

# We need a climate solution built on people, not projects

**Says Friendship founder Runa Khan in interview with Star**

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Friendship's Earthshot Prize win has shifted the world's view of Bangladesh, from that of a climate-vulnerable country to one capable of offering credible climate solutions, said the its founder Runa Khan.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, she described the honour as both humbling and a validation of over two decades of work in the country's chars and coastal belts.

Friendship is the first Bangladeshi organisation to receive the prestigious award, founded by Prince William and widely referred to as the "Nobel Prize for the Environment". It won in the "Fix Our Climate" category on November 6 and received £1 million (around Tk 16 crore) to scale its climate innovations.

"Bangladesh often appears in international news only for cyclones, floods or other crises. But now, maybe for the first time, we are on the map not for a disaster, but for a solution," Runa said.

She said the organisation did not emerge from a sudden breakthrough, but from a gradual build up of responsibility. Friendship began with a floating



**GG** You cannot fight climate change with one or two isolated projects. If you don't start holistically from the beginning, you cannot simply add it later.

RUNA KHAN

hospital and later expanded into education, legal aid, disaster preparedness and climate adaptation. The focus has always been on human needs rather than donor-driven targets.

Explaining what set Friendship apart, Runa said its core philosophy defined the difference. "We do not chase money. We chase needs. We never say a project failed because we do not take on projects. We take on human needs. If one method does not work, we try another."

She said the organisation had turned down donor offers amounting to hundreds of crores when the agendas did not match community realities. "Integrity and relevance matter more than volume," she said.

Asked why the judges selected Friendship, she said the award recognised a solution designed specifically for "intra-migrants" – people forced to move within Bangladesh due to river erosion, tidal surges and rising seas. These communities often fall outside formal migration definitions because they do not cross borders.

"We usually go to the world with our problems. But this is the first time a

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Vendors set up makeshift stalls directly on this level crossing in the capital's Jurain. They hurriedly remove their goods whenever a train approaches and return soon after, a risky practice that puts lives in danger. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

8 more die of dengue, 778 get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight dengue patients died while 778 others were hospitalised in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), among the deaths, three were reported from Mymensingh division, two from Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), and one each from Barishal, Chattogram and Dhaka divisions.

With the new deaths and cases, the total number of deaths rose to 364, while total cases rose to 90,264 this year. Currently, 2,458 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country.

## EARTHQUAKE FEAR 3 medical colleges, 2 universities suspend classes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid nationwide panic following a series of tremors, authorities have suspended academic activities at three medical colleges and two public universities in the capital.

Dhaka Medical College (DMC), Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC), and Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College have suspended classes until November 29.

Following the closure of Dhaka University (DU) on Saturday, Jagannath University (JNU) and Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University suspended their academic activities until November 27 and December 6, respectively.

While not formally closed, North South University (NSU) has shifted regular classes online after cracks were reportedly spotted in some buildings following Friday's powerful earthquake.

When contacted, administrators of the institutions stated that the decisions were made due to safety concerns.

JNU Acting Registrar Prof Md Sheikh Gias Uddin told The Daily Star,

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Honourarium for imams, muazzins if elected Says Tarique

BSS, Dhaka

BNP plans to provide monthly honourarium to imams and muazzins facing financial hardship if it returns to power, said the party's Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday.

He said the state must take responsibility for those who serve as religious and social reformers.

"The job of an imam or muazzin depends on the whims of the mosque committee. I believe this should not be the case; it cannot be. Insha'Allah,



if the BNP gets the opportunity to govern, the BNP government will prioritise the initiative to formulate service rules. The BNP government will certainly take effective steps to implement the other demands also," he said.

Tarique made the remarks while addressing the National Conference of Sammilito Imam-Khatib Parishad at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

He said the demands placed by imams and khatibs, including the formulation of Service Rules for imams, khatibs

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Former students of St Gregory's celebrated "Treasured Memories," a reunion organised by The Gregorian Society, at the Kristi Institute Convention Hall on November 22. Nearly 150 former students, including eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain and other distinguished alumni, attended the event.

PHOTO: STAR

Verdict of graft cases against Hasina on Nov 27  
STAR REPORT

The verdict of three graft cases filed against 23 people, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her daughter Saima Wazed Putul, and son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, is scheduled to be delivered on November 27.

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun set the date after hearing arguments from both prosecution and defence, Ariful Islam, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

Among the accused, Rajuk former member Mohammad Khurshid Alam is now in jail, while the remaining 22, including Hasina, are absconding.

