

"I will permanently pause migration from all Third World Countries to allow the US system to fully recover."

Trump writes on social media after troop killed

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2025



REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 307

AGRAHAYAN 14, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

JAMADIUS SANI 7, 1447 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00

5yrs on, no building regulatory body yet

HELEMUL ALAM

Five years after the revised Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) was gazetted, the government has yet to establish the dedicated national authority meant to enforce it, leaving much of the country's urban structures largely unregulated.

The BNBC-2020 mandates the formation of a Bangladesh Building Regulatory Authority (BBRA) to ensure building safety, fire protection, seismic resilience, quality materials, and professional accountability.

But no such body has



materialised.

Instead, the previous government made deputy commissioners heads of district-level building committees -- an arrangement experts say contradicts the code and has proved ineffective.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Code mandates design approvals, third-party vetting, construction monitoring

Previous govt put DCs in charge of district building committees, which experts say violates code, undermines enforcement

Current govt formed committee to set up regulatory authority

Experts doubt if authority will be set up within this govt's tenure or if next govt will prioritise it

BNP opens doors to expelled leaders ahead of polls

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

To strengthen unity among grassroots leaders ahead of the national election, the BNP has reopened its doors to leaders it had previously expelled for violating party directives and damaging the party's image.

Over the last month, the party reinstated nearly 240 leaders who had been removed from their posts for joining local government polls during Awami League's tenure, campaigning for AL candidates, or engaging in criminal activities.

Documents show that 70 percent of those reinstated had contested local government polls against party instructions. The rest were removed over criminal offences (7 percent).

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Khaleda's condition 'very critical'

Says Fakhrul; Yunus wishes her speedy recovery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health condition of BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia is "very critical", said party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

He urged the nation to pray for her recovery.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has also expressed deep concern over her condition and called for prayers.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital on November 23 on the advice of her medical board after being diagnosed with infections in her heart and lungs.

She is also suffering from pneumonia and is currently receiving treatment in the hospital's Coronary Care Unit (CCU) under the supervision of both local and foreign specialists.

Khaleda, 80, has long been suffering from multiple health

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



The struggle to cope with rising salinity, depleting sweet water, and diminishing livelihoods continues on the frontlines of climate change in the rural south west. This is the 3rd of a 5-part series.

The salt in their wounds

Women in coastal Bangladesh suffer severe reproductive health problems from rising salinity

WASIM BIN HABIB, back from Satkhira, Khulna

For nearly a decade, 45-year-old Shima Biswas caught shrimp fry to support her family, wading through knee- to waist-deep brackish waters of the Chuna River near the Sundarbans.

During low tide, she would remain in the salty water for hours, gathering fry she could sell for Tk 250-350 on good days.

It was in these long, salt-soaked hours that a small rash first appeared on her body. Shima ignored it.

But within weeks, the itch spread and she also developed persistent vaginal discharge, recurring Urinary Tract Infections and lower abdominal pain, often accompanied by fever at night.

"I was embarrassed to tell anyone," she said, sitting in a corner of her narrow veranda.

A local doctor urged her to stop working in saline water, but she felt she had no choice. "What would we eat? I've done this for years. My husband's income isn't enough."

She continued to work until the



pain became unbearable. Upon being taken to a clinic in Satkhira's Shyamnagar upazila, her tests showed tumours in her ovaries and uterus. A year ago, her uterus was removed. "I returned to the water for work for a while but now I cannot."

Her neighbour, Shita Rani Mandal, in her late 40s, faced a similar fate. Years of standing in saline water caused repeated infections leading to uterine prolapse.

"I'd tie my saree like a lungi before getting into the river," she said. Her husband has long been

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

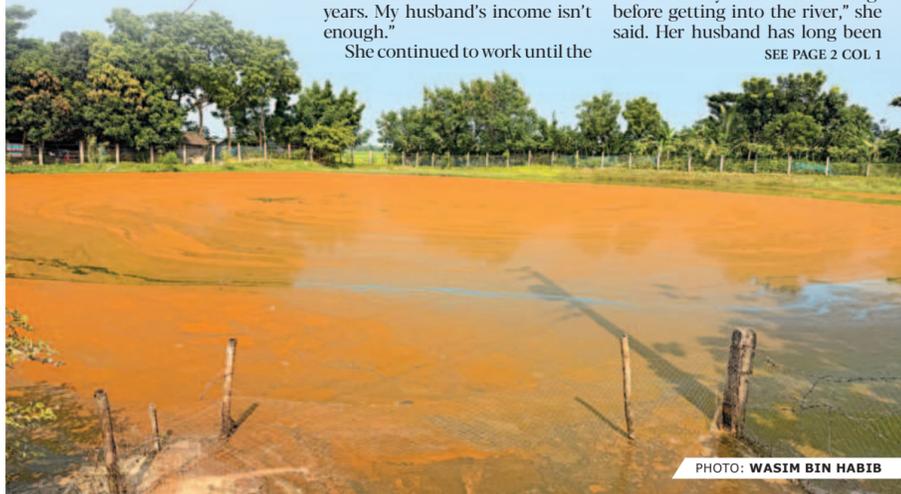


PHOTO: WASIM BIN HABIB

THIS EVENING

10th

BRAC BANK The Daily Star

ict AWARDS

Keynote Speaker



Kamal Quadir
CEO, bKash

*Participation is by invitation only.

WALTON Official Regional Partner of ARGENTINA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

WALTON Lift

No.1 Choice
for Safety and Comfort



EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY

01713448216
01713448227
01713448250

Call for Details

Energy-Efficient

Smart Control Panel

Built-in UPS

AI Integrated

24/7 Service

lift.waltonbd.com

The salt in their wounds

FROM PAGE 1

too ill to work. "I cried quietly through the pain but kept going. We had to raise our daughter."

She also had to have her uterus removed four years ago, with her son-in-law helping cover the cost. "The water we drink is salty; the ponds are salty. It feels like we're fighting salt in every part of life."

Across Satkhira and Khulna, hundreds of women and girls, like Sima and Sita, suffer skin diseases, UTIs and reproductive health problems linked to rising salinity.

Sea level rise, cyclones, tidal surges and unregulated shrimp farming have pushed salt water deep into rivers, canals and soil, eroding both livelihoods and women's health.

CAUGHT IN SALTY WATERS AND ILLNESS

Daily life in coastal villages is inseparable from saline water.

Women wash, bathe, collect drinking water and work in it. The constant exposure, along with consuming salty water, gradually takes a toll, causing chronic irritation, infections, menstrual disorders and gastrointestinal diseases, said doctors and experts.

Prof Dr Ferdousi Begum Flora, gynaecologist and former president of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh, said, "While there is no comprehensive scientific evidence, available literature shows prolonged exposure to saline water — through prolonged contact, drinking or soil — can aggravate common reproductive infections."

She added that long-term exposure may increase hypertension risk, including during pregnancy, which can affect the next generation.

There is no central government study on how many women suffer these illnesses. But several scientific studies show clear patterns linking salinity to health complications along the coastal belt.

A 2024 study in the Journal of Migration and Health found reproductive and skin-related illnesses widespread among



HOW SALINITY TAKES A TOLL ON WOMEN

women in Shyamnagar and Mongla.

According to the study, 64.8 percent of women in Mongla and 53.8 percent in Shyamnagar reported infections or inflammation in the vagina, uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. Many earn a living by wading waist-deep in saline water to collect shrimp fry.

Over a third of them struggled with menstrual hygiene, and 92 percent in Shyamnagar and nearly 70 percent in Mongla suffered severe skin problems.

An icddr,b analysis from 2012–2017 documented 12,867 pregnancies across hill and coastal regions.

It showed that women living within 20km of the coastline and as high as seven metres above sea level were 1.3 times more likely to miscarry than those in higher land.

MENSTRUATION AMID SALINITY

For coastal women and girls, menstruation becomes a monthly struggle shaped by poverty, saltwater and sanitation challenges.

With limited access to clean water or sanitary products, many rely on old cloth, washing it in saline ponds

Women collecting shrimp fry spend hours standing in saline water

Long exposure leads to UTIs, skin diseases and reproductive infections

Some women had their uterus removed after years of untreated illness

Studies show over half of coastal women suffer gynaecological problems

Girls wash menstrual cloths in salty ponds due to lack of safe water



and rivers before reuse.

"My period is irregular, and I have to keep it secret. We can't afford napkins, so we wash the same cloth in salty water again and again," said 14-year-old Shumi (name withheld) from Burigoalni.

In many families, school-going girls may get sanitary napkins, but adult women continue using cloth. Experts say this exposes them to infections and long-term complications.

Prof Sharmin Neelorme, an expert on climate change and gender justice, said limited access to fresh water forces women to drink less and compromises hygiene during menstruation, heightening risks.

She noted that reused cloth often becomes stiff and can cause wounds that lead to infections.

A medical officer in Shyamnagar Health Complex, seeking anonymity, said most female patients come with reproductive issues such as UTIs caused by poor menstrual hygiene and lack of care.

Shyamnagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Ziaur Rahman said there is no conclusive research directly linking uterine

diseases to salinity but confirmed frequent UTI cases among women working long hours in saline water.

A study in the Palgrave Handbook of Ecosystems and Wellbeing this year found 87.3 percent women in four Satkhira upazilas reported problems with menarche, while 68.3 percent suffered UTIs. It also found 41.67 percent experienced irregular menstrual cycles.

Amena Khatun, 27, from Khulna's Koyra upazila, said some girls begin menstruating unusually early, while others bleed heavily or fall ill. "Some families marry off their daughters early thinking it will fix the problem," she said, adding that many women also struggle to conceive.

"Apart from salt, the tube wells also contain arsenic and iron. If we had safe water, half our suffering would disappear."

Poor sanitation, limited healthcare and delayed diagnosis deepen the crisis. Many women avoid treatment because of stigma, distance, cost or lack of awareness, often normalising

symptoms until they become severe. Shampa Goswami, executive director of PRERONA, an NGO working on women's health and rights, said many women — especially shrimp fry collectors — are remain unaware of the available government or NGO health services. "At the same time, the stigma keeps them silent."

She noted that nearly 90 percent of women in Shyamnagar and Munshiganj unions do not know about VIA screening, a low-cost cervical cancer test.

"In our focus group discussions, many women reported early menopause, some as early as 35. Untreated uterine infections can progress to cancer," she said.

Experts called for targeted interventions, including access to safe water, more health facilities in remote areas, awareness campaigns and alternative livelihoods for women in saline-prone regions.

"Investing in them is not only for their well-being but also for the next generation," Prof Neelorme said.

(Our Satkhira and Khulna correspondents contributed to this story)

BNP opens doors to expelled leaders

FROM PAGE 1

extortion (5 percent), party indiscipline (7 percent), campaigning for AL candidates (4 percent), internal clashes (4 percent), and violent incidents (3 percent).

Political analysts say bringing back controversial figures does not send a strong message to party supporters.

Senior BNP leaders, however, say the initiative is part of a broader effort to reorganise the party ahead of the polls and mobilise experienced activists familiar with their localities.

BNP Standing Committee member Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain told The Daily Star, "Those who worked effectively for the party during tough times are being reconsidered. Their return will help strengthen the grassroots before the polls."

According to sources at the Nayapaltan office, several thousand BNP leaders have applied for reinstatement.

REINSTATEMENT

Over the past two years, the BNP expelled a large number of leaders for taking part in four city corporation and upazila parishad polls that the party had boycotted.

Of them, 164 have been reinstated so far, including 96 city-level leaders, 58 upazila-level leaders, nine municipality-level leaders, and one union parishad level leader, according to the documents.

Sylhet topped the list with 41 reinstated leaders, followed by Gazipur with 31, Rajshahi with 17, and Cumilla with seven.

Most were ward-level organisers or women councillor aspirants expelled in mid-2023 for defying party directives.

ABM Zillur Rahman, a BNP leader from Sylhet City Corporation's ward-18, said he regretted joining the last city polls and was "grateful to the party leadership for bringing him back". Another seven Sylhet leaders

expressed similar sentiments.

In Gazipur, several former councillors and metropolitan secretaries were welcomed back on November 17.

In Rajshahi, leaders such as Mirza Ripon and Shamsun Nahar also regained their posts.

Ripon, general secretary of ward-22 BNP in Rajshahi city, said he was pleased to return after more than two years. "I was expelled because of a mistake. Now the party has forgiven me," Shamsun, senior joint secretary of Rajshahi metropolitan BNP, echoed the view.

The BNP also reinstated 58 leaders removed during the May-June 2024 upazila parishad polls, including 21 from Sylhet division, nine from Barishal, eight from Chattogram, seven from Rangpur, six each from Dhaka and Rajshahi, and one each from Khulna and Mymensingh.

DISCIPLINE VIOLATION

Documents show that 46 reinstated leaders had faced disciplinary or criminal allegations after the July uprising.

Of them, 37 percent were accused of land or pond grabbing, sand extraction, or extortion from markets; 19.6 percent of kidnapping; and 17 percent of violating other party disciplines.

Thirteen percent were linked to violent incidents, including attacks on journalists, women leaders, and factory officials.

For example, Nazmul Fakir, member secretary of a Jubo Dal union unit in Gazipur, who was expelled on September 11 for alleged factory extortion, was reinstated just 70 days later. "I was hurt because I sacrificed so much for the party. Now the party has understood and given my post back," he said.

Two other leaders — Kausar Talukder of Munshiganj's Kumarbhog union and Shamim

Mollah of Dighirpar — were reinstated 15 months after being expelled in August 2024 for illegal sand extraction and extorting money from the Mawa ghat.

Contacted, Munshiganj BNP Convener Mizanur Rahman Sinha said, "Nothing was decided among us regarding his reinstatement. The central leadership did whatever they thought was best for the party."

Iqbal Hossain, general secretary of BNP's Siddhirganj thana unit, who was removed in December 2024 for assaulting a bus driver and a journalist, was also reinstated. "I thank Tarique Rahman for it," he said.

On May 22, 2024, eight leaders lost their posts for allegedly abducting and beating an army member in Barishal. All were reinstated six months later, on November 22.

Similarly, Abdul Halim Molla, member secretary of Gazipur Metropolitan Swechchhasebak Dal, expelled on July 6 this year for extortion, regained his post on October 29.

The BNP also reinstated 10 leaders who had campaigned for Awami League candidates in the last national polls.

Speaking to this newspaper, Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, former professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, called the move "a contradictory step" that could "discourage discipline and send a wrong message to party leaders and activists".

"If the party acting chairman [Tarique Rahman] were in the country, he might have reviewed these cases more closely," he added.

Dhaka University teacher Mojibur Rahman said, "Perhaps BNP sees the expulsions of those who took part in local government polls as mistakes. But reinstating those accused of serious misconduct is alarming."

5yrs on, no building regulatory body yet

FROM PAGE 1

The current government has now formed an interim committee, led by the housing and public works secretary, Rajuk chairman, PWD chief engineer and other development authorities, to begin the formal process of establishing the BBRA.

The urgency of a central authority heightened after a recent 5.7-magnitude earthquake killed at least 10 people in Dhaka, Narsingdi and Narayanganj, injured several hundred, and damaged around 300 buildings in Rajuk areas, exposing how vulnerable the country remains without coherent oversight.

Urban planner Mohammad Abu Sadeque, a member of the revised BNBC drafting team, said the code offers a "life-saving system" if implemented properly, with fire safety measures, earthquake resilience, and safeguards against the electrical faults that fuel most urban fires.

He noted that while Dhaka, Chattogram, and municipalities have development authorities, outside these areas, especially in upazilas and rural regions, there is no responsible authority.

Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of Buet's civil engineering department echoed these concerns, saying enforcement in major cities is limited and "almost non-existent" elsewhere.

"A dedicated authority is essential because the building code, despite being robust, is barely enforced," he said.

Rajuk's own estimates paint a stark picture: a 6.9 magnitude quake could collapse 865,000 buildings and kill 210,000 people in Dhaka, with Old Dhaka especially exposed due to its narrow lanes and century-old structures.

In Chattogram, 70–75 percent of more than 380,000 buildings are at serious risk, Bangladesh Earthquake Society assessments show. A magnitude

7.5 quake could devastate major installations including the port and refineries.

Sylhet, sitting atop the active Dauki Fault, faces rising micro quakes, with over 70 percent of buildings lacking seismic design.

The housing and public works ministry has only recently begun drafting documents and gathering stakeholder opinions on forming the BBRA, officials said.

Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan and Secretary Md Nazrul Islam did not respond to repeated calls for comment.

Rajuk Chief Town Planner Md Ashrafur Islam said the interim committee is now overseeing preparatory work and expects the BBRA to be formed by December.

Sadeque, however, doubts the timeline, warning that the interim government's term is ending and the next administration may not prioritise the issue.

Under BNBC 2020, in areas without development authorities or city corporations, the district PWD executive engineer is designated as the "building official".

But in 2022, the previous government bypassed this provision and created DC-headed committees, raising questions about how officers with little technical background, and burdened with over a hundred committees, could lead building safety oversight.

"This approach has crippled building-code enforcement nationwide," said Sadeque, who heads the Centre for Housing and Building Research.

He argued that the PWD executive engineer should convene the BBRA at district level, with upazila engineers as member secretaries, as they are better placed to monitor construction.

He suggested including engineers

from public health and disaster-management departments to strengthen enforcement.

Prof Munaz Ahmed Noor, another teacher of Buet's civil engineering department, said the BNBC outlines a full safety process: architectural, structural, electrical, mechanical and fire-safety designs must be submitted to the authority before construction; agencies lacking expertise must hire third-party professionals; and construction must be monitored for compliance.

"None of these mandatory steps are followed in Bangladesh," he said, adding that land-use policies are equally essential and the BBRA must be given real authority.

Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said the BBRA must be established without delay.

Earthquake preparedness, he noted, must be nationwide, soil-sensitive, and grounded in micro-zoning that determines where development can safely occur.

"Bangladesh needs a comprehensive physical plan. Earthquake risk, topography, and geological attributes must guide development. Otherwise even a moderate earthquake could cause severe damage," he said.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Thursday instructed authorities to explore creating a separate national body to approve all buildings and oversee construction works.

"The chief adviser directed the housing and public works ministry to examine whether a separate authority can be created for approving buildings across Bangladesh," Press Secretary Shaiful Alam told reporters at the Foreign Service Academy.

