with thin organisational capacity. Arendt's reminder that the social question can overwhelm the work of founding clarifies why these breakthroughs so often falter once budgets, appointments and security rules must be written. Where organisational density is low, the triad reasserts itself. Coercive and fiscal nodes remain in familiar hands, and technocratic narratives of responsibility legitimate elite return (Winters, 2011; Bermeo, 2016). Egypt and Tunisia illustrate the divergence. In Egypt, mass mobilisation removed the former President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, but the military retained decisive autonomy and the post-revolutionary field fragmented, so counterrevolution organised faster than reform. Studies of protest dynamics and coalition breakdown show how a broad, non-programmatic alliance proved unable to convert street power into leverage over coercion and the purse, which exposed the transition to reversal (Ketchley, 2017; Brownlee, Masoud & Reynolds, 2015). Tunisia began from a similar crowd repertoire, yet it possessed organisational intermediaries, especially the UGTT trade union, that could



Demonstrators celebrate entering the Presidential Secretariat during a protest, after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled, amid the country's economic crisis, in Colombo, Sri Lanka on July 9, 2022. PHOTO: REUTERS

Other episodes underline the centrality of movement-to-party conversion and fiscal room. Armenia's 2018 'Velvet' breakthrough translated protest into an electoral vehicle that initially expanded democratic space, yet subsequent security shocks and incumbent consolidation revealed how fragile gains remain when coercive and fiscal constraints are unresolved (Broers, 2020). Chile's 2019 protest wave produced a constitutional process with striking participation, but the absence of cross-class consensus and the hard budgetary arithmetic of reform constrained outcomes once the crowd returned to work (Smith, 2024). In both settings, the ability to bargain with entrenched elites while sustaining broad constituencies proved decisive for durability (Beissinger, 2022; Tilly, 2004).

Read back across this genealogy, the conditions for avoiding the South Asian trap become clearer. First, organisational density is not a decorative extra, it is the mechanism that converts moral authority into control over appointments, procurement and budget lines. Second, early rules for coercive power are foundational, since police, military and courts otherwise define the limits of contention by default. Third, fiscal politics is constitutive, not merely technical, since debt workouts and stabilisation scripts can lock in distributive choices that recreate the very coalitions a revolt sought to displace. These claims align with movement-centred research that stresses the preservation of broad coalitions and the capacity to remobilise when threatened, while shifting the analytic centre of gravity toward institutional insertion at coercive and fiscal nodes (Clarke, 2025; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). The comparative record from Cairo to Tunis to Khartoum suggests that youth can indeed move mountains. Durable change arrives when those same coalitions learn to move ministries, budget lines and chains of command.

Breaking the cycle: From rupture to rule The argument thus far points out how leaderless breakthroughs lose the order. The task now is to specify what would count as winning it. The point is not to replace spontaneity with vanguardism. It is to convert moral authority into institutional leverage at exactly those junctions where capture happens: appointments and procurement, coercion and courts, budgets and debt. The comparative record suggests four design principles that are compatible with democratic breadth and that speak directly to South Asia's dilemmas.

First, build an insertion map, not a wish list. Movements that reach office usually arrive with diffuse mandates and long catalogues of reforms. What they need in the first hundred days is a short map of nodes where early control prevents later capture. In practice this means independent procurement and audit with automatic public disclosure; mandatory asset declarations and beneficial ownership registers; open, merit-based civil service recruitment; and a hard rule that all senior appointments are published with selection

criteria and timelines. Participation without teeth is absorbable; participation with enforcement changes incentives (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). These are low drama choices that determine who signs contracts and who supervises them, and hence whether elite recomposition proceeds by default. Second, convert crowds into organisers without dissolving the crowd. Movement to party is necessary, yet premature demobilisation is fatal. Successful episodes keep a dual structure in which an electoral vehicle bargains inside institutions while civic networks retain the capacity for disciplined, nonviolent remobilisation if veto players defect. This is where Clarke's emphasis on preserving broad coalitions and the ability to return to mass mobilisation is most useful, although the South Asian cases add that coalition breadth must be anchored in bodies that can monitor, bargain and enforce across time, rather than only signal in the square. Unions, professional associations and neighbourhood committees are not decorative; they are the compliance machinery of democratic pacts. Third, rebalance coercion early and visibly. The institutions that define the limits of contention rarely rotate when leaders do, which is why counterrevolution so often travels through police, military and courts. Early rules matter more than late reforms: clear standards for protest policing and use of force, external complaints bodies with subpoena power, transparent chains of command, time-bound vetting for gross abuses, and legal guarantees that intelligence and paramilitary units remain under civilian law. Even partial gains change bargaining dynamics with security elites and lower the probability that 'law and order' frames will swallow a transition (Greitens, 2016; Bermeo, 2016). Without these rules, coercive continuity will set the ceiling of possibility no matter who holds cabinet posts. Fourth, treat fiscal politics as constitutive rather than technical. Debt workouts, exchange-rate choices and subsidy reforms are not merely macroeconomic housekeeping; they decide winners and losers and can lock in the very coalitions a revolt sought to displace. To widen the frontier of democratic choice, reformers need debt transparency statutes, parliamentary oversight of all major financing agreements, sunset clauses for emergency measures, real-time disclosure of budget execution, and campaign-finance rules that curb oligarchic wealth defence at the source. Sequencing matters: modest but credible tax reform and beneficial-ownership disclosure early can create revenue and information that expand policy space later.