The trial of three other graft cases filed against 23

## TWO CUSTODIAL DEATHS ASK, MSF demand judicial probe

STAR REPORT

Two rights organisations – Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) – have expressed concern over the recent deaths of two suspects in the custody of the Detective Branch (DB) of police.

The deceased were identified as Mukhtar Hossain in Dhaka and Shahadat Hossain in Sirajganj, who reportedly died in separate incidents while in DB custody.

Their families have alleged the deaths resulted from torture during detention, according to media reports.

In a statement issued yesterday, ASK called for an independent judicial investigation into the incidents. The organisation stressed that ensuring the safety of individuals under state custody is a constitutional duty of law enforcement agencies. Such deaths raise serious questions about Bangladesh's adherence to human rights, the Constitution, and international standards, and demand fresh scrutiny, they said.

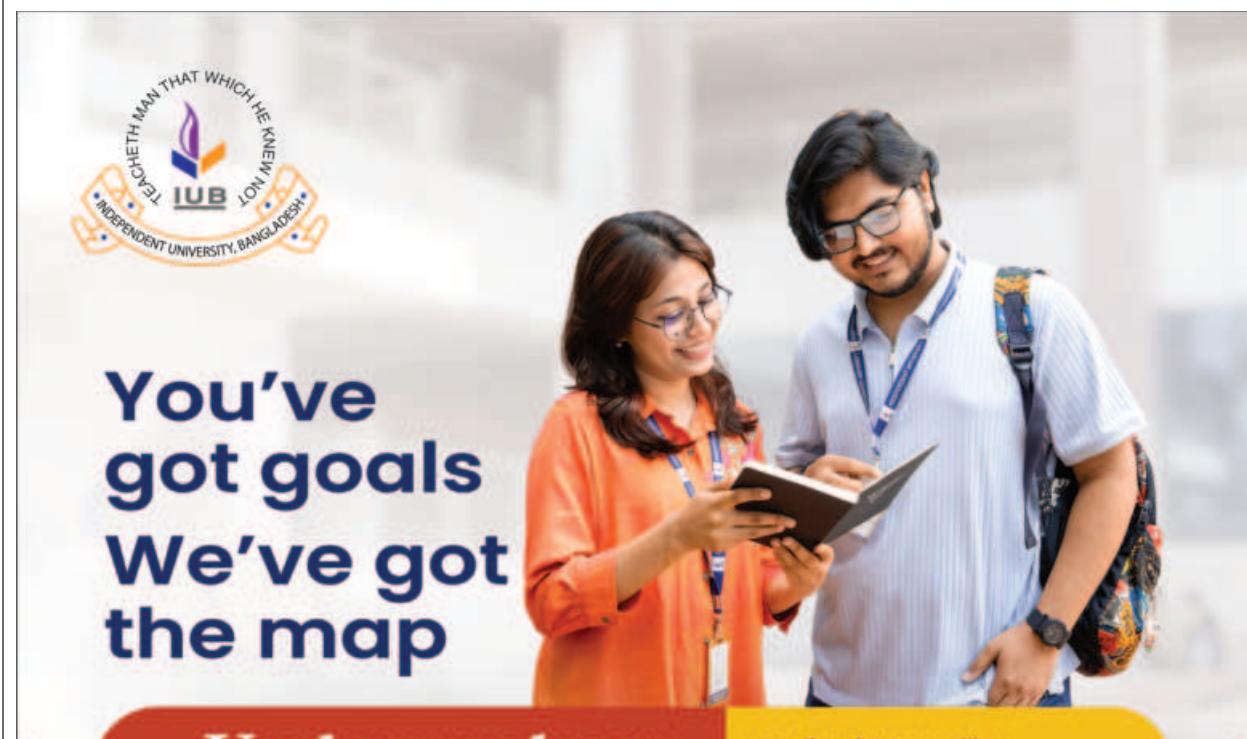
ASK noted that any death in state

custody is a grave violation of the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 32 of the Constitution. It also breaches fundamental principles of international human rights charters, which obligate the state to ensure detainees' safety.

Citing its records, ASK reported that at least 15 citizens have died in custody – whether in police stations, Rab, PBI, or DB – across the country between January to November 22 in 2025. The organisation said this figure reflects negligence, lack of accountability, and institutional weaknesses.

ASK urged that identifying those responsible for custodial deaths and ensuring legal accountability is a non-negotiable state responsibility. It also emphasised safeguarding the victims' families' rights to security, justice, and legal support.

Meanwhile, MSF, in a press statement yesterday, strongly condemned the deaths and described the allegations of torture-related deaths in DB custody as deeply regrettable and unacceptable violations of human rights.



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