Khaleda's condition 'very critical'

FROM PAGE 1

complications, including heart problems, liver and kidney issues, diabetes, lung problems, arthritis, and eye-related illnesses. She has a permanent pacemaker and previously underwent stenting for her heart.

Last night, the medical board sources said her kidney is not functioning properly.

They said if her condition permits, they may attempt to send her to the UK for advanced treatment; if that is not possible, Singapore is being considered.

Meanwhile, speaking at an event at Nayapaltan yesterday, Fakhru said, "You all know that our leader Begum Khaleda Zia has fallen ill and been hospitalised. Last night, doctors said her health condition is very critical."

"We offered prayers at the Nayapaltan Mosque and prayed to the Almighty for her recovery and good health," he added. Special prayers were offered at

mosques across the country after Juma prayers for Khaleda's speedy recovery.

In a statement last night, Professor Yunus said that during this crucial phase of the nation's democratic transition, Khaleda Zia remains a source of inspiration for many, and her good health is of great importance for the country.

He instructed the authorities concerned to remain fully prepared and maintain coordination to ensure uninterrupted support for her care.

Around 11:00pm, BNP leaders and activists gathered in front of the hospital to learn about her condition and waited for updates.

Khaleda's sister Selina Islam, her nephew Saiful Islam, and other family members visited her around 7:00pm.

Senior BNP leaders, including Fakhru, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, and several others, also visited the hospital last night.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul went there as well.

The day Khaleda was admitted, Professor Dr FM Siddiqui, a member of the medical board, said several of her health complications had appeared simultaneously.

"She has a chest infection, which has affected both her heart and lungs at the same time, causing respiratory distress," he said.

He said the BNP chief has long been suffering from heart conditions, including mitral stenosis, and has a permanent pacemaker and previous stenting.

Her family members, including Tarique Rahman and Zubaida Rahman, have been in close contact with the doctors.

Since returning from London on May 6 after receiving advanced medical care, Khaleda has been undergoing regular check-ups at Evercare Hospital.

RUSSIA OCCUPIED CRIMEA

Ukraine strikes oil refinery, air base

AGENCIES

Ukraine's military said yesterday it had hit Russia's Saratov oil refinery and the Saky air base in the occupied Crimea peninsula overnight.

"A series of explosions was recorded, followed by a fire in the target area," the military said regarding the refinery strike in a statement on social media.

It also said that it had hit fuel and lubricant depots in Russian-occupied parts of eastern Ukraine.

Russian air defence systems intercepted and destroyed 136 Ukrainian drones overnight, the defence ministry said. More than a half were shot down over the Rostov and Saratov regions.

Russia has received what the US and Kyiv have called an "updated

and refined peace framework" to end the war in Ukraine and will discuss it next week, the Kremlin confirmed yesterday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that outline draft peace proposals discussed by the United States and Ukraine in Geneva could become the basis of future agreements to end the conflict, but that if not Russia would fight on.



Clockwise from left, activists hold a torch procession in Shahbagh demanding the release of baul singer Abul Sarkar; artists perform protest songs at a programme in the area; and a similar event takes place at the Central Shaheed Minar with baul singer Aleya Begum, wife of Abul Sarkar, and poet and columnist Farhad Mazhar in attendance. Abul Sarkar was sent to jail in Manikganj on November 20 in a case filed on charges of hurting religious sentiments.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN

'End assaults on Baul artistes'

Pala Gaan protest calls for release of Abul Sarkar, demands action from govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of artistes yesterday staged a protest through Pala Gaan, the traditional Bangla folk music, condemning ongoing attacks on Baul artistes and mazars across the country and demanding the immediate release of Baul artiste Abul Sarkar.

The protest rally was held at Central Shaheed Minar, where participants alleged that certain groups tried to block them from attending the rally and issued threats beforehand.

Speakers said these groups were creating unrest instead of following legal processes and accused them of using religion to expand their political influence.

They also accused the government and law enforcement agencies of failing to prevent attacks on Baul performers.

Speaking at the rally, Aleya Begum, a renowned Baul artiste and wife of Abul Sarkar, asked, "I do not know why they want to destroy our songs or what they want to achieve in our country. Where are they coming from?"

Poet and columnist Farhad Mazhar said, "We will not react, but the people of the country will defend against those creating chaos."

On November 20, Abul Sarkar was sent to jail in Manikganj after being arrested in a case filed over charges of hurting religious sentiments during a performance in Ghior upazila on November 4.

Meanwhile, in Shahbagh, another event demanding Abul Sarkar's release saw tensions break out when a group vandalised banners and scuffled with organisers.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

People no longer want 'old, rotten politics'

Says Jamaat ameer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said people no longer want "old, rotten, and foul politics" and are seeking a change.

"They want to see a 'New Bangladesh'. And a 'New Bangladesh' cannot run on old formulas," he told a rally at the BRP ground in Dhaka's Bhashantek area.

Speaking as chief guest at the event organised in support of SM Khaliduzzaman, Jamaat's nominee for Dhaka-17, Shafiqur said people do not want to see any partisan government in the future. "They want a people's government -- one in which every official prioritises public interest over personal gains."

Referring to the July uprising, he said, "A great deal of blood and lives were sacrificed for change. People hoped fascism would leave this land forever. Sadly, it has not. A section of the fascists may have left, but fascism still remains."

He cited corruption, extortion, land grabbing, disrespect for women and attempts to destabilise

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Families struggle as dengue cases peak in November

HELEMUL ALAM

Twelve-year-old Nuhas and his two-and-a-half-year-old sister Najat are sharing a single bed at the children's ward of Mugda Medical College and Hospital, both diagnosed with dengue.

Their grandmother, Dina, said Nuhas developed a fever on Friday and was treated at a local clinic in Demra. As his condition worsened, he was referred to Mugda Medical College and Hospital and admitted on Tuesday.

"After his admission, Najat also developed a fever and was diagnosed with dengue on Wednesday," Dina said.

According to their mother, Sonia, Nuhas' platelet count fell to 26,000 on Thursday, though his condition has since shown slight improvement. Doctors are still waiting for Najat's test results. The family said they are trying to avoid admitting her unless necessary, as they want to keep her off saline unless required.

A similar ordeal was unfolding for another family from Mugda. Four-year-old Mohammad Bagdad was admitted to the dengue ward on Tuesday. His mother, Samsunnahar, said he had been suffering from fever since Sunday and was diagnosed at Islamia Hospital before being referred to Mugda. "He still has fever and abdominal pain," she said.

Bagdad's two-year-old sister, Kaniz Fatima, has also been running a fever since Monday but has not been admitted. Doctors are treating her on an outpatient basis, Samsunnahar added.

These are not isolated

cases. November recorded the highest number of deaths and hospitalisations from dengue this year, even though overall cases have recently begun to decline.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 377 people have died from dengue and 93,194 have been hospitalised nationwide so far this year. Of these, 94 deaths occurred in



► Dengue death toll stands at 377 this year

► Nov saw 94 deaths, highest in a month

► Hospitalisations peaked in Nov with 23,322 admissions

► Total dengue admissions this year 93,194

► Experts warn cases may not fall significantly before Jan

November, the highest in a single month, surpassing October's 80 deaths.

Hospitalisations also peaked in November with 23,322 admissions, compared to 22,520 in October.

Entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said dengue will decrease only slightly in December, with a significant decline unlikely before late January.

"The immediate emergency is that in Dhaka's multistorey buildings, Aedes mosquitoes are breeding in basements. This is not linked to rainfall. These areas must be brought under control immediately," he said.

He pointed to under-construction buildings and abandoned structures in Old Dhaka as high-risk breeding zones.

"These three areas -- basements, abandoned buildings, and construction sites -- must be closely monitored. Immediate action is essential," Bashar added.

He warned that irregular water supply in parts of Old Dhaka forces residents to store water, increasing breeding risks. "People should clean water containers with detergent at least every three to seven days before refilling," he said.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said while dengue cases may fall gradually, they will not disappear soon.

"Only the number of patients will slowly decrease," he said, cautioning that the Culex mosquito population is rising and could cause new public health problems by January or February.

"Containers that held water earlier may still contain eggs even if they are dry. These must be disposed of properly. Active breeding sites must be destroyed immediately," Rahman said. He added that authorities have a short window to act. "If preventive measures are implemented now, it may delay the dengue surge that usually comes after the first rains in March or April."

TIB slams approval of ACC ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed disappointment over the Advisory Council's final approval of the Anti-Corruption Commission Ordinance, 2025, saying the move ignores key strategic recommendations aimed at ensuring transparency, accountability, and institutional independence of the ACC.

TIB said the removal of the proposed "Selection and Review Committee" -- despite earlier consent from relevant government authorities and unanimous support from all political parties in the July Charter -- undermines efforts to reform the ACC, which it described as long burdened by a negative image and used as a tool against political opponents.

The organisation said excluding the provision indicates that the state's desire to reform is being held "hostage by anti-reform circles within the government".

It also questioned whether the chief adviser, who leads the consensus commission behind II reform initiatives, was sending a message that reforms are merely symbolic if the ACC is kept beyond accountability.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftakharuzzaman said the committee was

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Halt unplanned urbanisation to save Dhaka

Urge experts, call for strengthening city planning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unless Dhaka's uncontrolled and unplanned urbanisation is stopped, there will be no effective way to protect the city from earthquakes, fires, and other disasters, speakers said at a virtual programme yesterday.

They said recurring disasters -- such as earthquakes and fires -- have made Dhaka, one of the world's most densely populated cities, increasingly unsafe and unfit for living.

The speakers noted that the government has failed to control the continuous influx of people into Dhaka or manage rapid urbanisation, while city planning has been neglected at both public and private levels.

There is a severe lack of enforcement of building codes and construction regulations, resulting in unsafe high-rise buildings being built on weak, reclaimed land over water bodies, wetlands and floodplains.

Speakers said there is a severe lack of enforcement of building codes and construction regulations, resulting in unsafe high-rise buildings being built on weak, reclaimed land over water bodies, wetlands and floodplains.

They added that political influence, landowners' arbitrariness, and corruption and negligence by responsible officials have turned life in Dhaka into a dangerous and uncertain reality.

They further claimed that under pressure from business groups, the government recently approved changes to the Detailed Area Plan without considering earthquake risks or the city's livability.

Presenting the keynote paper, Institute for Planning and Development Director Prof Adil Mohammed Khan said making Dhaka safe and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Empowered to stand on their own

Rural women rebuild lives with help from govt, UNDP project



NILIMA JAHAN

When her husband fell ill in 2013 and could no longer work, 36-year-old Moni Begum from Sherpur's Nakla upazila suddenly became the only earning member of her family. However, she refused to give up.

Leaving her six-year-old son in the village, Moni moved to Dhaka and found work as a helper in the quality department of a garment factory in Ashulia. For seven years, she supported her family alone.

By 2020, her own declining health forced her to return home, unsure of what to do next.

Back in the village, Moni felt lost but determined. Her turning point came when she enrolled in SWAPNO, a social protection and employment programme for rural women

facing extreme poverty -- widowed, divorced, abandoned, or with husbands unable to earn.

Run by the Local Government Division with technical assistance from UNDP since 2015, SWAPNO offers temporary public works jobs along with financial literacy, savings support, and livelihood training.

According to project data, over 10,000 women have been employed under the public works component, each earning around Tk 75,000 during their term. More than 6,000 women have also completed skills training in livestock rearing, small business management, fish culture, and crop production, with many now running their own income-generating activities.

For Moni, the programme was a chance to rebuild.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Candidates and their guardians gather outside Kalabhaban after the IBA admission test, as Dhaka University began its entry exams yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

INTERNATIONAL

HK tower fire toll rises to 128

200 remain missing; security chief says fire alarms failed



REUTERS, Hong Kong

The death toll from Hong Kong's worst fire in nearly 80 years has risen to 128 and about 200 people remain missing from the high-rise residential complex that was engulfed by the blaze, the city's security chief said yesterday.

The fire in the Wang Fuk Court development, with eight 32-storey towers in the northern district of Tai Po, started and quickly spread on Wednesday afternoon.

"We do not rule out the possibility that more bodies could be discovered when police enter the building for detailed investigations," Hong Kong Security Chief Chris Tang told a press conference, adding that only 39 of the 128 dead had been identified.

Tang also said fire alarms in the complex had not been working properly. Rescue efforts had now been concluded and at least 79 people, including 12 firefighters were injured, he said.

"Our aim now is to make sure the temperature decreases in the building and once everything is deemed safe, police will collect evidence and conduct further investigation," Tang said. The estate housing more than 4,600 people had been wrapped in bamboo scaffolding and green mesh for renovation work.

Dozens of domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia had been caught up in the disaster and 19 were still missing, said Edwina Antonio, executive director at migrant women refuge association Bethune House.

Police said they had arrested three construction company officials on suspicion of manslaughter for using unsafe materials, including flammable foam boards blocking windows.

Israel strikes Syria, Gaza in air raids

13 Syrians killed, 25 others hurt in Beit Jin; Palestinian killed near Khan Younis; 9 bodies found in Hamas tunnels

AGENCIES

At least 13 Syrians were killed and 25 others wounded yesterday in Israeli artillery and missile attacks on the town of Beit Jinn, southwest of Syria's capital, Damascus.

In Gaza, at least one Palestinian was killed in an Israeli drone attack on the Bani Suheila municipality near Khan Younis city.

Israeli forces also carried out artillery attacks and shot from helicopters in Khan Younis city and air strikes nearby Rafah, reports Al Jazeera online.

Syrian state television reported that women and children were among those killed by Israeli military attacks in Beit Jinn. "Others remain trapped in the rubble", said the media, adding that dozens of local families have fled the area.

The Israeli army said an exchange of fire in an operation to detain militants from neighbouring Lebanon in the Syrian village of Beit Jin left six Israeli soldiers wounded, three of them in serious condition.

"We were asleep when we were woken up at three in the morning by gunfire," wounded resident Iyad Daher told AFP at a hospital in Damascus around 40 kilometres

(25 miles) from the village.

"We went outside to see what was happening and saw the Israeli army in the village, soldiers and tanks. Then they withdrew, the air force came, and the shells started falling. I was hit by shrapnel in the neck."

The Israeli army said the targets of the operation were fighters from the Islamist group Jamaa Islamiya, which is based in neighbouring Lebanon. "The suspects operated in

of Palestinian armed groups, was filmed from several angles, including by AFP.

Four European nations on Thursday urged Israel to stop what they called increasing "settler violence against Palestinian civilians" in the occupied West Bank.

"We — France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom — strongly condemn the massive increase of settler violence against Palestinian civilians and call for stability in the



the area of Beit Jin in southern Syria and advanced terror attacks against Israeli civilians," it said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army and police said they were investigating the circumstances in which two Palestinians were shot dead in the occupied West Bank while seemingly surrendering to Israeli forces.

The incident in Jenin in the northern West Bank, a stronghold

West Bank," they said.

In a separate development, the Israeli army said yesterday it had found the bodies of nine Palestinian militants recently killed in its attempts to dismantle the tunnel network in the southern Gaza Strip.

During operations in eastern Rafah, soldiers "located nine additional terrorists who had been eliminated in the underground terror infrastructure", the army said.

Putin to visit India on Dec 4-5 for Modi talks

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to visit India on December 4-5 at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss bilateral ties and international issues, the Kremlin and India's Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

During the state visit, Putin will hold talks with Modi and hold a separate meeting with Indian President Droupadi Murmu, the Kremlin said, saying a number of unspecified intergovernmental and commercial documents would be signed.

Putin last went to India in December 2021, just a few months before ordering troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

"This visit is of great importance, providing an opportunity to comprehensively discuss the extensive agenda of Russian-Indian relations as a particularly privileged strategic partnership," the Kremlin said in a statement.

Tunisia court hands opposition figures decades in jail

AFP, Tunis

Dozens of Tunisian opposition figures were handed prison sentences up to 45 years long on appeal yesterday, lawyers told AFP, in a trial rights groups have condemned as politically motivated.

Nearly 40 defendants, many of them critics of President Kais Saied, were sentenced to up to 66 years in April for "conspiracy against state security" and "belonging to a terrorist group".

The United Nations and rights groups have criticised the trial, and the charges were mainly based on accusations of meeting with foreign diplomats.

Most of the detainees were arrested in a crackdown on the opposition in 2023, after Saied labelled them "terrorists". Saied was elected in 2019 after Tunisia emerged as the only democracy of the Arab Spring. In 2021, Saied staged a sweeping power grab, and human rights groups have since criticised a major rollback on freedoms.

Jamaat mulling major overhaul

FROM PAGE 12

decided to bring forward young leadership. "A significant number of our voters are young who couldn't cast their votes in the last three farcical national elections. We want to attract the young voters by nominating young candidates," he said.

Porwal also said Islamist parties were discussing an "understanding" for seat adjustments, adding, "Once the electoral understanding or alliance is finalised, candidates will be withdrawn from some constituencies." The Jamaat had completed the nomination process in all 300 constituencies early this year, allowing its candidates to prepare the field far ahead of their opponents.

The party, however, faced criticism from different quarters for not nominating any candidates from minority and women. Asked about the matter, Zubair mentioned the

party's recent decision to nominate several candidates from minority and ethnic groups. On the inclusion of women candidates, he said the party has an organisational system to pick the prospective candidates for running in the national election.

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

At least 16 candidates are former presidents of Islami Chhatra Shibir, including Shafiqul Islam Masud, currently serving as the secretary of the party's Dhaka South unit.

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

NCP-led alliance

FROM PAGE 12

declared a constituency, insiders say he is "highly likely" to run from Dhaka-10, noting that he recently shifted his address from Cumilla-3's Muradnagar to Green Road.

With the BNP yet to nominate a candidate for the seat, the likelihood of Asif contesting from Dhaka-10 has strengthened, they added.

At a November 27 event, Asif said, "I will resign before contesting. I have not yet decided which party's ticket I will run with."

NCP sources say Asif has built a substantial organisational network in Dhaka-10, opening seven campaign offices across Green Road, Dhanmondi, New Market, Kalabagan, Hazaribagh, and Kamrangirchar.

Asked about the dispute, Mily avoided direct comment. "Talks on forming the alliance are still ongoing, and we would like to think positively. We hope to overcome all

disagreements and contest the election together."