Two cross-cutting points follow. Timing is strategic. Early, narrow, verifiable pacts are more defensible than grand, indefinite refundings that invite unified resistance. And narrative is not an afterthought. Read with Arendt, the danger is that the social question consumes the founding; the antidote is not to abandon social urgency, but to link it to institutional authorship so that compassion does not become relief without rule. Bayat's warning about 'revolutions without revolutionaries' is therefore a design brief: cultivate organisers able to anchor crowds in institutions, rather than a counsel of despair about spontaneity itself. None of this guarantees durability. It does, however, change the game that follows a breakthrough. Elite recomposition becomes harder when appointments, contracts and budget lines are legible by design. Coercive continuity is less automatic when protest policing and accountability are rule bound rather than discretionary. Austerity governance is less hegemonic when debt and fiscal decisions must pass through public and parliamentary scrutiny. The measure of success is simple to state and demanding to achieve; the day the crowd leaves the square and the order remains changed.

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Protesters gather at the Central Shaheed Minar during the July Uprising in Bangladesh on August 2, 2024. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN/THE DAILY STAR

Read together, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal reveal the same pattern in different sequences. In Colombo, debt workouts and stabilisation frames narrowed policy choice and enabled old networks to repopulate the state even as protestors claimed a civic refunding; in Dhaka, student victories collided with security and bureaucratic power that first repressed and then channelled transition, which tested whether insurgent coalitions could institutionalise without absorption; in Kathmandu, a digital rights spark exposed deeper patronage bargains and invited law and order responses that disciplined the interim. The lesson is comparative: when movements cannot embed broad coalitions inside coercive and fiscal institutions, elite recomposition proceeds under the banner of responsibility. This analysis aligns with, but is not reducible to, movement-centred accounts of counterrevolution such as the recent monograph by Killian Clarke (2025). Clarke's work emphasises the preservation of broad coalitions and the capacity to remobilise as necessary defences, yet the South Asian threads suggest a further requirement: institutional insertion into the sites that allocate rents and authorise force. Egypt haunts the background not as a template to copy or avoid wholesale, but as a caution that nonviolent victories are most vulnerable when coalition breadth is not converted into durable leverage over coercion and the purse (Ketchley, 2017).

Winning the crowd, losing the order

A striking commonality across Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal is how much they resemble what Asef Bayat terms "revolutions without revolutionaries": eruptions sparked by ordinary people, precipitated by structural shocks such as debt distress, price spirals and abrupt restrictions on digital life, and coordinated through diffuse networks rather than disciplined organisations (Bayat, 2017). These uprisings scale quickly because they

into the machinery move fastest to occupy commanding posts, typically with the rhetoric of responsibility and stability (Winters, 2011). Second, coercive continuity persists: police, military and courts rarely change hands during the transition, so the very institutions that policed dissent set the limits of the new order, including licensing, media regulation, crowd control and prosecutorial discretion. Third, austerity governance narrows the policy frontier: crises that mobilised crowds are reframed as technical problems of debt, reserves and inflation, which empowers fiscal technocracies whose stabilisation scripts redistribute pain without altering the underlying settlement (Bermeo, 2016). The sequence varies. Colombo tilted first toward technocratic closure. Dhaka tilted toward security and bureaucratic management. Kathmandu tilted toward law and order containment. The outcome converges, which is a return to rule by networks that the uprising did not displace.

The implication is not that spontaneity is futile. These coalitions puncture inevitability, expose rent seeking and hold leaders to account. To convert rupture into rule, however, crowds must become organisers. That requires vehicles such as parties, unions and watchdog bodies that can bargain with entrenched elites, supervise coercive agencies and shape fiscal choices early, before stabilisation hardens into a new settlement (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Movement research underscores the need to preserve broad coalitions and to retain the capacity to remobilise under threat. The South Asian evidence adds a further condition. Without rapid institutional insertion into the sites that allocate rents and authorise force, winning the crowd becomes losing the order.