"Since I grew up in Dhanmondi, I am the best candidate for the seat. I have long been politically active there and enjoy both acceptability and experience."

NCP Insiders say Asif strongly preferred aligning with the BNP-led coalition, seeing it as a more secure route to a nomination.

Another adviser, Mahfuj Alam, also supports joining the BNP; although he hopes to run from Lakshimpur-1, he may drop out if circumstances are unfavourable.

In contrast, NCP's top five central leaders — Convener Nahid Islam, Member Secretary Akhtar Hossen, Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patowary, and Chief organisers Sarjis Alam and Hasnat Abdullah — had initially agreed to join the four-party bloc or contest independently. They have now stepped back amid resistance from leaders aligned with Asif.

Funding concerns have also played a role. Asif has reportedly assured financial support to several NCP candidates, and many within the party are reluctant to jeopardise that backing by moving ahead with the alliance, insiders said.

Man shot dead

FROM PAGE 12

of Dilip orchestrated the killing to frame their rivals. They said Saddam was one of their own and had been with Dilip earlier that evening.

However, Delwar Hossain Dilip rejected the allegation, saying he did not call Saddam from his home and denied that the victim had been with him earlier that night.

Azharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station, said the two groups have long been locked in a power struggle over local dominance.

"The murder appears to be linked to the same rivalry. Police have begun investigating," he told The Daily Star.

39 deported from US arrive

FROM PAGE 12

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC Migration and Youth Platform, criticised the lack of monitoring behind these journeys. He said the government allowed workers to travel legally to Brazil, but did not ensure whether they were genuinely going there for work or using Brazil as a route to US.

Returnees said in previous months, many Bangladeshis were sent

back from the US in handcuffs and leg chains, but this time, the 39 were not restrained.

Since Donald Trump's second presidency, the US government has intensified efforts to remove undocumented migrants. As part of this policy, several groups of Bangladeshis and other nationalities have already been deported.

On June 8 this year, a chartered flight brought back 42 Bangladeshis.

Between March 6 and April 21, at least 34 more were deported on multiple flights. From the beginning of 2024 to August 2025, more than 220 Bangladeshis returned from the US.

Under US law, undocumented migrants can be deported through court orders or administrative decisions. When asylum claims are rejected, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement arranges their removal.

Revision proposes cost

FROM PAGE 12

was later extended to Kamalapur, raising the estimated cost to Tk 33,472 crore in the previous revision.

According to the proposal, as of June 2025, physical progress on the Uttara-Motijheel section stands at 99.40 percent, while progress on the Motijheel-Kamalapur section is at 63.15 percent.



**Department of International Relations
University of Dhaka**

Professional Masters in International Relations (PMIR)

ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT

14th BATCH

Elevate your career with a prestigious IR degree from the University of Dhaka

Apply Online

Weekend Classes (Fridays & Saturdays)

9:30 am - 12:30 pm and 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Application Process

- Candidates are recommended to apply online through: <https://www.duir.ac.bd/pmir>
- Application Forms can also be collected from and submitted to the office of the Department in person
- Application Fee: Tk. 1,900/-

Application Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in any discipline with a CGPA of 2.5 or 2nd class
- Post-Graduate Diploma in International Relations (PGDIR) holders are especially encouraged to apply

Career Paths

- Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS)
- International Organizations
- MNCs, NGOs & Think Tanks
- Security & Intelligence Services

Programme Features

- 18 months (3 Semesters)
- 12 courses (International Law & Organizations; Foreign Policy of Bangladesh; Global Development, Trade and Governance; International Security; South Asian Affairs; International Diplomacy, etc.)
- Research Module on International Relations

Admission Test: Friday, 26 December 2025

Merit list will be published based on score earned out of: Written Test (100 Marks) + Professional Experience (5 Marks)

Test Evaluates: Analytical skills, basic knowledge of international affairs, English proficiency & qualitative aptitude.

Application Deadline: December 20, 2025

Enrollment Deadline: January 10, 2026

Class Commencement: January 16, 2026

Contact Details

Office of the Chair
Department of International Relations
5th Floor, Social Sciences Faculty Building
University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000.
Mobile: 01871542055, 01715622891,
01717943066 (11 am-5 pm)
Email: pmir@du.ac.bd
Website: <https://www.duir.ac.bd/pmir>



Scan to Apply Online

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

প্রধান প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়

গণপূর্ত অধিদপ্তর, সেতুনবাগিচা, ঢাকা

স্মারক নং-২৫.৩৬.০০০০.২১১.১১.৪০২.২০২৫-৬৬১

তারিখঃ ১২ অগ্রহায়ণ ১৪৩২
২৭ নভেম্বর ২০২৫

শ্রেণি-১৬ হতে শ্রেণি-২০ পর্যন্ত MCQ পরীক্ষার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, গণপূর্ত অধিদপ্তরের শ্রেণি-১৪ হতে শ্রেণি-২০ পর্যন্ত মোট ০৮ ক্যাটাগোরির ৬৬৯টি শূন্য পদে সরাসরি জনবল নিয়োগের নিমিত্ত গত ২৯/০৯/২০২৫ তারিখ বাংলাদেশ প্রতিদিন, দৈনিক যুগান্তর এবং The Daily Star পত্রিকায় বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশ করা হয়। বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত ০৮ ক্যাটাগোরির মধ্য হতে নিম্ন বর্ণিত ০৩ ক্যাটাগোরির পদের MCQ টাইপ পরীক্ষা উল্লিখিত সময়সূচি অনুযায়ী ঢাকা শহরের বিভিন্ন শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে।

| নং | পদের নাম | শূন্য পদের সংখ্যা | পরীক্ষার তারিখ ও সময় |
|----|--|-------------------|--|
| ১ | অফিস সহকারি কাম-কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরিক | ৭৬ | ১২ ডিসেম্বর, ২০২৫ শুক্রবার |
| ২ | হিসাব সহকারি | ১১৯ | সকাল ১০.০০-১১.০০ ঘটিকা |
| ৩ | অফিস সহায়ক | ১৬১ | ১৩ ডিসেম্বর, ২০২৫ শনিবার সকাল ১০.০০-১১.০০ ঘটিকা |

পরীক্ষার অংশ গ্রহণের জন্য <http://recruitment.pwd.gov.bd> ওয়েবসাইট হতে প্রবেশপত্র ডাউনলোড করার জন্য প্রার্থীদের মোবাইল নম্বরে SMS পাঠানো হবে। প্রবেশপত্রটি MCQ পরীক্ষা, লিখিত ব্যবহারিক (প্রয়োজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষার জন্য প্রযোজ্য হবে। প্রবেশপত্রটি সংরক্ষণ করতে হবে। প্রবেশপত্রে পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও পরীক্ষাকেন্দ্র উল্লেখ থাকবে। প্রার্থীকে অবশ্যই প্রবেশপত্রটির প্রিন্ট কপি পরীক্ষা কেন্দ্রে পরিদর্শককে প্রদর্শন করতে হবে। প্রবেশপত্র ব্যতীত পরীক্ষার অংশগ্রহণ করতে দেয়া হবে না। প্রার্থীদের যথাসময়ে উক্ত পরীক্ষার অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

(মুহাম্মদ সারওয়ার জাহান)

তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী (সংস্থাপন)
ও সদস্য সচিব
বিভাগীয় বাহাই, নিয়োগ ও পদোন্নতি কমিটি
গণপূর্ত অধিদপ্তর, ঢাকা।

Protect the polls from digital manipulation

Hold platforms, parties accountable to curb misinformation and data misuse

The recent surge in digital manipulation in Bangladesh has justifiably raised concerns about its likely impact on the upcoming national election. This threat, emerging in an already charged sociopolitical atmosphere, could prove more complex and consequential than anything witnessed in recent electoral cycles. Speakers at a roundtable organised by *The Daily Star* and the Tech Global Institute therefore emphasised the need for rigorous scrutiny and policy interventions, warning that, without these, the playing field could be tilted not only against certain political parties and actors but also against voters themselves.

The speakers—political leaders, digital experts, and civil society representatives—identified online misinformation, data misuse, and AI-driven propaganda as key challenges. They also highlighted how defamation and religiously charged cases are increasingly being filed to intimidate opponents or silence dissent. Concerns were raised about the judicial system being pressured by fears of backlash, leading to the misuse of vague provisions under laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Penal Code. This cascade of legal and digital manipulation indicates that electoral integrity cannot be protected by state institutions alone. Political parties and social media platforms must also be held accountable for failing to prevent abuse down the line.

In this context, several speakers underscored the vulnerability of citizens' data. With 183 institutions having access to the National ID database and a large pool of candidates likely to receive constituency voter lists, how do we ensure this access is not abused? Clearly, safeguarding personal data is no longer merely a privacy concern; it is also a matter of electoral fairness. Without strict oversight, voter information could be exploited for targeted intimidation, profiling, or micro-manipulation. Compounding these risks is the spread of AI-generated content. Fabricated videos, synthetic images, and doctored materials are already circulating—often produced by politically aligned actors—with women candidates and minority communities particularly exposed. In the absence of digital literacy and a strong fact-checking infrastructure, such attacks may not only damage reputations but also discourage participation, suppress votes, and inflame communal tensions.

The fact that Bangladesh has nearly 80 million Facebook users, along with a substantial presence on YouTube, gives the government some leverage to demand responsible behaviour from these platforms. Yet, they continue to operate with minimal accountability. As one expert noted, the government should negotiate election-time protocols with social media platforms—protocols that many countries have already implemented. Their absence here represents a policy blind spot, much like the lack of a robust regulatory framework for online political campaigns. These gaps must be addressed by the Election Commission. It must regulate online campaigning and coordinate with relevant state bodies, media organisations, fact checkers, and global tech giants to establish clear rules, rapid-response mechanisms, and meaningful accountability. Without such measures, the election risks being compromised.

Act now to reverse the poverty backslide

Economic slowdown, job losses, rising inequality demand policy shifts

Bangladesh is witnessing one of its most troubling reversals in poverty in over a decade, and recent assessments emphasise the scale of the crisis. According to the World Bank's Bangladesh Poverty and Equity Assessment 2025, nearly 20 lakh people have fallen into poverty this year, pushing the rate to 21.2 percent, while more than 30 lakh slipped below the line last year. The country's total poor population has now reached around 3.6 crore, driven by job losses, soaring inflation, and declining household consumption. Despite repeated policy assurances, scattered relief measures, and incremental social assistance, the slide continues. The WB found that between 2010 and 2022, the poverty-reduction elasticity of growth fell to 0.9; in other words the country's economic growth was less effective in reducing poverty, reflecting weakened governance, shrinking labour opportunities, and a growth model increasingly unable to shield vulnerable households.

Labour market data shows that Bangladesh lost nearly 20 lakh jobs between 2023 and 2024, with another eight lakhs expected to vanish this year, with women and young people being the hardest hit. Most new jobs are concentrated in low-productivity agriculture, signalling stagnation in industrial and service-sector dynamism. The WB report revealed entrenched failures in the social protection system, with only half of the poorest 20 percent of households receiving benefits, while the richest quintile continues to benefit from various subsidies—evidence of chronic mistargeting and political leakage. The survey further highlights that 6.2 crore people now hover just above the poverty line, vulnerable to slipping below it due to illness, shocks, or minor income disruptions.

Nationwide, poverty dynamics is increasingly visible in altered consumption patterns, livelihood adjustments, and falling living standards. Real wages, particularly in rural areas, have stagnated or fallen even as food prices remain elevated. Rising rural poverty is eroding household resiliency as families are reducing meals, borrowing at high interest, or selling productive assets to cope. Stagnation in job creation also risks undermining Bangladesh's hard-won progress in women's economic participation.

The persistence of this crisis reflects a failure of coordination, accountability, and long-term planning. Budgetary constraints, administrative delays, and fragmented policymaking are no longer sufficient explanations. Job creation strategies must be revamped, market access improved for rural households, skills development strengthened and transparency ensured in welfare programmes. Bangladesh has overcome adversity before, but the current trajectory demands decisive, coordinated, and accountable action. Without it, the poverty reversal could become entrenched, undermining national progress for years to come.

The birth pang of a university



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

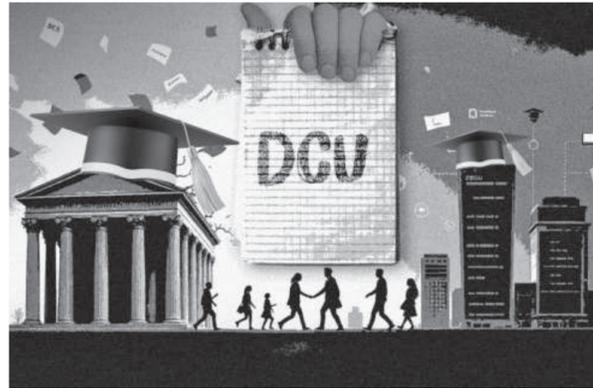
As the Chinese word for "crisis," *wei ji* (danger and opportunity), suggests, we do not need to see all crises as catastrophes but as thresholds for reinvention. The standoff over the seven government colleges formerly affiliated with Dhaka University (DU) offers one such moment. The problem, which started as a protest against DU administration, evolved into a decoupling process that promised the establishment of a new university.

Dhaka Central University (DCU) was hurriedly conceived and delivered under pressure, with authorities now struggling to start classes after admissions, to formalise its ordinances, and to decide on the existing cadres of teachers. These crises have pushed the limits of our inherited university model and now require the urgent need to craft alternatives. The seven colleges—Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Begum Badrunnesa Government College, Government Bangla College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Government Titumir College, and Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College—have operated under shifting jurisdictions. Their status as degree colleges was initially governed by DU, then by the National University, and returned to DU in 2017. On the surface, such a shift was an attempt to fix dysfunctions in governance, examinations, and staffing, but the hasty decision hints at a foundational flaw related to the current situation. The uncertainty surrounding the future of students, faculty, and staff may prompt the interim government to implement temporary solutions. But let us not waste this "crisis" to address the deeper design flaws experienced by our universities. It is time for the new university to move beyond colonial-era templates and focus on our demographic, social, epistemic, and economic realities.

In a provocatively titled book, *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*, Peter Fleming diagnoses some of the ills of late capitalism for the conceptual death of universities. Fleming argues that the factory model of education, which insists on auditing, key performance indicators, and metrics while pursuing ranking, sustainability, and competitiveness, simply serves a corporate bureaucracy and undermines academic freedom. The mechanical process takes the

soul out of the universities and turns the institutions lifeless. More and more, universities have become self-referential machines incapable of adaptation. The question before us is whether or not we want the new university as an extension of the colonial legacy from which the seven colleges want to liberate themselves.

Dhaka University, like its peers—Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras University—was established not to cultivate public intellect but mostly to produce clerks who would run and reinvigorate the administrative machinery of the British Empire. DU's colonial mindset persists in its



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHARYAR

obsession with BCS exams and its claim to produce almost half of the country's civil servants. Structurally, the university, along with its public counterparts, maintains a hierarchical administrative system and discipline-bound departments. People worldwide raise questions about this structure's ability to meet current demands.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), which oversees all universities, maintains ties to this colonial structure and has accepted many of the institutional contradictions of such structures. Dealing with the crisis of the seven colleges exposed the impossibility of running an examination system for lakhs of students through a decade-old administrative logic. Bangladesh has expanded access to higher education without articulating a philosophy for it. Are public universities meant to be

must not replicate DU's rigidities under a new banner. The ordinance created for the university suggests that the new university is deemed flexible, distributed, interdisciplinary, and socially engaged.

UGC has proposed a federated, multi-campus, school-based university spread across the existing seven colleges. This model aims to preserve access and inclusivity, reduce immediate infrastructure burdens, and create specialised nodes of excellence through specific schools or clusters. The proposal will allow organic growth towards a central campus at DCU. But the main challenge has a human face. The BCS teachers who have been an integral part of the system must have a fair transition. Earlier, when Jagannath College was turned into a university, similar problems arose. In such case, selective absorption based

Civil registration system needs a citizen-centred upgrade



GM Saiful Islam
is a development professional specialising in local governance, urban planning, and results-based management.

GM SAIFUL ISLAM

Every year, lakhs of birth certificates are issued to establish the civil identity of citizens, and this document later becomes essential for obtaining a National ID (NID) card. Before the introduction of online birth registration, the process was entirely manual, slow, fragmented, and prone to errors. NID issuance began in 2008, and in 2010 Bangladesh modernised its civil registration system by launching the online Birth Registration Information System, reinforcing the legal requirement to register every birth within 45 days under the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004.

Despite these advances, interoperability remains a major challenge. The Birth and Death Registration Information System (BDRIS) currently exchanges limited data with 22 government agencies through MoUs and API-based connections. Previously, in the absence of a unified legal mandate or a standardised data-protection framework, these arrangements relied more on administrative goodwill than enforceable safeguards. The recent introduction of the Personal Data Protection Ordinance (PDPO), Cyber Safety Ordinance (CSO), and the National Data Governance and Interoperability Architecture (NDGIA)

provides much-needed regulatory clarity and institutional mechanisms for secure, transparent, and lawful data exchange. Together, these policy instruments signal the government's commitment to strengthening interoperability and establish a clear legal foundation for expanding future BDRIS linkages with other government systems.

However, the lack of full integration continues to create real-life complications for citizens. To obtain an NID, an individual must first have a birth certificate; yet an adult applying for a birth certificate is often required to present an NID as proof of age. For many, the experience resembles the classic question: which comes first, the egg or the chicken?

Even birth registration rate among children aged 0 and 11 months are not 100 percent in Bangladesh. However, major opportunity to link the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) with BDRIS exists. Such integration would allow birth registration to take place automatically at the point of delivery or during a child's first vaccination, ensuring accuracy and preventing children from being left out. Beyond easing the burden on families, this approach would reduce duplicated

data entry across government offices and cut the number of steps citizens must navigate. Similar integrations are needed to bring birth and death registration closer to frontline health services, creating a more transparent, efficient, and citizen-friendly system.

The government's commitment to making BDRIS accessible to all is clear, but that commitment must

To obtain an NID, an individual must first have a birth certificate; yet an adult applying for a birth certificate is often required to present an NID as proof of age. For many, the experience resembles the classic question: which comes first, the egg or the chicken?

now translate into more timely and forward-looking technical upgrades. The expansion of hosting capacity from 72-terabyte to 500-terabyte and the increase in document upload limits from 200-kilobyte to two-megabyte are welcome steps, but they come long after the system began straining under its own weight. These fixes should not be viewed as enhancements; they were overdue necessities for a platform expected to manage crores of records across the country.

Interoperability is also beginning to show promise. The April 2025 collaboration with the Election Commission, through which BDRIS data supported e-ID delivery for 1.25

crore students demonstrates what coordinated digital services can achieve when systems finally begin to talk to each other.

Despite these improvements, the current BDRIS interface still works only partially on mobile and tablet screens, even though smartphones remain the primary digital access point for many rural registrars and citizens. Without a fully responsive redesign, the platform risks excluding precisely the communities it aims to serve. A dedicated mobile app, designed around real user behaviour rather than technical assumptions, could simplify registration and deepen public engagement. Bangladesh does not lack talent; a national design challenge or hackathon involving universities and private-sector partners could inject fresh, practical ideas into the redesign process. Such an initiative would help BDRIS evolve into the intuitive, citizen-centred digital service it has the potential to be.

Improving BDRIS is not just a technical necessity; it is a matter of identity, access, and dignity. Civil registration platform responsible for documenting the very beginning of a person's legal existence cannot afford to be slow, disconnected, or difficult to navigate. It must be interoperable, easy to use, and designed around the realities of citizens' lives, not the limitations of legacy systems. Stronger coordination, user-centric design, and long-term planning are needed to close the remaining gaps. If these reforms are prioritised, BDRIS can truly fulfil the promise with which this journey began: ensuring that every individual is recognised, protected, and able to participate fully in public life.

The concern with DCU is also about retaining old ideas. It would be a waste of time and resources to simply recreate old departmental silos in a new setup. The proposed university must create a breathing space for the just transition of its current students and staff while working towards interdisciplinary clusters needed for the 21st-century world, e.g., climate and society, technology and ethics, digital language and media, and public health and community studies. The university, based in Dhaka, must address urban issues to effectively serve its communities by focusing on urban studies, riverine ecologies, linguistic diversity, community health, and informal economies.

UGC has already proposed a hybrid learning framework, which will take time to be popular. Incentivising the stakeholders (e.g., low-priced or subsidised gadgets or Wi-Fi provided by sponsors or donors) can ease the tension. The university needs to move away from the closed credit systems of its parent institution. The philosophy of the university must involve intellectual openness and social accountability. The ordinances are a beneficial place to bring changes and establish trust among the stakeholders. The Federated School Model, using the seven campuses as distributed schools linked by central governance until infrastructure matures, is a good initiative. The government must sit with the agitating teachers to specify teacher absorption mechanisms, service rules, and redeployment pathways. It must freeze new BCS cadre recruitment for university-level teaching. For future expansion, in the second phase, the university must prioritise interdisciplinarity, community engagement, and Bangladeshi realities. Planning should not consider the existing resources only. Let the crisis of the seven colleges not be a failure, but an invitation to shape the identity of a newborn university.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



Nusrat Imrose Tisha

Prarthana Fardin Dighi

Mousomi Nag

Sabnam Faria

Runa Khan

Ashna Habib Bhabna

Putul Saja Sultana

Ridy Sheikh

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Showbiz women clap back at virtual harassment

SHARMIN JOYA & RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

"Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women."—a widely attributed line by Maya Angelou, the African American author, poet, and civil rights activist. Her words are a reminder that individual courage is collective strength—each woman's resistance fuels the fight against gender-based violence.

Since 1991, from November 25 to December 10, the world has observed the "16 Days of Activism" to end gender-based violence. This year's theme is "UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls." Needless to say, this issue remains one of the most urgent global challenges today.

Four headstrong women from our showbiz industry—Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Ashna Habib Bhabna, Nusraat Faria, and Azmeri Haque Badhan—have come forward to share their experiences of virtual abuse.

Cyberbullying can take many forms—abuse, stalking, posting or sharing inappropriate content in private or public spaces; issuing threats; making hurtful comments; leaking personal information—all fall under its scope. The most common patterns of virtual abuse are personal



"Online bullying taught me something important that silence only feeds the trolls. I chose to stand tall, speak my truth, and remind myself that my worth isn't defined by anyone hiding behind a screen. Women are told to stay quiet, to not 'make a scene,' but I believe that raising our voices is the only way to break this cycle."

NUSRAAT FARIA

Taking a pause, she continued... "These weren't just comments—they were reminders of the everyday misogyny women continue to face, even in spaces meant to amplify their voices."

The actress shared that UNW informed her they would follow up on those comments. "I'm not sure if they'll publish anything, but this is the reality we face every day in the virtual space, especially those of us in the public eye. My question is, why are we allowing this to become normal?"

She was courageous enough to take legal action against her abuser, setting an example which gave confidence to many victims. "A few years ago, I posted a picture with my mother on Mother's Day. For the same reason, Chanchal Chowdhury and I were targeted, and sadly 99% of our fellow artistes stood by his side and not mine. Many renowned newspapers also showed such bias, which hurt me and, in fact, gave me more strength to stand alone."

Besides, her mother also requested her not to share any photos with her, which broke her heart as a daughter. Bhabna was adamant about seeing this come to an end. "I had to take action, because this was about my mother! At that time, only one person from the industry was by my side, and that's Shahiduzzaman Selim. Initially, when we went to complain, the authorities were pretty reluctant to lodge the complaint, and they were even trying to convince me to let it go as it's 'just a comment'. However, due to my nagging, they at last took the complaint, saying that this was the first time that they were taking any complaints from any actress for online harassment through comments. So yes, I proudly say that I began with this to set an example that you cannot just make a disgusting remark and easily get away. What was the worst part was that the perpetrator easily got away just by giving a 'muchleka' (contract of guarantee)."

She also spoke about the growing concerns surrounding mobile journalism, YouTube, and the spread of fake news.

"Earlier, when we attended press shows or events, there were only TV cameras capturing us from standard angles. Now, we have to be constantly alert because we don't know who is filming from which angle, and how that footage might be uploaded with absurd captions on social media, and make it viral."

Alongside online abuse, she noted another rising threat—AI-generated videos and photos, particularly deepfakes, which have become a disturbing global issue. "A few months ago, a fake page posted an AI-generated photo claiming I was found unconscious in a car in Dubai. Do I really need to show my passport to prove that I haven't even been there in the last eight years?"

A strong advocate of women and child rights, Rafiath Rashid Mithila, an artiste and a development specialist, mentioned, "Cyber bullying is all about character assassination and is the most common pattern particularly used for breaking mental strength. Although it mostly comes from men, but shockingly from women as well. Despite their socioeconomic status, their remarks highly contain abusive language, slang. And no matter what my achievements are, they would end up attacking my personal life!"

In 2019, Mithila became the



"Initially, when we went to complain, the authorities were pretty reluctant to lodge the complaint, and they were even trying to convince me to let it go as it's 'just a comment'. However, due to my nagging, they at last took the complaint, saying that this was the first time that they were taking any complaints from any actress for online harassment through comments. So yes, I proudly say that I began with this to set an example that you cannot just make a disgusting remark and easily get away."

ASHNA HABIB BHABNA

However, there was a public petition made from the government's end as an order to put down all the materials from the print and electronic media, and this is it. But they couldn't remove them from social media!"

Online bullies often operate multiple fake accounts, using them to vent their frustrations; however, many are desperate enough to post from their real accounts as well, which are trackable.

"Nobody cares or sees the sufferings," she said. "Like, how it would affect their personal life relations, leading to constant tensions and sometimes panic attacks. The mental trauma that leads to virtual abuse must be addressed, and perpetrators must be punished; only this way can it be minimised."

Mithila insinuates that the harassers can never get away with these comments and actions if authorities take serious actions. "Setting examples will help, and I believe if we keep raising our voices being public figures, we will inspire and give courage to others to voice out. So, we must keep on talking about these."

She also questioned the

efficiency of the cyber-cell unit, as they should be quite prompt in investigating such matters smartly.

Throughout her career, Nusraat Faria has faced relentless online bullying, whether it was trolling over her bold fashion choices or being labelled "100 percent plastic" by those who claimed she had undergone multiple surgeries or even compared her to a witch. The abuse intensified further when she portrayed Sheikh Hasina in the Mujib biopic. Although she addressed the issue responsibly, naysayers continue to target her on social media simply for doing her job as an actress. Like many women in the public eye, she has been attacked for nothing more than expressing herself freely.

Speaking to The Daily Star about how she confronts online abuse, Nusraat said, "Online bullying taught me something important that silence only feeds the trolls. I chose to stand tall, speak my truth, and remind myself that my worth isn't defined by anyone hiding behind a screen. Women are told to stay quiet, to not 'make a scene,' but I believe that raising our voices is the only way to break this cycle. I didn't fight back with anger; I fought back with resilience. And every woman who refuses to be intimidated online becomes part of a larger movement that says:

with laughing emojis, even on a topic as sensitive as this.

"The way we are bullied online is clearly visible to others because most of our profiles are public. People see all the abusive comments posted on our pictures and posts. I have faced severe harassment online and received various types of threats, especially after the July mass uprising. Awami League activists have used fake profiles to harass me, and I have even faced harassment from my colleagues. It is not just unknown people or fake accounts. What hurts the most is being harassed by colleagues I have worked with and even by people close to me," she said.

"I undergo regular therapy, which has helped me understand that what people say about me does not define who I am. My true personality is reflected through my work and behaviour. I try to react politely and usually do not respond to bullying or harassment. I mostly ignore it. At 43, having faced all sorts of harassment, I have built a certain immunity to it. I know how to cope. But for teenagers, this kind of bullying is very hard to handle. I believe society needs to change. There are laws addressing harassment, but implementing them is not always easy. More than laws, what we need is a shift in mindset."

HELP IS ONE CALL AWAY

National Emergency Helpline — 999

For immediate police, fire, ambulance support.

Violence Against Women & Children Helpline — 109

Rescue, legal aid, psychosocial support.

Police Cyber Support for Women — 01320000888

For cyber harassment, blackmail, image misuse.

Police HQ Women's Hotline (24/7) — 01320002001 / 01320002002 / 01320002222

Direct police assistance for threats and abuse.

Quick Response Team (MoWCA) — 01713659573 / 01713659574

Emergency rescue, counselling, safe shelter.

Victim Support Centre — 01320042055

Police support, counselling, safe space.

National Legal Aid Helpline — 16699

Free legal advice and state lawyers.

Child Helpline — 1098

Rescue and protection for children.

enough is enough."

Azmeri Haque Badhan has long been a strong and outspoken advocate for women's rights. However, her activism and her role as a July warrior have often made her a target of abusive comments on social media. As a single mother and an actress, she has repeatedly faced harassment from both industry colleagues and activists from banned political groups. Yet, Badhan remains unwavering, meeting the abuse with courage and determination.

Recently, she shared a video as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, raising awareness about violence against women. In the post, she spoke directly to her followers and highlighted a hotline where survivors of abuse can seek help, urging women to speak out and access support. Despite the seriousness of the message, some trolls responded

As a matter of fact, abusers get away far too easily because institutions often lack the will to take proper action. If law enforcement and the relevant authorities responded swiftly and decisively, the rate of online abuse would drop significantly. A responsible state must protect its citizens—especially those most vulnerable to harassment. There can be no excuses when it comes to online abuse.

Whether an actor, athlete, singer, journalist, a corporate, or as a woman, they have to carry the burden of such acts regularly. Every form of abuse must be addressed. In this era of technology, where it takes seconds to post a derogatory comment, the action should be just as swift. Clear rules are needed to ensure that profiles can be properly identified, regulated, and held accountable. Without this, we only empower abusers to continue.



"At 43, having faced all sorts of harassment, I have built a certain immunity to it. I know how to cope. But for teenagers, this kind of bullying is very hard to handle. I believe society needs to change. There are laws addressing harassment, but implementing them is not always easy. More than laws, what we need is a shift in mindset."

AZMERI HAQUE BADHAN

attacks—targeting someone's complexion, physical appearance, bold fashion choices, political or religious views, or simply the fact that they are a woman.

Ashna Habib Bhabna began with a recent incident. "Just as the 16 Days of Activism campaign began, the UN Women (UNW) shared personalised numbers for many women, including celebrities, to post on their profiles," she shared. "My number was 99. I uploaded a photo with '99+' written on it. Shortly after, I received two screenshots of comments left under my post from the UN. One said, 'Tasted 99, one more will make a century'. Another asked, 'Is 99 your body count?'"

victim of cyberbullying, which was the worst of its kind. "During that time, I sought legal help, and the path was not smooth," she said. "The perpetrator is still unidentified. I had to file a written complaint at the police station, and I don't know if we are still lacking an advancement technologically that the IP address of the convicted couldn't be identified. They were there to give me moral support rather than the justice I needed the most. I thought our cybersecurity has intelligence that can identify the IP addresses and identify the actual culprit."

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW FOR DETAILED INFORMATION



Hill farmers turn to coffee for better earnings

MONG SING HAI MARMA,
Bandarban

Farmers in the hilly areas under the Chimbuk range in Bandarban are gradually shifting from traditional jhum cultivation to coffee farming, driven by better market prospects and higher returns.

For decades, nearly 90 percent of people from the indigenous communities in the CHT depended on jhum. Declining soil fertility, shrinking land, scarcity of water, low yields, and increasing population pressure have now pushed many towards more profitable options.

Arabica, Robusta, and Chandragiri varieties are being cultivated, with growers saying coffee requires simple management, carries lower disease risk, and is easy to market without syndicate control.

Farmers say the Chandragiri variety offers higher yields and is gaining ground.

A recent visit to Chimbuk hill, about 26 kilometres from Bandarban town and 2,500 feet above sea level, found vast mixed orchards in Babuchhara Para under ward 9 of Taracha Union in Rowangchhari upazila.

Coffee plants were seen growing alongside mango, pomelo, dragon fruit, and litchi, with rows of red and green cherries colouring the



PHOTO: STAR

slopes. Local growers sell ripe cherries to companies in Dhaka at Tk 200 per kilogramme.

Farmers such as Chamlang Mro, Jongsom Mro, Langring Mro, Rumklan Mro, Zangoi Mro, Tumrao Mro, Kaing Oi Mro, Kolai Mro, and Chongkrat Mro -- once dependent on jhum -- said coffee has changed their fortunes.

"Last year, I made Tk 1.5 lakh from coffee alone. This year, I have hired three workers for harvesting ripe cherries," said Chamlang Mro, 40.

Yong Chong Mro said he shifted

from jhum after poor yields. "This year I expect around 1,000 kg yield, which should generate around Tk 2 lakh in earnings," he said.

Taidu Ram Tripura, who has worked with coffee cultivation in the region for 16 years after receiving training abroad, said demand remains high at home and abroad.

As local production is still insufficient, Bangladesh imports coffee from Ethiopia, Brazil, and other countries.

"Local growers here get fair prices because there is no market

syndicate," he said.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Bandarban, coffee was cultivated on 544 hectares in the 2024-25 fiscal year, producing 122.06 tonnes.

Abu Naim Mohammad Saifuddin, deputy director of the DAE in Bandarban, said, "We began with just 586 growers under a project. Now, 1,930 people are engaged in coffee cultivation, which continues to expand steadily due to its profitability and because it allows growers to cultivate other fruits alongside it in mixed orchards."

People no

FROM PAGE 3

the country as signs of persisting fascism.

On the national election, he said, "Some have said if they are elected, they will form a government with all anti-fascist parties except Jamaat-e-Islami. We say to them: if the people elect us, we will not exclude you. We will build the country together with everyone."

He also claimed propaganda was being spread that Jamaat would confine women if it came to power. "We will respond to all such propaganda through our actions, not words. The days of misleading people with lies are over," he said.

"Every citizen has the freedom to practise any religious belief. There will be no coercion. In the next election, some of our candidates will be from minority communities. We want to bring the nation on a platform of unity through this," he said.

Meanwhile, Shafiqur Rahman was sworn in for the third consecutive term [2026-2028] as the Jamaat ameer last evening. ATM Masum, its central executive council member and assistant secretary general, administered the oath at the Al-Falah auditorium in Moghbazar, Dhaka.

End assaults on Baul

FROM PAGE 3

The protest, titled "Gaaner Artonad," was arranged by Sampriti Jatra in front of Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts around 4:30pm yesterday.

Organisers and participants alleged that activists of "July Mancha" carried out the attack.

Sami Abdullah, general secretary of Biplobi Chhatra Maitri's DU unit, said, "Some people from July Mancha attacked our pre-scheduled programme. They gathered beforehand and vandalised our banner."

Cultural activist Abul Hashnat Bhuiyan said the altercation was minor, but participants feared further trouble. "They

became agitated because Abul Sarkar's name was mentioned," he said.

Earlier in the afternoon, July Mancha had held a separate gathering nearby, calling for the "highest punishment for those who hurt religious sentiments" and urging resistance to "cultural conspiracies".

Masum Billah, who attended that event, said, "We told them not to organise anything supporting those who make derogatory comments about religion. But they did not listen."

Shahbagh Police Station OC Mansour Ahmed said police were unaware of the incident, and no formal complaint had been filed.

TIB slams approval

FROM PAGE 3

proposed to restore public trust in the ACC, which he said has long functioned as a protector of the powerful and a tool to harass opponents. He said it was "regrettable" that the government disregarded a strategic reform that could have made the ACC more accountable, independent, and impartial through half-yearly reviews, public hearings, and consultations.

He said at least seven advisers reportedly opposed the proposal, even though all political parties had agreed to it under the July charter.

"Before violating the charter themselves, why does the government not consider that it is encouraging political parties to do the same? Why were such sacrifices made if reforms will not curb corruption effectively?" he said.

Empowered to stand

FROM PAGE 3

She completed a week-long life-skills course at the Swopno Puro Training Centre in Sherpur, where she learned commercial duck rearing. Using Tk 30,000 saved from her wages, she bought 100 egg-laying ducks; within two years, her flock grew to 500.

"After all expenses, I earn about Tk 1,500 a day -- sometimes more," she said. "People now respect the work I do."

Moni has even hired three women, including 26-year-old Lucky Akter, who had been abandoned by her husband. "This job means I can pay for my children's schooling. For the first time, I feel I can manage on my own," Lucky said.

Elsewhere, the project has opened doors to trades traditionally dominated by men.