Beyond the square: A genealogy of leaderless revolutions and order setting

To situate South Asia's present within a wider twenty-first century arc, let us briefly consider how the Arendt-Bayat lens and the triad

bargain, monitor and enforce early pacts. That dense associational layer, together with a time-bound constitutional agenda, created some insulation against immediate recapture, even as later crises narrowed the horizon of reform (Beissinger, 2022). Likewise, Sudan's 2018-19 uprising shows both promise and peril. Professional associations and neighbourhood committees supplied an organisational spine that negotiated a civilian-military pact, which briefly opened institutional space. The failure to rapidly rebalance coercive institutions, and the absence of credible accountability for abuses, left the transition vulnerable, and a renewed military takeover followed (Cross, 2025). The lesson travels: organisational gains matter, but without early rules for policing, command and oversight, coercive continuity will set the limits of the new order (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Greitens, 2016).



Demonstrators shout slogans as they stand on a barricade during a protest against corruption and the government's decision to block several social media platforms, in Kathmandu, Nepal, September 8, 2025. PHOTO: REUTERS/NAVESH CHITRAKAR



DHOLAIKHAL

The scrapyard that keeps Bangladesh moving

The engineering cluster in old Dhaka survives through ingenuity and grit, supplying reconditioned machinery and parts that keep factories humming and vehicles running

DIPAN NANDY and SUKANTA HALDER

Go to Dholaikhal and see if you can find it there: this is the cruel joke your friends might have hurled at you once you lost your car. In many cases, it would be true.

There are an estimated 30,000 parts in a typical modern car, and the saying goes that there is no part you cannot find here. Any repair you might ever need, Dholaikhal is the place to go when all else fails.

Known for its illiterate mechanics who can dismantle an entire car in less than an hour and who built everything from miniature medical ventilators during the Covid-19 pandemic to repairing gigantic water vessels, the junk yard carries a mix of shame, pride and surely history.

Its proximity to Sadarghat makes Dholaikhal what it is today.

Old Dhakaites say larger paddle steamers once carried passengers from faraway districts to Dhaka's Sadarghat in the British period. Those vessels often needed anything from minor fixes to major overhauls, gradually giving birth to Dholaikhal on the banks of the Buriganga.

This place came to be seen as the



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

beating heart of inland water transport in Bangladesh's old river-based era, and it also paved the way for the shift from paddle steamers to motor vessels.

As time passed, the 550-sq-yard engineering hub of old Dhaka evolved, adopting auto repair to become a small parts supplier to the garment sector. It now repairs refrigerators, sells old air conditioners, and makes light and heavy machinery.

Bordering Bahadur Shah Park and Tipu Sultan Road, it houses some 7,000 to 8,000 workshops. Its narrow, choked lanes are filled with the constant smell of grease, engine oil and metal.

"Everything here is used," says Md Rafiq of Tansen Motors, a veteran trader who has spent more than 40 years in these lanes. "Almost everything is reconditioned, second-hand."

He does not say this as a complaint. Rather, it is the reason the area exists at all. Dholaikhal supplies what many industries and transport operators need: functioning parts at prices they can manage.

RECOVER, RECONDITION, REUSE

The flow of material begins thousands of kilometres away. Most of the parts traded in Dholaikhal come from Japan, a country known for strict maintenance habits and reliable components.

Vehicles that reach the end of their domestic life cycle are shipped to dismantling hubs, often in Dubai, where the cars are taken apart piece by piece. Engines, suspension units, compressors, electronic modules and filters are packed into containers and sent to Bangladesh. Then Dholaikhal takes over.

Inside the workshops, parts are cleaned, repaired, polished, repainted and tested. Some arrive in scrap condition and need extensive work. Others need only minor adjustments. Either way, the process keeps equipment in circulation and lowers costs for consumers.

For bus owners, truck operators, small factory managers and everyday motorists, buying new parts is often too costly or too slow. Import procedures can drag on for weeks. Dholaikhal offers a faster, cheaper fix.

The inventory is encyclopaedic, covering Japanese, Korean and even discontinued models no longer supported by manufacturers.

"Bolts, mirrors, bearings, springs, brakes, boosters, hangers, tyres -- you name it. Everything is available here at a

reasonable price, often 50 to 70 percent cheaper than a new import," said Md Nasir Uddin of Bhai Bhai Motors.

The scale is immense.

In the 1980s, Dholaikhal had around 500 to 600 shops, according to Mosharraf Hossain Mir of the Bangladesh Engineering Association. "Today, more than 5,000 officially registered shops run in the core area, with many more informal stalls surrounding them."

It employs 60,000-70,000 people, including mechanics, lathe operators, welders, polishers, assembly workers, transporters and the middlemen who negotiate, source and distribute parts.