In Laksham, Cumilla,

35-year-old Shilpi Rani Robidas wakes up before dawn for her apprenticeship at a local footwear manufacturer.

Married at 15 to a man twice her age, she was widowed by cancer and left to raise two children with almost no income. She repaired shoes door-to-door, earning about Tk 300 a day, while also dealing with family estrangement.

Under SWAPNO, she joined an apprenticeship placement and hopes to open a small shoe-making workshop. "If I can make and sell my own shoes, maybe I can finally bring some peace to my life," she said.

The project also links women to formal sector jobs.

In Cumilla, 33-year-old Shipra Rani Das -- divorced, a mother of a 10-year-old boy, and recently remarried -- has completed a two-month residential Sewing Machine Operation (SMO) training at AID Cumilla.

She is among 2,208 women enrolled in industrial skills training; 483 have completed SMO training, and 171 have secured jobs in garment factories.

Shipra, who survived physical violence and dowry demands in the previous marriage, said the training has given her the chance to earn a stable wage.

"Without this training, I would have had to join as a low-paid helper," she said. "Now, as a machine operator, I can earn more than twice that."

SWAPNO is currently active in 283 Union Parishads across 12 districts, including Sherpur, Cumilla, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, and Patuakhali.

The project also runs a micro-health insurance scheme. So far, 10,371 women have enrolled using smartcards, with 781 claims and 11 death claims processed, according to UNDP Communication Associate Nusrat Mahmud Ananna.

For many beneficiaries, the numbers matter less than the confidence the programme has restored.

As Shipra said, "I don't want to endure violence again or depend on anyone. I've learned that no one can guarantee my safety or income -- only I can."

[Our correspondent contributed to this report]

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Narail
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.6500.000.07.001.20-1420 Date: 27-11-2025

e-GP Tender Notice-07/2025-2026

e-GP Tender is invited in the National e-GP System (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of works mentioned below under LGED, District: - Narail.

| SL No | Tender ID | Package No | Name of work | Tender Last Selling Date & Time | Tender Closing Date & Time |
|-------|---------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1183095 (OTM) | Pd/pori. Abashan/ Narail.W 1.42 | Construction of 7 Storied (24 unit apartment) Narail Paurashava Cleaners Residential Building including internal electrical works, lift & external electrical connection, electro-mechanical work, sanitary and water supply, boundary wall, internal road, drainage, earth work etc. under Upazila: Sadar, Dist. Narail. | 22-12-2025 15:00 | 23-12-2025 15:00 |

Sardar
29/11/25

(Sardar Ikramul Kabir)
Executive Engineer
LGED, Narail.
Telephone No- 02477773031.
E-mail No- xen.narail@lged.gov.bd

GD-2583

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (HED)
NOAKHALI DIVISION
MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
MAJIDEE COURT NOAKHALI
hed.noakhali.gov.bd

Memo No. 45.02.2075.261.00.000.25-01 Date : 27/11/2025

e-Tender Notice (01/2025-2026) (OTM)

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Packages from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' branches up to Particular date and time specified on the Tender Notice.

| Sl. No | Package No | Name of Works | Tender ID | Last Date & Time for Tender Document selling | Last Date & Time for Tender proposal Security Submission | Last Date & Time for Closing/ Opening |
|--------|--------------------------|---|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/01 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil, Sanitary & Electrical works of Kankirhat MCWC at Senbag Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185512 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 2 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/02 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil, Sanitary & Electrical works of Upazila Family Planning Office Building at Senbag Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185511 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 3 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/03 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil, Sanitary & Electrical works of Upazila Family Planning Office Store Building at Sonaimuri Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185510 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 4 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/04 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil, Sanitary & Electrical works of Deuti UH&FWC at Sonaimuri Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185509 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 5 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/05 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil & Sanitary works of Deputy Director office for Family Planning at Sadar Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185508 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 6 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/06 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil, Sanitary & Electrical works at Regional Training Centre (Academic & Administrative Building) at Begumgonj Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185507 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 7 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/07 | Repair, Maintenance of Civil, Sanitary & Electrical works at Hostel Building at Regional Training Centre at Begumgonj Upazila in Noakhali District. | 1185506 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 8 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/08 | Repair, Maintenance works of Deputy Director (Family Planning) Office at Sadar Upazila in Laxmipur District. | 1185505 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 9 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/09 | Repair, Maintenance works of Char Mohona UH&FWC at Raipur Upazila in Laxmipur District. | 1185504 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 10 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/10 | Repair, Maintenance works of Bamni UH&FWC at Raipur Upazila in Laxmipur District. | 1185503 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 11 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/11 | Repair, Maintenance works of Char Falcon UH&FWC with remaining Boundary Wall at Kamalnagar Upazila in Laxmipur District. | 1185497 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 12 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/12 | Repair, Maintenance works of Uttar Charbongsi UH&FWC at Raipur Upazila in Laxmipur District. | 1185433 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |
| 13 | HED/GOB/FP/No a/25-26/13 | Repair, Maintenance & Renovation Works of MO Quarter (3-5d) at Sadar Upazila in Fenil District. | 1185022 | 09/12/2025 11:00 AM | 09/12/2025 12:00 PM | 09/12/2025 13:00 PM |

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System. The Authority may cancel the tender without notice.

(Md Ferroz Uddin)
Executive Engineer (c e)
HED, Noakhali Division
e-mail: hedxennoa@yahoo.com

GD-2584

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Sadar, Noakhali.
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.7587.000.902.46.25.1530 Dated: 27/11/2025

Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice No: 08/2025-2026 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

| Sl No. | Package No. | Name of works | Tender Last Selling (Date & Time) | Tender Closing & Opening (Date & Time) | Tender ID No |
|--------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 01 | e-Tender/PEDP4/NKL/SAD/2025-26/W15A.03032 | Construction of Head Teacher's Room with Attached Toilet of 1) Chowrasta Reg. Non Govt. Primary School, 2) East Majchhara Sujamia Reg. Primary School under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila, Noakhali. | 11-Dec-2025 12:00 | 11-Dec-2025 14:00 | 1179638 |

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches up to 12.00PM on 11-Dec-2025. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) or egnhelpdesk@lged.gov.bd.

(Abul Mansur Ahmed)
Upazila Engineer
LGED, Sadar, Noakhali.
Phone No: 02334433734.
ue.noakhali-s@lged.gov.bd

GD-2585

BRAC UNIVERSITY
Inspiring Excellence

SEARCH FOR DEAN
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

BRAC University, one of the leading private universities in Bangladesh, is seeking an outstanding academic leader to serve as "Dean of the School of Pharmacy".

This is a unique opportunity to shape the school's future-focused vision, advancing its teaching, research, and societal impact in alignment with BRAC University's mission and values. The dean will play a pivotal role in positioning the school as a hub of academic excellence, interdisciplinary innovation, and global collaboration, amplifying the voice of the Global South on the international stage.

ROLE OF THE DEAN
Reporting to the pro-vice-chancellor, the dean will provide strategic and academic leadership, ensuring the school achieves the highest standards of excellence in teaching, research, and engagement.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- Strategic Leadership: Develop and implement a long-term vision for the school, contributing to university-wide policy development and strategic planning as a senior member of leadership.
- Academic Excellence: Oversee curriculum design, program innovation, and delivery of an inclusive and world-class student experience. Ensures that the school prepares skilled, ethical, and innovative pharmacy professionals who can contribute to improved healthcare and the advancement of the pharmaceutical sector.
- Research and Societal Impact: Foster a vibrant academic environment that supports impactful research addressing pressing social, political, and economic challenges in Bangladesh and beyond.
- External Engagement: Build and sustain partnerships with academia, policymakers, industry, and civil society to strengthen the school's global reputation and reach.
- Faculty and Student Development: Support and mentor faculty while nurturing students as confident, ethical, and socially conscious leaders.
- Operational Stewardship: Ensure financial sustainability, manage admissions, alumni relations, fundraising, and external partnerships, while securing research funding.
- Thought Leadership: Maintain a personal academic profile as a scholar of distinction, contributing to intellectual life locally and internationally. For more information about the job description please visit career.bracu.ac.bd.

QUALIFICATIONS

- A PhD in Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Sciences, or related discipline.
- A distinguished record of teaching and research, with deep knowledge of higher education, internationalization, and impactful scholarship.
- At least 12 years of academic leadership experience, including a minimum of 5 years at the level of associate dean, dean, or equivalent.
- Extensive experience in leading complex academic or research institutions, securing significant research funding, and developing strong external partnerships.
- Proven ability in strategic planning and fostering collaborations that strengthen the school's standing in pharmacy education, practical training, and research.
- Demonstrated ability to manage school-level operations, with international leadership experience preferred.
- Strong understanding of commercial practices and the ability to leverage intellectual property for institutional value creation.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE
Application should include:
- A cover letter
- Curriculum vitae
- Names and contact information of three professional references

Please submit applications via email to deanrecruitment@bracu.ac.bd or through the career portal at career.bracu.ac.bd.
Subject line: Dean, School of Pharmacy
Application deadline: 17 December 2025
Join us in shaping the future of BRAC University and advancing the impact of pharmaceutical education and healthcare in Bangladesh and beyond.

LITERARY CURTAINS

Adaptation as misrecognition: 'Siddhartha' between text, philosophy, and stage

The more I watched, the more I realised that the strengths of the production lay in its visual and choreographic language. The play was at its most powerful when it embraced movement, imagery, and symbolic representation. These moments allowed the philosophical dimensions of the story to breathe in nonverbal ways. The river sequences, the choreographed transitions, and the contemplative stillness of Vasudeva's presence created a space where meaning felt embodied rather than explained.

NASEEF FARUQUE AMIN

There is always a subtle tension when a story migrates across cultures. Some narratives travel with the lightness of wind, reshaping themselves almost effortlessly inside new imaginations, while others arrive heavy with the weight of the worlds that first produced them. Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (S. Fischer Verlag, 1922) belongs to this latter category. It carries within it the long shadow of a Western gaze pondering the East, a fascination that blends desire, distance, and misrecognition. Before the curtain rose at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and before I could surrender to Reza Arif's theatrical adaptation, I found myself returning again and again to this lingering tension. I had come to watch a play named "Siddhartha", but I was acutely aware that the Siddhartha on stage would not be the historical Buddha. Instead, this Siddhartha would be the child of a European novel shaped by a specific spiritual hunger of the West.

In Hesse's hands, Siddhartha is a symbolic seeker, a lone wanderer who believes that truth has to be tasted personally rather than received from teachers or traditions. That idea may feel intuitive to a contemporary western reader, but it stands in subtle tension with the historical reality of Buddhist enlightenment, which is steeped in communal practice, lineage, doctrine, meditation techniques refined over centuries, and an explicit rejection of the ego.

This is where the western gaze quietly narrows the terrain of Eastern spiritual biography. In classical Buddhist philosophy, enlightenment is not a poetic softening of the self but a profound dissolution of the illusion of selfhood. It is not the discovery of a truer inner self but the recognition that no self exists at all in the permanent sense. Hesse's novel, however, turns this metaphysical demandingness into an introspective psychological awakening. The Buddha becomes less a teacher of rigorous doctrine and more an emblem of serene authenticity. The journey becomes less about liberation from the cycle of suffering and more about the cultivation of an inward wholeness. Such a transformation is not insignificant. It shapes the very way audiences imagine Eastern spirituality: as something gentle, aesthetic, universal, floating free of its philosophical architecture. And such a reframing inevitably ripples into any adaptation that draws from Hesse.

The novel itself does not make the work easy for the theatre. It is episodic and contemplative. It moves like a river, looping from youth to asceticism to sensuality to despair and then returning to renewal. Siddhartha leaves home to seek the life of the Samanas, encounters the Buddha, yet chooses to forge his own path, learns the pleasures of love with Kamala, and accumulates wealth under the guidance of Kamaswami, sinks into spiritual fatigue and moral numbness, and then walks away once more to the river where he nearly chooses death. When he awakens, saved by the resonance of Om, he settles beside the ferryman Vasudeva and learns to listen to the many voices of the river. The river becomes the last teacher, revealing unity, cyclicity, and timelessness. The novel concludes with the return of the old Govinda, Siddhartha's lifelong friend, who, upon touching Siddhartha's forehead, experiences a vision of totality and recognises the depth of his enlightenment. This moment of recognition functions as both emotional closure and philosophical culmination. The theatrical adaptation, however, chooses to end earlier. Instead of returning to the friendship between Siddhartha and Govinda, it closes with the moment where Vasudeva guides Siddhartha into the river's layered voice. It ends on awakening rather than transmission.

As I took my seat inside the dimming hall and allowed myself a moment of anticipation, I felt the novel's philosophical compressions echoing in the background. Hesse's text is generous in imagery and introspection but



PHOTO: SHADAB SHAHROKH HAI

austere in dialogue. The language is shaped by inner monologue, silence and symbolic encounters. Drama, in the classic sense of tension and relational friction, is sparse. A theatrical adaptation would therefore need to invent where the novel holds back. It would need to turn inward revelation into external gesture, stillness into movement, reflection into dramaturgy. The task was demanding. I was curious to see how Reza Arif would navigate these absences.

The opening moments surprised me. The decision to cast a female performer, Qazi Nawshaba Ahmed, as the young Siddhartha was immediately captivating. Her presence held a luminous fluidity. It offered a version of Siddhartha that felt unbound by gender, almost androgynous in essence, reminiscent of the idea that enlightenment is a state beyond identity. For a moment, the performance hinted at a particularly powerful reading: Siddhartha as a notion rather than a man, a seeker with a soul that transcends gender. This gesture resonated deeply with me, because it aligned with a philosophical intuition that certain spiritual itineraries dissolve categories rather than reinforce them. However, this interpretation did not carry forward into the rest of the play. As the narrative progressed, the production returned to a more conventional representation of Siddhartha's identity, leaving that initial experiment feeling like a brilliant but isolated spark. It raised a question in me about the courage and continuity required to sustain radical theatrical choices. The early gesture had immense promise but was not given space to mature into a structural idea.

The challenge of adapting a novel written in contemplative chapters was already evident by then. Theatre demands dramaturgy, and dramaturgy demands shape, pacing, tension and rhythm. The early dialogues, however, felt flat and overly declarative. They carried a tone of explanation, as if sacred truths were being announced rather than discovered. Many lines sounded preachy in a way the novel never intended. Hesse's prose breathes through silence and rhythm. It creates an atmosphere more through suggestion than through exposition. The production could have embraced a more poetic vocabulary, allowing the dialogue to be porous, metaphorical, rhythmic, and responsive to the shifting emotional terrain. Instead, the scenes moved through statements

rather than revelations. This made the opening arc feel somewhat rigid.

The blocking in these early movements also felt constrained. There were moments that called for illusion, ambiguity, and choreographic abstraction, but remained static instead. This was striking because the director later embraced symbolic choreographies with confidence, and those later sequences were some of the most arresting parts of the play. The shift between early stillness and later fluidity made me feel that the production carried two different selves: one cautious and literal, the other daring and imagistic.

Given that many performers appeared to be new to the stage, a few lighting cues and musical transitions slipped. These may seem minor, but in a production as spiritual and atmospheric as "Siddhartha", rhythm is integral. Missed cues can elongate scenes that should feel sharp or contemplative, pulling the audience out of the spell. The pace became stretched at times, especially in the first half. The script also glossed over the dramatic beats that could have lifted the early scenes toward their emotional peaks. Siddhartha's spiritual thresholds in the novel are quiet, but they are charged with interior turbulence. Representing that on stage requires a dramaturgical sensitivity to tension building. Without that, the first part of the performance struggled to find its pulse.

Yet in the midst of these challenges, there were performances that grounded the production. The scenes with Kamala were beautifully realised. The performer, Jeenat Jahan Nisha, carried her scenes with a compelling mixture of sensuality, precision, and emotional intelligence. Her presence seemed to open up the stage in a way that allowed Siddhartha's transformation to feel lived rather than narrated. The set design also contributed immensely to the sense of journey. It was visually imaginative, creating symbolic landscapes that echoed the emotional shifts in Siddhartha's arc. As the production moved toward the later chapters, it found a steadier rhythm. The portrayals of the older Siddhartha, performed by Maeen Hasan and the older Vasudeva, performed by Refat Hasan Saykat, were sincere and layered. Ariful Islam Neel who played Siddhartha's son offered a surprising depth, bringing forth the stubbornness, longing, and vulnerability of a child navigating abandonment and expectation.

The more I watched, the more I realised that the strengths of the production lay in its visual and choreographic language. The play was at its most powerful when it embraced movement, imagery, and symbolic representation. These moments allowed the philosophical dimensions of the story to breathe in nonverbal ways. The river sequences, the choreographed transitions, and the contemplative stillness of Vasudeva's presence created a space where meaning felt embodied rather than explained.

But *Siddhartha* is a work that also demands intellectual architecture. Without a grounded understanding of Buddhist philosophy and the dramaturgical craft necessary to shape internal transformation into external drama, an adaptation can inherit limitations from the original novel without interrogating them. Hesse simplifies the doctrines of impermanence, suffering, and non-self into poetic metaphors. A theatrical adaptation that does not return to the philosophical roots risks reproducing that simplification. What is required is a director who sees dramaturgy and philosophy as intertwined. Siddhartha's journey is not only about movement across space but about movement across consciousness. That journey has its own dramatic structure, which must be rendered with care.

The production had immense poetic potential, and it often reached toward it. The design instincts were strong, the performers sincere, and the choreography evocative. But without a more cohesive dramaturgical vision, the experience remained beautiful yet incomplete. It touched the surface of spiritual transformation but did not always descend into its depths. The materials were present, the ambition clear, and the sincerity palpable. What remains is the need to harmonise all these elements so that design, text, philosophy, and movement exist not as fragments but as one flowing current. In that sense, the play is much like the river at the heart of Siddhartha's story. Many voices, many textures, many possibilities. What it seeks is a unity that can hold them all together.

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



POETRY

'The Unnamed' and 'Incomplete': Two poems

MITALI CHAKRAVARTY

The unnamed

You can get lost trying to get back to the exit at the Vatican Museum. With swirls taking you to skies filled with stories woven by hand, you walk under endless ceilings edged with gold, craning to understand. The Raphael rooms paint war, philosophy and saints coloured with emotions.

PHOTO: MITALI CHAKRAVARTY

Dali redefines Trinity. Matisse brings more modernity. And yet, there are so many unnamed. Were those unnamed a part of humanity that continues unframed, suffering the expulsion that Michelangelo painted in Sistine?

Incomplete

For the statues left incomplete by Michelangelo (1475-1564), statues that were meant to accompany Moses on the tomb of Pope Julius II (1443-1513). They try to break free—these prisoners caught in marble. Stilled by mass,

they struggle to emerge. The artist left them incomplete. Imprisoned still in rock, their muscles strain and bulge. David completed breathes, hesitating, watching tautly for Goliath. His face tense, young, complete, almost breathing. While in Rome, Moses sits alone waiting, waiting for the incomplete to grant him completion. He waits while the prisoners strain

for life, find home in Florence near the perfection called David. Imprisoned in stone, the statues remain lovelorn to find freedom in togetherness. Strung with the bond of incompleteness, they struggle like humanity in throes of living—Michelangelo's most moving, reliable imperfections.

Mitali Chakravarty edits borderlessjournal.com and has published widely. Her latest book is *From Calcutta to Kolkata: City of Dreams* — Poems.

Case filed against shooting federation's joint secretary

SPORTS REPORTER

Sharmin Akter Ratna, a gold-winning shooter at the South Asian Games and Commonwealth Shooting Championship, filed a case on Thursday against Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation (BSSF) joint secretary GM Haider Sajjad under Article 10 of the Bangladesh Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

The case was lodged at the Gulshan Police Station a day after national shooter Kamrun Nahar Koly filed a general diary (GD) against the same official on behalf of Ratna and fellow shooter Tasmyati Ema.

Ratna, who has been working as a coach since retiring from competition, alleged in case statement No. 53 that Sajjad – also the joint secretary of Dhaka Rifles Club – had been harassing her for years, starting from 2012 to the present. The allegations include proposals for physical relations, inappropriate touching, verbal abuse, obscene remarks, intentional hugs and other forms of misconduct.

She further stated that Sajjad had previously been suspended for four years by the federation over a women-related scandal, and had also been sentenced to three years in a case involving attempted murder of Dhaka Rifles Club member Abu Sadeque.

The complaint added that her two witnesses, Koly and Ema, were also subjected to mental harassment by Sajjad, who allegedly abused his official authority to prevent both shooters from joining national training camps and participating in international competitions.

According to the GD filed by Koly, Sajjad had also threatened to rape two national shooters inside the federation premises. Koly claimed she was confined inside the shooting office for four hours and verbally abused for the purpose of mental intimidation.

"We have repeatedly complained to the federation, the ministry and the National Sports Council, but no visible action has been taken. That's why I filed the case – to seek justice under existing laws and to protect athletes in the future," Ratna told The Daily Star, adding that Bangladesh Human Rights Foundation chairperson and CEO Advocate Alena Khan will represent her in court.

Haider has denied all allegations.

"I don't have any connection with these accusations," Haider said, adding that if evidence exists, it should be presented publicly. He further alleged, "Members of the previous executive committee are pulling strings from behind, using shooters close to them, because I had a bad relationship with the former committee."

Bangladesh in 'NO RISK' MODE

EKUSH TAPADER from Ctg

A defeat in the first T20I against Ireland has disrupted the pre-series calculations of the Bangladesh selectors as thoughts of T20 World Cup preparation have now been set aside and the focus has shifted towards winning the series.

The selectors were confident that Bangladesh would secure the three-match series against Ireland early by winning the first two games, opening up the chance to test a few new faces in the third T20I. That was why they announced the squad for only the first two games.

But after the first T20I ended in a 39-run defeat, the selectors don't want to take any chances with the squad anymore.

"There is no scope to take risks now. We have to win the series," selector Hasibul Hossain Shanto told The Daily Star on Saturday, a day before the second T20I. "The earlier plan had to be adjusted a bit. For now, the chances of changes in the squad are slim."

The unexpected defeat has turned today's second T20I into a must-win match for the hosts in order to keep the series alive – which seemingly outranks the management's desire to try and tick the boxes that are still unchecked before the T20 World Cup.

After the Ireland series, Bangladesh don't have any international matches lined up before the T20 World Cup, set to begin next February in India and Sri Lanka, making it their last opportunity to experiment with the side before the global event.

Understandably, playing three T20Is at home against the 11th



ranked side in the world around two-and-a-half-months before the event hardly seems like an ideal preparatory series before a World Cup.

Still, as the Tigers are fresh of a recent 3-0 whitewash against the West Indies in Chattogram and are ranked just two slots above the Irish, it could have been used to try out a few new options, or at least new combinations.

But the only notable change in the squad from the last series was the inclusion of Mahidul Islam Ankon in place of Shamim Hossain – a change that had sparked some controversy a day before the series when skipper Litton Das called out the selection panel for ignoring his opinion and dropping the all-

rounder. However, Ankon did not get picked for the match while Saif Hassan, who found success as an opener in the Asia Cup, batted in the middle-order to plug the gap left in Shamim's absence.

Selection-wise, the Tigers played it safe in the first T20I, but their strategy did not work as their batters lost the plot chasing 182 on a flat track. The management would likely stick to the same approach today, hoping it yields the opposite result. But even if they succeed in winning the match and even go on to win the series, failing to address recurring issues or unearth new options would render the triumph largely irrelevant to their T20 World Cup prospects.

SHORT CORNER

Drama continues over players list for BPL auction

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) Governing Council is still waiting for reports from BCB's Anti-Corruption Committee's consultant Alex Marshall before finalising the list of both local and foreign players ahead of the players' auction scheduled for November 30. The council has already supplied two preliminary lists – featuring 166 local players and 245 foreign players – to the six participating franchises for Sunday's auction. However, sources have confirmed that changes are imminent, as Marshall, the former ICC Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) chief, is expected to provide recommendations that the council intends to adopt.



Will Dhaka league crisis be resolved today?

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will host a tea party today at the Westin Dhaka in an effort to resolve the ongoing crisis surrounding the commencement of the Dhaka leagues. All 76 Dhaka-based clubs have been invited, but the participation of 45 of them remains uncertain as they are questioning the legitimacy of the current board, irregularities in the recent board elections, and have other grievances.

Iran to boycott 2026 World Cup draw over US visa row

Iran is to boycott next week's World Cup finals draw in Washington because the United States refused to grant visas to several members of the delegation, the Iranian football federation announced on Friday. "We have informed FIFA that the decisions taken have nothing to do with sports and the members of the Iranian delegation will not participate in the World Cup draw," the federation's spokesperson told state television.

** Read full stories on The Daily Star's website



Bangladesh players celebrate their 2-1 win against Bahrain in the AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers at the Yongchuan Sports Centre in Chongqing, China yesterday. Golam Rabbani Choton's charges have won all four matches of the campaign and sit second in Group A, behind China who have a superior goal-difference. The two unbeaten teams will square off in the last match of the group on Sunday where Bangladesh will need to beat the hosts to claim the lone qualifying spot.

PHOTO: BFF

Abahani seal first BFL win

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Abahani finally secured their first victory in the ongoing Bangladesh Football League with a 2-0 win over Bangladesh Police in their home match at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Malian forward Souleymane Diabate opened the scoring before Enamul Islam Gazi doubled the lead for the six-time professional league champions, delivering their first triumph in four matches after two consecutive defeats and a draw.

Coming off a 3-2 loss to archrivals Mohammedan SC, the Sky Blues needed to bounce back in a match against Bangladesh Police, a side that had often troubled them in the past, with five draws in 12 league meetings. Police showed similar resilience from the outset, but Abahani broke through in the 25th minute. Diabate converted from the spot after defender Ismail Hossain pushed him from behind while he was chasing a long ball from Alomgir Molla.

Both teams fought for midfield control, but Abahani extended their lead in the 43rd minute. Enamul



produced a brilliant finish, turning to volley a Sheikh Morsalin free-kick inside the box, leaving Police goalkeeper Rakibul Islam stunned.

Abahani protected their two-goal cushion to seal the much-needed win and climbed to sixth place with four points from four matches.

At the Shaheed Miraj Tapan Stadium in Manikganj, Fortis FC returned to winning ways with a 1-0 victory over winless Arambagh KS,

following a draw against Police FC and a defeat to Bashundhara Kings. Rijaz Uddin Sagor scored in the 16th minute, tapping in from close range after a free-kick from captain Pa Omar Babou was deflected off the Arambagh wall. Arambagh, with three defeats and a draw, sit at the bottom of the 10-team table alongside Fakirpool Young Men's Club, while Fortis climbed to third with seven points from four matches.



মিলিটারি কলেজিয়েট স্কুল ফরিদপুর (এমসিএসএফ)

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

| ক্র. নং | পদ | বেতন স্কেল | শিক্ষাপত্র/যোগ্যতা/অভিজ্ঞতা |
|---------|--|--|---|
| ১. | সহকারি অধ্যাপক গণিত - ০১ | মূল বেতন ৩৫,৫০০/-, (৬ষ্ঠ গ্রেড, অনুযায়ী সর্বমোট ৫২,৩০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা, প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিজস্ব বেতন কাঠামো অনুযায়ী নির্দিষ্ট চাকুরীকাল শেষে অডিভেট ফান্ড ও গ্র্যাডুইটি সুবিধা। | বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক বিধানে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির স্নাতক (সম্মান) সহ স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রী/সমমানের সার্টিফিকেট সহ স্নাতকোত্তর ০৬ বছরের শিক্ষাদানের বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। *গ্রাডুইকে অবশ্যই ইংরেজি মাধ্যমে ক্লাস পরিচালনার দক্ষ হতে হবে। |
| ২. | প্রভাষক ইসলাম শিক্ষা - ০১ বাংলা - ০২ ইংরেজি - ০২ পদার্থ বিজ্ঞান - ০১ সোল্যান্ড সাইন্স (বিভিজিএস) - ০১ আইসিটি - ০১ | মূল বেতন ২২,৫০০/-, (৬ম গ্রেড, অনুযায়ী সর্বমোট ৩৫,৩০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা, প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিজস্ব বেতন কাঠামো অনুযায়ী নির্দিষ্ট চাকুরীকাল শেষে অডিভেট ফান্ড ও গ্র্যাডুইটি সুবিধা। | বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক বিধানে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির স্নাতক (সম্মান) সহ স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রী/সমমানের সার্টিফিকেট সহ স্নাতকোত্তর ০৬ বছরের বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা। *গ্রাডুইকে অবশ্যই ইংরেজি মাধ্যমে ক্লাস পরিচালনার দক্ষ হতে হবে। |
| ৩. | একডেমি সুপার - ০১ প্রধান কর্মকর্তা/হেডকোয়ার্টার - ০১ মেডিক্যাল এ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট/নার্স (পূর্ণকর্ম) - ০১ | মূল বেতন ১৬,০০০/-, (১০ম গ্রেড অনুযায়ী সর্বমোট ২৫,২০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা, প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিজস্ব বেতন কাঠামো অনুযায়ী নির্দিষ্ট চাকুরীকাল শেষে অডিভেট ফান্ড ও গ্র্যাডুইটি সুবিধা। | বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক বিধানে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির স্নাতক (সম্মান) সহ স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রী/সমমানের সার্টিফিকেট সহ স্নাতকোত্তর ০৬ বছরের বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা। বীকৃত নার্সিং/হেলথ ইনস্টিটিউট থেকে ডিপ্লোমা ইন নার্সিং কোর্স সম্পন্ন। বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর। |
| ৪. | শিক্ষক (চুক্তিভিত্তিক) শারীরিক শিক্ষা - ০১ চারুকলা - ০১ | চুক্তিভিত্তিক, সর্বমোট ১৭,০০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা। | বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক বিধানে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির স্নাতক (সম্মান) ডিগ্রী অথবা বিপিএড ডিগ্রী সহ শারীরিক শিক্ষা বিধানে মাস্টার্স। শিক্ষা জীবনে ৩য় বিভাগ গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক বিধানে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির বায়োসের অফ ফাইন আর্টস অথবা মাস্টার্স অফ ফাইন আর্টস ডিগ্রী। গ্রাডুইকে অবশ্যই স্নাতক বিধানে দক্ষ হতে হবে। শিক্ষা জীবনে ৩য় বিভাগ গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। |
| ৫. | ড্রাইভার - ০২ আইটি টেকনিশিয়ান - ০১ | চুক্তিভিত্তিক, সর্বমোট ১৬,০০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা। | ১। এমএসসি পাস এবং বিআরটিএ হতে ডার্লি/মাধ্যম/হালকা যান চালানোর শাইলেন্স গ্রাউন্ড এবং ৫ বছরের গাড়ী চালানোর বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা, বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর। ২। সেনাবাহিনী হতে অবসরপ্রাপ্ত চালকপদ আধিকার পাবনে (এক্ষেত্রে বয়স শিথিলযোগ্য)। ১। ন্যূনতম এইচএসসি (আইটি টেকনিশিয়ান এর ক্ষেত্রে Networking, CCTV এর উপর বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন গ্রাডুইকের আধিকার দেওয়া হবে। |
| ৬. | এলভিসি (করগণিত) - ০২ আসিস্ট্যান্ট লাইব্রেরিয়ান - ০১ আইএনটি/চারুকলা সহকারি/ক্রাফটসম্যান - ০১ সিকিউরিটি ইনচার্জ - ০১ | চুক্তিভিত্তিক, সর্বমোট ১৫,০০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা। | ১। এলভিসি কেরে এমএস অফিস প্যাকেজের দক্ষ এবং টাইপিং গতি বাংলা ও ইংরেজিতে যথাক্রমে ২০ ও ২৫ শব্দ। স্নাতক কেরে কমপক্ষে ০২ বছরের বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা। বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর। ২। বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক বিধানে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির অনার্স সহ মাস্টার্স ডিগ্রী অথবা লাইব্রেরী এবং ইনফরমেশন সাইন্স এ মাস্টার্স ডিগ্রী। গ্রাডুইকে অবশ্যই লাইব্রেরী পরিচালনার দক্ষ হতে হবে। শিক্ষা জীবনে ৩য় বিভাগ গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। ৩। ড্রাফটসম্যানশীপ, ডিজাইন, নকশা, নকশা ও অক্ষর কাটা, ব্যানার তৈরী এবং পেইন্টিং এ দক্ষ। (গ্রাফিক্স ডিজাইন যোগ্যদের আধিকার দেওয়া হবে)। |
| ৭. | বার্তাবাহক - ০১ মশালি - ০২ পাচক/ফুক - ০৩ মালি - ০২ মেসওয়ার্টার - ০৪ সিকিউরিটি গার্ড - ০৬ হাউজ এ্যাটেন্ডেন্ট - ০৩ পরিষ্কার কর্মী - ০৪ জেনারেল/পাসপোর্ট অফিসার - ০১ | চুক্তিভিত্তিক, সর্বমোট ১৩,৫০০/-, মূল বেতনের সমপরিমাণ ২টি স্ট্রিপ বোনাস ও ২০% বাংলা নববর্ষ ভাতা। | ১। এমএসসি পাস এবং ২ বছরের বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা, বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর। ২। এমএসসি পাস এবং ২ বছরের বাবদ অভিজ্ঞতা, বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর। বৈদ্যুতিক কাজে দক্ষ প্রার্থীদেরকে আধিকার দেওয়া হবে। |

আবেদনের শর্তসমূহ:
অনলাইন আবেদনের ক্ষেত্রে www.mcsf.edu.com ওয়েবসাইটের মাধ্যমে আবেদন ও আবেদন পরবর্তী প্রদত্ত অনলাইন পেমেন্ট গেটওয়ে সিস্টেমের মাধ্যমে টাকা জমা করতে হবে। ক্রমিক ০১ ও ০২ এর ক্ষেত্রে ৬০০/-, টাকা, ০৩ এর ক্ষেত্রে ৪০০/-, টাকা, ০৪ ও ০৫ এর ক্ষেত্রে ৩০০/-, টাকা, ০৬ এর ক্ষেত্রে ২০০/-, টাকা এবং ০৭ এর ক্ষেত্রে ১০০/-, টাকা আবেদন ফি হিসেবে সঠিকভাবে জমা দেওয়ার পরেই আবেদনটি দৃষ্টিত হবে। সঠিকভাবে আবেদন ফি জমা না হলে আবেদন সম্পন্ন হয়েছে বলে গণ্য করা হবে না ও প্রবেশপত্র প্রদত্ত করা যাবে না।

আবেদনের সময়: ২০ নভেম্বর ২০২৫ তারিখ বুধসপ্তাহের থেকে ১০ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখ শনিবার রাত ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
www.mcsf.edu.com ওয়েবসাইটের মাধ্যমে অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে পারবেন।

নিয়োগ সূত্র: মেমোরান্ডাম নং: ০১৭৯৯-২৫৮৭৬০ (সেকার্টারী ব্রিটিশ সিন কলেজ) সফল ৯০০ খণ্ডের থেকে বিকল্প ৩০০ খণ্ডের সফল থাকবে।
আবেদনের তথ্য: www.mcsf.edu.com



DHAKA-10 SEAT NCP-led alliance plan stalls over nomination row

SHAMIMA RITA

A dispute over nominating a candidate for the Dhaka-10 seat caused the planning of a four-party alliance led by the National Citizen Party to collapse at the last moment on Thursday, party insiders say.

Opposition from two influential student advisers, who argued against building any "third force" and instead pushed for joining the BNP, further derailed the effort.

For days, the NCP had been negotiating with Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party, United Peoples (UP) Bangladesh, and Rastro Songkar Andolon to form a new electoral bloc.

Just as the partners were preparing to announce it at a press conference in Shahbagh, the initiative unravelled.

Sources say both LGED Adviser Asif Mahmud, a key power centre within the NCP, and AB Party Joint General Secretary Nasreen Sultana Mily intend to contest the national polls from Dhaka-10.

Mily has already begun nomination groundwork. Though Asif has not

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3



Workers unload textbooks from a truck at Kawnia Manik Mia High School in Barishal yesterday. The books arrived from Dhaka for free distribution to schools ahead of the new academic year. PHOTO: TITU DAS

Jamaat mulling major overhaul of nomination list Party to field student leaders, minority reps, new faces

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Jamaat-e-Islami is bringing major changes to its nomination list by incorporating top student union leaders from Dhaka University and other institutions, civil society members, journalists, cultural figures and representatives of minority and ethnic groups.