FROM MUGHAL CANAL TO INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER

The name Dholaikhal comes from a canal dug during the Mughal era. The canal was completely filled in by 1973, making more room for the growing light engineering cluster.

Old Dhakaites say larger paddle steamers once carried passengers from faraway districts to Dhaka's Sadarghat in the British period. Those vessels often needed anything from minor fixes to major overhauls, gradually giving birth to Dholaikhal on the banks of the Buriganga.

After independence, import restrictions and a lack of domestic machinery pushed small workshops to produce and repair parts on their own. They experimented with casting, lathe work, welding and assembly. Over time, these skills developed into a specialised sector.

A turning point came in 1986 with the Dholaikhal Zinzira Project, which offered Tk 5 crore in government loans. By then, the area had developed a reputation for mechanical problem solving. The loans helped formalise parts of the trade and enabled workshops to expand.

Today, Dholaikhal remains central to Bangladesh light engineering sector, often described as the mother of all industries.

According to the SME Foundation, light engineering contributes around 3 percent to GDP with a value addition rate of 30 to 35 percent. Dholaikhal alone hosts an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 factories and workshops, involving roughly Tk 2,500 crore in investment and around Tk 5,000 crore in annual turnover.

Much of this operates informally, without central planning or modern infrastructure.

Workers earn widely varying wages depending on their expertise. A polisher or dismantler may pocket daily wages, while skilled lathe operators and troubleshooters earn way better. Many take on extra work after hours, repairing custom components or upgrading old machines.

Md Kamal, while polishing a suspension part, said the pay is not high. "But there is plenty of extra income if you know your work... I enjoy the challenge, the precision needed."

At Dholaikhal, it is common to find engines lying in rows, waiting for inspection. Scrap metal is sorted and sent to recycling yards. Tyres are cleaned, repainted and reshaped, then sold for Tk 800 to Tk 3,000 depending on quality.

Md Harun, owner of a junk yard, said properly reconditioned tyres "can easily last a year."

Navigating the lanes requires patience, but the density of parts is exactly why customers like Hasibur Rahman return. For many older cars, resident Ali Azgar says, "only Dholaikhal can help."

Workshops produce concrete mixers, brick crushers, stone crushers, roof hoists, moulds, agricultural tools, pipe elbows, soldering parts, engine filters and components used in textile, steel, sugar, dyeing, spinning and jute mills.

Several items, such as concrete mixers and farming tools, are also being exported. According to business owners, shipments could grow if proper testing and certification facilities were available.

But the cluster faces serious constraints. Modern machinery is

scarce. Computer numerical control (CNC) equipment, standard elsewhere, is almost absent because of high costs.

Most workshops depend on manual lathes, basic welding sets and simple drills. Cramped spaces limit expansion, power outages cut productivity, and electricity bills strain small operators. Training opportunities are limited, so younger workers often leave for other jobs.

A HOSPITAL FOR MECHANICAL CREATURES

Entrepreneurs believe light engineering exports, which recently touched \$796 million, could rise further with modern technology and product testing.

Md Abdur Razzaque, president of the Bangladesh Engineering Industry Owners Association, has watched the sector evolve.

He began making lathe machines in the 1980s. One machine had 317 parts, and Dholaikhal workshops made 310 of them. Motors, belts and bearings were the only imported items.

"Back then, this was a good business. After paying all the workers, we made around Tk 10,000 to Tk 15,000 profit per month, which was a big amount," he said.

But from 1994, imported machines from India and China flooded the market. Local manufacturers could not match the price or the technology.

"Today, Dholaikhal is no longer a manufacturing hub. It has become a repair centre, a hospital for mechanical creatures," he said.

Engineers from factories across Bangladesh come here when one broken part halts an entire production line. Skilled machinists often reproduce the needed component within hours. "But this area still runs as part of the informal sector, with huge potential but no investment."

He notes that the Light Engineering Industry Development Policy 2022, which promised better infrastructure, industrial parks, financing and incentives till 2027, has not been implemented. "If it had been, this sector would be far ahead."

HOW TO SAVE IT

The SME Foundation has outlined several recommendations for Dholaikhal.

Short-term measures include specialised training in mould design, machine operation and troubleshooting; accredited testing labs; and dedicated loans for technology upgrades. The foundation also suggests fairs and buyer-seller meetings at home and abroad.

Medium-term steps include exposure visits and technology exchanges with China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand. The creation of common facility centres is also advised.

In the long term, the foundation calls for full implementation of the Light Engineering Industry Development Policy 2022 and new industrial clusters across the country.

The goal is to modernise a sector that has grown despite little formal backing.

For now, Dholaikhal continues in its usual form, crowded and resourceful. It may not resemble a modern industrial zone, but it performs the work of one. It keeps factories running, maintains transport fleets and supplies equipment to industries from construction to agriculture.