The party would also leave a number of seats in support of strong candidates from its seven like-minded parties, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair told The Daily Star.

The mostly Islamist electoral alliance plans to reveal the list after the election schedule is announced in early December, according to him.

"You will see major changes and attraction in the final list of our nomination as we want to make it inclusive," added Zubair, who also heads the party's media wing.

He said several frontline student leaders of the July uprising who won the central vice-president and general secretary posts in recently held student union polls at Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University and Chattogram University, would be nominated for contesting the upcoming national election to woo young voters.

"We have also asked the student leaders that their respective duties in the central student unions of their universities are not hampered if they win the national election," Zubair said.

Leaders of Jamaat's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir swept all these elections, securing almost all VP and GS posts.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar told The Daily Star that considering the new political context and the young generation's expectations, the party has

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Man shot dead hours after B'baria turf clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
B'baria

A man was shot dead late Thursday night in Brahmanbaria town, hours after three people were injured in an earlier shooting triggered by a turf clash in the same area, police and family members said.

The deceased was identified as Saddam Hossain, 32.

Witnesses and family sources said tensions escalated around 7:00pm Thursday, when alleged followers of "Lion Shakil" fired rubber bullets at supporters of district Swachhchasebak Dal convener Delwar Hossain Dilip near Kandipara Madrasa Road, injuring three people.

Later that night, Saddam was allegedly called out of his home by men known to him. Shortly afterwards, locals found him lying on Kandipara Road with gunshot wounds. He was rushed to Brahmanbaria General Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Family members claimed that followers

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

METRO RAIL LINE-6 Revision proposes cost cut by Tk 755cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's first metro rail project is set to see a cost reduction of around Tk 755 crore as the Planning Ministry prepares to place the third revision of the Metro Rail Line-6 proposal before the ECNEC tomorrow for approval.

The project cost will come down to Tk 32,717 crore from Tk 33,472 crore in the second revised estimate, thanks to lower land acquisition expenses under the government-funded portion. However, costs under foreign loans will rise due to the depreciation of the taka against the US dollar.



The project deadline will also be extended by three years, to December 2028, according to the proposal.

Inaugurated in December 2022, the 20.1km Utara-Motijheel section of MRT-6 is already in operation, while work on the 1.16km Motijheel-Kamalapur extension is underway.

According to the proposal, the government's share of the project cost will decrease by Tk 1,232 crore, or 8.95 percent, while expenditure under

project loans will increase by Tk 477 crore, or 2.42 percent.

Overall, compared to the second revised estimate, the third revision reduces the total cost by Tk 754 crore, or 2.25 percent, bringing it down from Tk 33,472 crore to Tk 32,717 crore.

The proposal attributes the reduction in government funding to the fact that additional land acquisition was not required at the Bijoy Sarani, Farmgate, Shahbagh, Dhaka University, and Motijheel stations.

As a result, 3.56 hectares less land was needed, saving Tk 1,212 crore. Proposals have also been

- Total cost now estimated at **Tk 32,717cr** instead of **Tk 33,472cr**
- Govt share to drop by **Tk 1,232cr** due to less land acquisition
- Foreign loan portion to rise by **Tk 477cr** due to taka depreciation
- Project deadline extended to **Dec 2028**

made to reduce costs in several other areas.

However, consultancy expenses and foreign loan repayment obligations have increased, including a proposed rise of Tk 270 crore in foreign loan repayment.

In December 2012, the ECNEC approved Tk 21,985 crore for the construction of the metro rail line from Utara to Motijheel, with JICA contributing Tk 16,594 crore in loans. The line

SEE PAGE 5 COL 8

Trump suspends immigration from 'Third World'

Orders review of green card holders from 19 countries

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday his administration will "permanently pause" migration from all "Third World Countries", following the death of a National Guard member in an attack near the White House.

The comments mark a further escalation of migration measures Trump has ordered since the shooting on Wednesday that investigators say was carried out by an Afghan national who entered the US in 2021 under a resettlement program.

Trump did not identify any countries by name or explain what he meant by third-world countries or "permanently pause". He said the plan would include cases approved under former President Joe Biden's administration.

"I will permanently pause migration from all Third World Countries to allow the US system to fully recover, terminate all of the millions of Biden illegal admissions, including those signed by Sleepy Joe Biden's autopen, and remove anyone who is not a net asset to the United States," he said on his social media platform, Truth Social.



Social media chaos fuelling mob violence Says Fakhru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir

yesterday warned that unchecked activities on social media are fuelling mob violence, spreading false campaigns and obstructing the country's democratic transition.

"Anyone can say anything. Negative campaigns against political leaders, public figures and businesses are being carried out in a way that does not strengthen democracy," he said at the opening session of the biennial council of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists at Jatiya Press Club.

Fakhru said social media had become a global problem due to a lack of accountability.

He also urged journalists to strengthen their unions and avoid aligning with any political party, saying this was the only way to protect their professional rights and ensure true media freedom.

Speaking about the national election, he said the entire nation was waiting for the February polls, hoping to return to a democratic system. "Democracy means I may not agree with you, but I will defend your right to express your views," he said.



DENIAL OF JAIL VISITS Pakistan ex-PM Imran's sister files contempt petition

DAWN ONLINE

Aleema Khan, sister of former Pakistani prime minister and Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, has filed a contempt of court petition against the superintendent of Adiala Jail for denying her permission to meet her brother, despite a directive from the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

The IHC reinstated a twice-a-week meeting schedule for the incarcerated former premier.

The petition was filed after Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, along with several other PTI members, staged an overnight sit-in outside Adiala jail in Rawalpindi, where Imran has been imprisoned since 2023.

The sit-in was staged as CM Afridi was denied a meeting with Imran for the eighth time on Thursday.

Previously, Imran's sisters, including Aleema, had also staged sit-ins outside the prison in Rawalpindi on multiple occasions after they were barred from meeting the former premier.

The PTI ended its latest sit-in yesterday morning, with the KP CM announcing that they would be approaching the IHC, where Aleema has now filed a contempt plea.



The bridge over the Atrai River in Shilimpur of Naogaon's Patnitala lies unusable due to the absence of approach roads. Locals say work on the bridge, crucial for thousands of residents in Enayetpur, Mahadebpur, Pathakatahat, Manda, and Shilimpur, has progressed very slowly for more than three years, forcing people to take long detours. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

39 deported from US arrive in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States has sent back 39 Bangladeshis, who arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka early yesterday via a special US military flight.

After landing at 5:30am, airport authorities and BRAC provided transport support and emergency assistance.

Among the returnees, 26 are from Noakhali, while others are from Cumilla, Sylhet, Feni, Lakshimpur, Chattogram, Gazipur, Dhaka, Munshiganj, and Narayanganj.

According to BRAC's Migration Programme, at least 34 of the 39 migrants had travelled to Brazil with clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

From Brazil, they made it to Mexico, and then entered US without documents. Of the remaining five, two travelled directly to the US and three entered from South Africa.

After applying to stay, US authorities completed legal procedures before ordering their return.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



THE CHEF WHO PUT HOME COOKS AT HEART OF GLOBAL CUISINE

Asma Khan turns spotlight on matriarchs whose quiet genius shaped South Asia's flavours



RAFAAT BINTE RASHID

Asma Khan is an advocate for women's empowerment through food — honest, eloquent, and unapologetically frank. Her confidence and mastery of her craft are deeply inspirational. Yet her mission extends far beyond the plate. She is committed to championing the unsung heroes of the culinary world: the home cooks.

These women, whose labour, creativity, and knowledge have long been dismissed as informal and unskilled, are in fact the true custodians of culinary heritage. In South Asia, they remain among the most discriminated and least appreciated. Through her restaurant in London, Darjeeling Express, Asma pays tribute to their genius and ensures their voices are finally heard.

The matriarchs of our families — our grandmothers, mothers, home chefs, and even the old household cooks — are the living bridges of culinary culture. They carry forward cooking techniques and traditions, weaving them across countries, regions, communities, and even the unique rhythms of each household.

"They don't measure — they taste, adjust, trust their instincts. My mother never gave full recipes, not to be secretive, but because she cooked from memory. Unless you watched closely, you'd miss that one crucial pinch. When I want to replicate an old recipe, I think of our old cook, Haji Shaab, and my mother's technique, and add the same pinch my mother once did.

"Most of the women had never tasted the food I served in my supper clubs. They came from South India, Pakistan, Bangladesh — each with their own traditions. But later, when they started working in my restaurant, they learned by watching, not reading. They cooked by feel," Asma says.

Home cooks have a rhythm that cannot be taught. You just feel it. That beautiful rhythm connects generations. That's the soul of home cooking. Recipes and measurements can't capture that. It's about patience, intuition, and respect for ingredients.

Asma Khan, a celebrated chef and star of Netflix's *Chef's Table* (season 6), visited Dhaka

for the launch of a cookbook called *Flavours of Unity — A SAARC Culinary Journey*. It is an initiative of the SAARC Women's Association, Dhaka Chapter. She authored several books that are cultural tributes to South Asian home cooking and the women behind it.

Finding Comfort in Healing and Building a Restaurant with Home Cooks
For Asma, food was a way to find comfort and connection when she left her home in India some 35 years ago.

She reflects that leaving home felt like being uprooted. Back then, staying in touch meant short, expensive phone calls — no video chats, no shared meals. She missed her home food to the extent that she says, "I couldn't change my loneliness, I could only think to recreate the smell of home. Once while cycling around campus, I smelled parathas

"I knew how one bite of mutton rezala could make you feel whole again," she reflects on how traumatic homesickness can be.

It's ironic that, given her background, a PhD in British constitutional law, and a solid legal career, she took the risk. With no safety net to fall back to, she followed her dream because she didn't want to live for cooking only on weekends or wait for a 30-day holiday back home to feel alive again.

What makes food so powerful isn't just its taste — it's intimacy. Food is family, memory, and

In many ways, Bengal, which comprises West Bengal and Bangladesh, is the culinary heart of the subcontinent. The cuisine embraces innovation, absorbing and adapting flavours from across the world.

frying and just stood there, crying. That scent held everything I missed.

"That moment pushed me to cook — not for fun, but to survive. I wanted to bring back the flavours of our family retreats, to restore the romance of home. I taught myself. If you love food, your palate will guide you."

Being cut from everything warm and familiar, cooking grounded her and helped her rebuild her life. It gave her purpose. She shares this story always because she knew what it felt like to miss home, to feel that same emptiness. Food brought her solace and joy, and that dream wasn't just to cook for herself but to feed others who missed the flavours of her homeland, too.

identity. We don't separate it from ourselves. She continues, "At home, we had two kinds of shami kabab, my mother's sweet version with raisins and caramelised onions, and my father's bold one with green chili and mint. Their food reflected who they were. Food crosses every boundary; it is a living bridge."

"My core food philosophy is shaped by Mughal influence — minimal turmeric, little to no cumin, and perhaps a touch of coriander. Mughal cuisine is defined by its lightness, the use of milk, and subtle layering. This heritage is spread across South Asian regions, but the Mughal cuisine of the two states of India, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, moved me deeply.

"Bihari Muslim food is exquisite. I make a korma inspired by my grandmother from Bihar, thickened with ghee-fried, crushed makhana, which are the edible part of lotus seeds, called fox nuts. It's rich, refined, and deeply Mughal," she says.

The generation that carried the narratives and secrets behind our dishes is fading with them. That's the tragedy — we forget to honour the hands that fed us while they're still here. Yet, despite this richness, we often overlook their stories.

The Bengal Cuisine

In many ways, Bengal, which comprises West Bengal and Bangladesh, is the culinary heart of the subcontinent. The cuisine embraces innovation, absorbing

and adapting flavours from across the world. Yet the differences even within Bengal are profound. There are two distinct culinary traditions: one rooted in Hindu heritage, the other shaped by Muslim legacy. Bangalee Muslim and Hindu cuisines differ significantly.

Bengal's cuisine, taken as a whole, is layered and diverse. One style is steeped in antiquity; the other evolves through cultural exchange. Port cities like Kolkata and Chattogram welcomed traders and settlers whose food traditions, like the Armenian dolmas and Afghan kababs, left lasting imprints on Bangalee food.

Bangladesh has its own signature dishes — their biye bari'r roast (roasts served at

weddings), the jali kebab, chita roti, and especially their duck preparations, which are deeply rooted in Bangladeshi food repertoire but are rare in West Bengal. Even meat dishes vary; Chattogram's kala bhuna is vastly different from preparations in Jashore or Kushtia.

These regional nuances challenge the notion of a singular Bangalee cuisine. Like "Indian food," it's a broad term that masks a world of subtle, striking differences.

Onions and garlic are staples, though some dishes omit them for religious reasons, creating unique flavour profiles. This spiritual choice makes recreating Kolkata's culinary heritage nearly impossible. It's fascinating how identical-looking dishes like vegetable labra can taste entirely different depending on the cook and context on the two sides of Bengal.

"One major difference lies in the liberal use of green chillies — kancha lonka — in Bangladesh. I once served rezala to guests who were surprised by its pale colour, but the burst of lemon-lime juice, heat from green chillies, and hint of sugar left them mesmerised. That final touch of fresh chillies transforms the dish with a subtle, unforgettable aroma.

"Kolkata has dishes I cherish, too. I make chicken jhol in London that's close, but not quite the same. Water matters. The taste of your land's water changes everything. That's why some dishes aren't replicable. My mother never poured water into kosha mangsho — she'd spray it gently around the pan's edges to deglaze. It's a passed-down technique, the grammar of cooking, the grammar of love," the celebrated chef talks passionately about the little things that matter the most to make food taste like your mother's. She devoted nine pages in her book to just the taste of water in cooking.

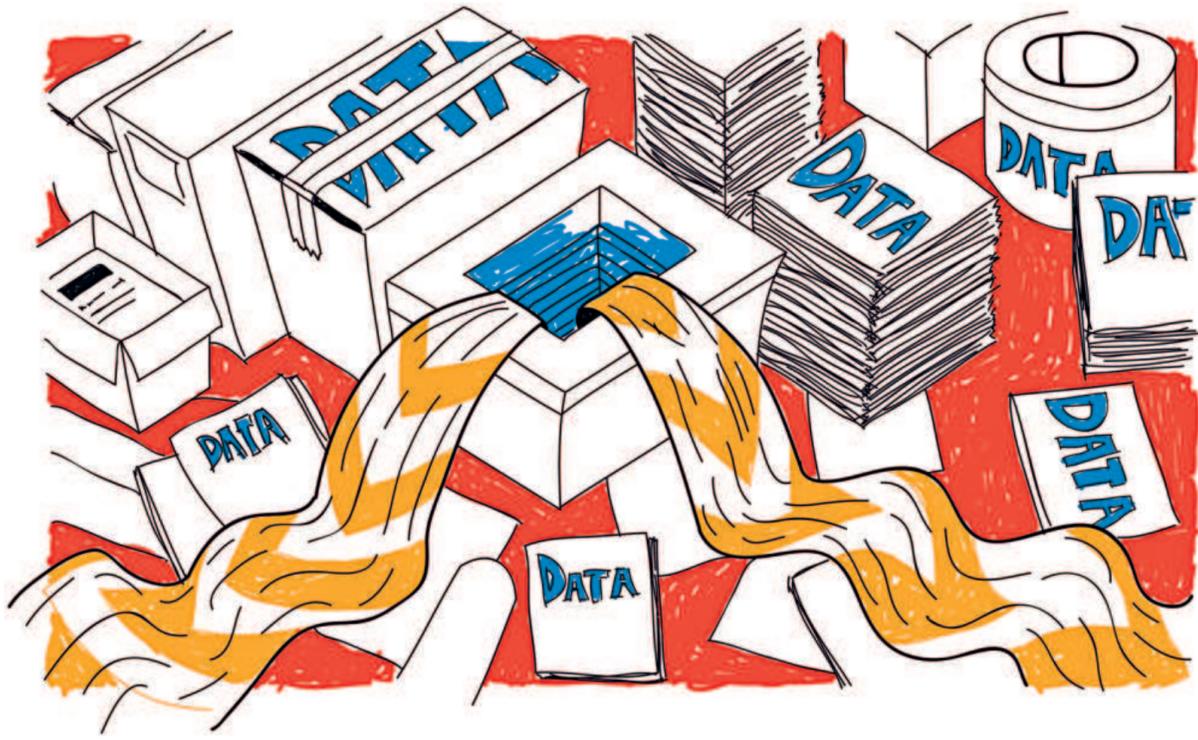
Asma loves Bangladeshi food, especially wedding feasts. In her recent book, she included Dhaka's famous biye bari'r roast with the hope that the recipe would be tried as an alternative to turkey, because the roast has jointed pieces, so no carving is required.

"No one says this publicly, but I will: people here seek joy through food. That's why it matters so much," she ends.



WE DON'T NEED MORE DATA

We need to understand it



In many instances, monitoring became a bureaucratic exercise. Data was gathered because it was required, not because it mattered.

SABBIR RAHMAN KHAN AND MD MARJAD MIR KAMELI

Back in the 1950s and 60s, aid agencies were largely driven by faith and anecdote. Progress was measured in tons of food or miles of road. In the 1960s, economists at the World Bank redefined how aid was understood. "Without measurement," they stated, "we cannot tell whether progress exists." Those few words marked the beginning of the practice of counting, tracking, and comparing human progress. This triggered the development sector to rely on data to tell its story. Moving forward, the newly formed World Bank and the newly formed UN agencies began measuring economic growth in developing nations. Gross Domestic Product, school enrolment rates, and birth statistics opened new avenues to measure human development.

It was the time of clipboards and paper surveys, of census drives and handwritten ledgers. Back then, the

data collection process was lengthy, expensive, and often incomplete. But the underlying objective was strong: what gets measured gets managed. By the late 1980s and 1990s, this practice had evolved into something bigger. The rise of results-based management (RBM) and the logical framework approach turned data from background evidence into the centrepiece of decision-making. Aid agencies and development partners wanted metrics, impact indicators, baselines, targets, and evaluations.

Then came the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. For the first time, the world agreed on eight goals that would define success for an entire generation—poverty reduction, universal education, gender equality—all expressed through numbers. It was an ambitious vision but also posed bottlenecks. Countries that could not count were left out of the count. The Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) expanded this ambition but also exposed the limits of the global data system. With 232 indicators to track, even the most advanced national statistical systems struggled to keep up.

UNCTAD reported that more than half of developing countries still lack reliable data for half of the SDG indicators. Experts call this phenomenon the "data paradox", meaning we have more numbers than ever, but less usable knowledge than we need. The key reason is that development data exists in silos. It is scattered across ministries, development partners, NGOs, and statistical agencies. Projects build parallel systems, each with its own dashboards, definitions, and what not. And when the project ends, so does the data stream.

Data was supposed to make development transparent, but it also made it transactional. What was once only about people gradually became about numbers. Development

actors began to design projects that looked "measurable". Governments designed programmes that would only fit the indicators, not moving beyond counting outputs towards understanding outcomes. To address this shortcoming, different frameworks were introduced.

The DCED Standard, MERL, MEL, and related models were designed to push the sector past mere output-counting and towards genuine outcome-level understanding. RBM (Results-Based Management) introduced a logic chain linking inputs to impact; DCED offered a verifiable method to prove market systems change; and MERL tried to integrate data, evidence, and learning into a single cycle. Later came frameworks such as PDIA (Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation) and adaptive management, both advocating learning by doing rather than predicting.

Each model was an improvement on the last. However, one underlying challenge persisted: the sector became better at measuring activity than understanding change. Indicators multiplied faster than real insight. Reporting systems expanded while the practice of reflection lagged behind. Everyone wanted evidence of impact, yet the mechanisms built to generate it often produced compliance, not

and ethical use lagged far behind innovation. Much of what is collected remains unverified, unshared, or unused—particularly in the Global South, where institutional capacity and coordination remain uneven.

South Asia offers a textbook example of this paradox. The region generates an immense amount of data through multiple development projects over the decades. Unfortunately, data integration remains limited. Most development programmes still maintain project-specific systems that fail to speak to one another. Learning captured in one project seldom informs another. Ministries maintain separate systems; NGOs track their own indicators; national statistical offices operate under their own mandates. The result is a fragmented data ecosystem, where progress is measured in spreadsheets rather than outcomes.

Globally, the development sector is entering what some call the "post-project era", where the impact of interventions depends less on discrete outputs and more on how knowledge and data circulate across systems. As development projects do not stay forever due to fixed timelines, what matters is how data outlives the projects that generated it.

The lesson from seven decades of data-driven development is not that we

Data was supposed to make development transparent, but it also made it transactional. What was once only about people gradually became about numbers. Development actors began to design projects that looked "measurable".

comprehension. In many instances, monitoring became a bureaucratic exercise. Data was gathered because it was required, not because it mattered.

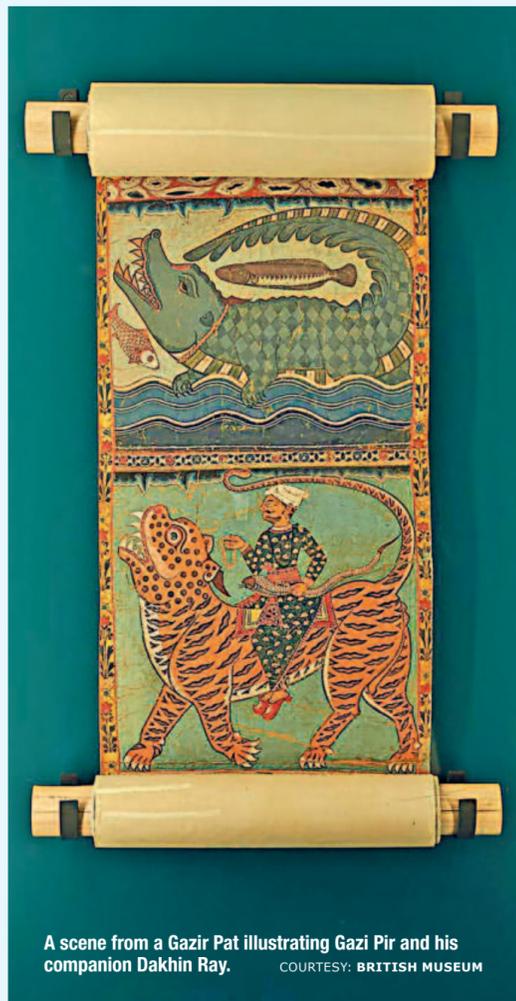
Meanwhile, technology transformed the world of data itself. Satellites, digital surveys, and real-time dashboards were introduced to connect data with decision-making processes more efficiently. "Big data for development" became the new frontier, opening possibilities to predict migration, map poverty, or track deforestation from space. But the reality appeared different: data quality, interoperability,

need more numbers, but that we need better conversations around them. Counting is easy. Connecting is hard. What matters now is not how much we collect, but whether our systems—global, regional, and local—can make sense of what we already have. The question is no longer about data scarcity, but about data governance: who holds it, who uses it, and to what end.

Sabbir Rahman Khan and Md Marjad Mir Kameli work as development practitioners at Swisscontact.

Faith, art, and livelihood in patachitra

The quiet loss of an audio-visual storytelling tradition



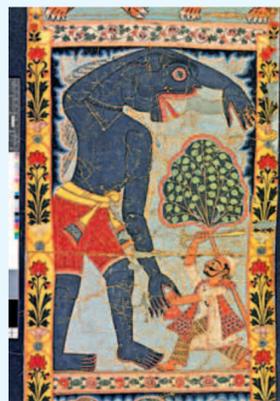
A scene from a Gazir Pat illustrating Gazi Pir and his companion Dakhin Ray. COURTESY: BRITISH MUSEUM

MD RAIHAN RAJU

The Bengali word pat literally means cloth, rooted in the Sanskrit patta, and chitra means paintings. Therefore, the etymological meaning of patachitra corresponds to a form of paintings on cloth. In practice, the term patachitra refers to a distinctive form of Bengali folklore—an indigenous audio-visual storytelling tradition that emerged within the sacred Bengali landscape. This particular Bengali form of storytelling is often translated as scroll painting due to the distinctive rectangular size and shape of the pats. People who are engaged in making patachitra are called patuas, comprising both Hindus and Muslims. Patuas serve as an intersecting node between visual representation and oral narrative, performing an audio-visual storytelling tradition known as pater gan. While performing, the patuas slowly unroll the pats (scrolls) and unfold the corresponding stories, in which the two wings of audio and visual are merged into one body of art—better described as one discursive tradition of knowledge.

Patachitra is considered one of the oldest Bengali forms of audio-visual storytelling; however, there is no historical clarity regarding when it specifically emerged in Bengal. Amid ongoing scholarly debates about its origins, some researchers suggest that patachitra first emerged under Buddhist influence and later absorbed a wide range of narrative traditions—mythological stories, Hindu gods and goddesses, local motifs, characters from the mangal kavya, and elements of Sufi and fakir practices deeply embedded in the Bengali sacred landscape.

Indigenous methods of fabric preparation, natural colour making, drawing patterns, tone, and rhythm have made this tradition distinctive.



From a Pir Pat: Satya Pir appears in a shapeshifting form, frightening the king.

It remained apart from European forms of painting—at least during its inception—as it emerged not merely as an institutional practice of aesthetics but as an indigenous way of crafting and curating social life. Historical evidence shows that, alongside Bangladesh, this form of storytelling is also traceable in the northeastern parts of India, West Bengal, Odisha, and some other regions of South Asia.

In 2010, a group of Hindu and Muslim patuas, also known as chittrakars, gathered in the village of Pingla in the Midnapore district of West Bengal and collectively established a Patua art hub to connect their scroll paintings with both local and global markets.

Bahadur Chitrakar, a patua from Pingla, shared that nowadays the Patua profession no longer exists as it was practised in earlier times. Traditionally, patuas travelled from village to village, performing audio-

visual stories spanning mythological and religious worlds, entertaining both Hindu and Muslim audiences, as patachitra encompassed both cosmological imaginations. Generations of patuas have engaged in this hereditary profession, which relies on oral and visual knowledge. In return for their performances, they made no specific demands; audiences offered rice, vegetables, food, and other exchangeable items. Hence, patuas were once also called beggars, as they did not demand but received gifts.

His reflections make it clear that in earlier times, patachitra functioned not only as a traditional art form but also as a vital source of livelihood. In this way, three dimensions were woven together: the transmission of knowledge, the practice of audio-visual storytelling as a communal art, and the everyday means through which patuas sustained their lives.

In Bangladesh today, patachitra is

described the wide range of pats once in circulation—Gazir Pat, Kazi Kalu, Bonbibi, Pir-Fakir, Manasha Mangal, Sree Krishna, Muharram, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and depictions of many gods and goddesses from the Mangal Kavya tradition—all of which were regarded as sacred objects. For the patuas, any pat that had outlived its use was not stored away but respectfully immersed in a river, in keeping with longstanding customs surrounding sacred materials. Yet, despite these traditions, some historic pats survive today only because they were preserved in European archives, a reminder of the colonial practice of collecting and classifying indigenous storytelling forms.

This storytelling emerged as an intermingling of religious and mythological knowledge, mediating Hindu and Muslim audiences to the religious cosmologies flourishing in the Bengali sacred landscape, marked

Patachitra is considered one of the oldest Bengali forms of audio-visual storytelling, blending religious and mythological knowledge and mediating between diverse audiences and religious cosmologies.

seldom practised or performed, save for a few isolated exceptions. A couple of years ago in the Sundarbans—particularly in the Munshiganj Union—a Bonbibi pat was still used to recount her story. A patua from the area reflected on the long generational history of patachitra in the Bengal delta. He explained that he had learned the craft from his father in childhood, yet in his old age he no longer finds any social interest or audience for it.

He recalled how, as a boy, he would often perform alongside his father and grandfather. He also

by shared devotional knowledge practices. It serves as a medium for transmitting knowledge to new generations. Above all, it seamlessly encompassed art, social life, knowledge, and livelihood—none of which could be mechanically produced or treated as by-products of one another; instead, they thrived as living social practices in a co-conditioned, organically interdependent system.

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

The economic rise of river islands

Northern chars evolved from temporary settlements into thriving agricultural hubs, boosting crops, livestock, and incomes

A 2022 study jointly conducted by Bangladesh Agricultural University and Taif University found that char farmers in northern Bangladesh have rapidly expanded maize, mustard, groundnut, and chilli cultivation, often adopting high-yield varieties because of better market linkages and rising demand

SDILIP ROY

At first glance, the northern chars seem like strokes of accidental geography – as if the sandy patches were never meant to be there. A river slows, sand settles, and a strip of land rises like an afterthought, in shapes no mapmaker could have predicted. One season a thin sandbar; the next, a stretch where grass dares to grow.

For generations, these islands of silt were treated as temporary ground – shifting, unreliable, and potentially gone with the next flash flood. Until two decades ago, families built homes with the hesitation as they knew their walls might float away during the monsoon.

Step into these chars today, however, and a different picture emerges. Long rows of maize and chilli colour the pale, sandy landscape. Cattle graze on tall, glossy grasses rooted in rich alluvial soil. Small bazaars buzz with traders who cross the channels not for relief work, but for business.

Families that once stashed dry rations now confidently talk about yields, livestock prices, and savings. Instead of seeking loans to survive, they now seek investment advice.

Across some dozen districts, including Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Sirajganj, Bogura, Jamalpur, Tangail, Manikganj, Faridpur, and Rajbari, stories of barren land transforming into fertile farmland are no longer just tales.

"After the monsoon, the chars

grow around 130 crops on char lands. Lentils, chilli, sesame, wheat, groundnut, foxtail millet, maize, garlic, and sweet potato dominate the fields. Crops like maize, chilli, and groundnut have become valuable enough that major consumer brands buy directly from char farmers.

"While there is no exact survey of total production, ongoing assessments show that food grains grown on char lands contribute significantly to the national food reserve," Mamun said.

Research confirms these observations. A 2022 study jointly conducted by Bangladesh Agricultural University and Taif University found that char farmers in northern Bangladesh have rapidly expanded maize, mustard, groundnut, and chilli cultivation, often adopting high-yield varieties because of better market linkages and rising demand.

A 2025 study by Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University and Sylhet Agricultural University found that many char farmers now cultivate between 2.5 and 4 acres on average, thanks to improved soil nutrition and shifting river morphology.

LIVESTOCK AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Agriculture alone does not explain the economic surge. Livestock farming, powered by alluvial grasses, has become one of the char economy's strongest pillars. Milk and other dairy products are now regularly supplied to upazila markets.



Daikhowa in Kurigram.

Women now manage most farm and livestock tasks and have embraced crops like maize in the last five to six years, often earning strong profits. Buyers frequently travel to the char to purchase cows, goats, sheep, buffaloes, and poultry.

Almost every char household functions as a small farm, typically keeping 8-20 cows, 6-10 goats, and 8-10 sheep.

"There are around 19 lakh livestock in Kurigram, about 65 percent of which are reared on chars," said Habibur Rahman, Kurigram district livestock officer. "Each char family now earns between Tk 3 lakh and 15 lakh annually from livestock sales. Livestock has made char dwellers self-reliant."

This aligns with findings from the 2022 MDPI study, which observed that mixed farming – crops combined with livestock – significantly increases income stability in char households, especially for women.

IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE AND LIVELIHOODS

Motorised vans, horse carts, and bullock carts now move almost constantly between settlements, where boats were once the only means to cross rivers. A few chars even have semi-paved roads, and many are lit by electricity delivered through submarine cables. These changes are not cosmetic; they cut labour hours, reduce crop loss, and improve household comfort.

"I have 15 bighas of arable land. Seven or eight years ago, most of it was barren. Now I grow crops two or three times a year," said Ansar Ali, a farmer from Char Shakhahati in Chilmari.

With 15 cows, three buffaloes, 10 goats, and eight sheep, he earns around Tk 10 lakh annually from livestock alone, spending only Tk 2-Tk 3 lakh.

Rahmat Ullah, a 68-year-old farmer, recalled a time when they cultivated only paddy, aus, and vegetables using

traditional methods that produced little profit.

Training from NGOs and the Department of Agricultural Extension encouraged adoption of improved techniques. "Now we cultivate all kinds of modern crops on our own and are getting expected yields," he said.

But farmers still grapple with high transport costs cutting into their income. "The wholesalers who come here pay 5-7 percent less than the mainland price, citing higher transportation costs," Rahmat said.

Despite these challenges, economic progress is visible. The potential has attracted mainlanders to buy land and settle on the char.

In Ghughumari Char, Ulipur of Kurigram, 60-year-old Badiar Rahman said families can now afford brick houses, though many avoid them due to erosion risk. "Most people are better off thanks to crops and livestock... Some families have even bought land on the mainland."

His neighbour, Akhtar Hossain, captured the reversal of fortune. "Earlier, we went to the mainland to work as labourers. Now, labourers from the mainland come here. Work is available year-round."

Local markets have grown accordingly. "Markets for crops and livestock from the Brahmaputra chars are thriving. We often pay farmers in advance," said trader Sohrab Ali.

"Char-bred livestock is always in high demand... People in the chars are now financially stronger than many on the mainland," he added.

NGO veteran Ahsanul Kabir Bulu, who has witnessed the transformation firsthand over the last 20 years, noted, "Seven or eight years ago, poverty was widespread. Now people don't ask for loans, they ask for investment advice."

GROWTH AMID FRAGILE GROUND Prosperity in the chars comes with a warning. The same silt that creates new land can erase it overnight. With rivers depositing massive amounts of sediment each year, chars expand

while river channels narrow.

Lack of dredging, upstream hill silt, and blockages in channels are causing new land to emerge – a worrying trend for riverine Bangladesh.

The Water Development Board reports that most major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, Padma, Jamuna, and Meghna, deposit heavy silt annually, pushing new land above the surface.

Char land now makes up about 2.8 percent of Bangladesh's territory, around 2,500 sq km, Prof Shafiqul Islam Bebu of the Kurigram Char Development Committee said, citing studies.

"Studies estimate that 17 to 18 lakh people live on these chars, with around 600,000 in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat alone," he said.

"About 400 sq km are in the Brahmaputra and Teesta basins, 1,000 sq km in the Jamuna basin, 700 sq km in the Padma and Ganges basins, and 400 sq km in the Meghna basin. From Kurigram to Sirajganj and Pabna, the Brahmaputra has over 700 char spots," he added.

Opportunity, however, comes with peril. Char Montola in Kurigram, once home to 350 families, vanished in just two years, swallowed by the Brahmaputra.

"Newly formed char lands bring economic opportunities but also threaten river navigation and ecology... The chars are a lifeline for millions, but they are not permanent. Just as they appear during floods, they can vanish overnight," cautioned Rakibul Hasan, executive engineer of the Kurigram Water Development Board.

Tuhin Wadud, director of Riverine People and professor at Begum Rokeya University, notes that mainstream development policies overlook the distinct challenges of char regions.

"Separate policies are needed for education, healthcare, and communication systems." Improved transport suited to char terrain – horse carts, boats, and low-cost routes – must be ensured," he added.

Dr Abdul Majid Pramanik of the Rural Development Academy emphasised solar-powered irrigation as a way to strengthen agricultural output. "If a separate policy for char development is formulated based on our recommendations, the chars will become a beacon of economic progress."

While most northern chars are under cultivation, only around 30 percent of southern chars are used, leaving vast potential untapped.

Researchers have long described chars as both fertile and fragile – an agricultural gift shaped by erosion and rebirth. While char farmers benefit from fertile silt, they also face persistent threats. Yet none of this deters char residents. They build, rebuild, sow, reap, and start again. Their economy has grown not because the land is stable but because the people are.

As Rakibul Hasan put it, "Rivers erode, chars emerge, but life never stops."



PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

turn into a sea of green. Farmers now grow almost every type of crop here. The soil is so fertile that it needs very little fertiliser or pesticide, yet the yields are excellent," said Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy director of Kurigram Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

He noted that many farmers produce two to three crops a year on land that was entirely barren a decade ago.

FROM ZERO TO 130 CROPS

According to the DAE, farmers now

Small dairy farms line the sandbars, and nearly every household keeps cattle, goats, or sheep. Many families also rear buffaloes, boosting income and living standards.

Women, who traditionally stayed confined to household chores, now play central roles in feeding, tending, and managing livestock income.

"About 10-11 years ago, women were restricted due to superstition. Now women work in the fields from morning till evening," said 55-year-old Nurunahar Begum from Char

