



Ukraine is prepared for any possible developments. Of course, we will work... to ensure peace is achieved, and that it is a dignified peace."

Zelensky on Ukraine peace plan

YOUR RIGHT
TO KNOW

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A taste of
Dhaka: Street
snacks you
shouldn't miss
WR 1



Stories from
the hanging
village
WR 2



A Dhaka weekly
that died without
a bang
WR 3



The lifeline
Bangladesh
must win before
2029
WR 4

KHALEDA'S TREATMENT IN UK Health concerns, air ambulance delay stall plan

Medical board keeping her under 48-hour observation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The plan to send BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to London for advanced treatment has faced a setback following a slight deterioration in her health on Thursday night and a delay in the arrival of an air ambulance.

The medical board overseeing Khaleda's treatment met at Evercare Hospital last night to review her condition.

During the meeting, local and foreign specialists decided to keep her under close observation for 48 hours to assess whether she is stable enough to travel abroad. Prior to reaching this decision, the team conducted several tests and evaluations, according to board sources.



- Khaleda's condition remains critical
- Qatar to rent air ambulance for her
- Zubaida Rahman in Dhaka
- Special prayers held countrywide

Besides, the air ambulance arranged by the Emir of Qatar, scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on Friday night, failed to do so due to technical issues.

Qatar is now supposed to send another air ambulance rented from a German company.

Meanwhile, Dr Zubaida Rahman, wife of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, arrived in Dhaka from London yesterday morning and visited her mother-in-law at Evercare.

She held a meeting with doctors before heading to her Dhanmondi residence. Hours later, she returned to the hospital to attend last night's medical board meeting.

On Thursday, Khaleda's personal physician, AZM Zahid Hossain, said she would leave for London on a Qatari air ambulance by Friday morning.

After it failed to arrive due to technical issues, the Qatar embassy in Dhaka told this newspaper yesterday that the Qatar government has already rented an air ambulance.

"Whenever the medical board decides Khaleda is fit to travel, the air ambulance will fly in from Georgia and take her to London," said Asadur Rahman, public relations officer at the embassy.

The 80-year-old former prime minister has been receiving treatment in the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) at Evercare Hospital since November 23.

She has long been battling multiple health complications, including liver cirrhosis. She has a permanent pacemaker and has previously undergone stent implantations in her heart.

Earlier this year, Khaleda spent four months in London for treatment. She returned home on May 6.

ZUBAIDA IN DHAKA

Zubaida arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning from London on a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight. She went directly to Evercare, where she was welcomed by party leaders and activists.

Zubaida, also a member of the medical board overseeing Khaleda's treatment, spent two and a half hours at the hospital and stayed nearly 40 minutes with Khaleda in the CCU. She then left for her Dhanmondi residence.

She returned to the hospital last night and joined the meeting with the medical board comprising local and foreign specialists.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Putin, Modi agree to boost trade, ties

Sign multiple deals; both sides adopt economic cooperation plan till 2030



REUTERS, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday agreed to expand and diversify trade beyond oil and defence despite Western pressure on New Delhi to scale back its decades-old close ties with Moscow.

India, the world's top buyer of Russian arms and seaborne oil, has rolled out the red carpet for Putin during his two-day state visit, his first to New Delhi since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The trip coincides with New Delhi's talks with the US on a trade deal to cut punitive tariffs imposed by President

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



An illegal three-wheeler drives against traffic on the Aminbazar Bridge in Dhaka. This reckless manoeuvre, which risks a fatal crash, is far from an isolated incident. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Over a hundred factories, including textile, dyeing, printing, and re-rolling mills, discharge untreated, toxic waste into the Buriganga river every day, poisoning this vital waterway. The photo was taken recently near the fire service station in Dhaka's Shyampur.

PHOTO: STAR

Number of fire-prone structures triples in a year

Reveal inspections by fire service; experts call for strict enforcement of safety regulations

2024	2025 (till Oct)
7,568 buildings surveyed	9,000 buildings surveyed
2,731 or 36.08% were at risk of fire	7,987 or 88.74% were at risk of fire

DIPAN NANDY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The number of fire-prone structures across the country has nearly tripled to 7,987 within a year, underscoring a worsening fire safety situation despite repeated warnings from the Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Experts have attributed this to negligence by building owners, inadequate monitoring, and weak enforcement of fire safety regulations.

A nationwide inspection last year found that 2,731 out of 7,568 buildings were at risk of fire. The fire service then notified the owners and instructed them to improve safety measures at the buildings.

From January to October this year, the fire service inspected around 9,000 buildings, of

which 1,435 were marked as extremely fire-prone and 6,552 as fire-prone.

The inspection covered a wide range of establishments, including factories, hospitals, clinics, shopping complexes, educational institutions, and government offices.

According to fire service officials, the number of risky buildings has risen sharply, partly due to an expanded scope of inspection and partly because most of the previously listed buildings remain non-compliant.

A building is classified as risky if it lacks essential fire safety measures such as fire extinguishers, emergency exit stairs, a dedicated water tank, or fire hydrants.

When contacted, Lt Col Tajul Islam

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

TALES OF FREEDOM

Fifty-three years after Bangladesh's independence, countless stories remain untold. Part 3 of this 12-part series tells the story of the brutal killing ground in Hariharpara village in Enayetnagar union of Fatullah, Narayanganj, where thousands were shot dead by the Pakistani army.

A massacre in Hariharpara

AHMAD ISTIAK

Throughout the Liberation War, the oil depots along the Buriganga River in Narayanganj became sites of unspeakable horror.

Witnesses recall how, day after day, trucks would arrive carrying men and women picked up from Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Munshiganj. The men were tortured in makeshift cells during the day, then blindfolded and executed by the riverbank at night.

The women were confined, subjected to rape and torture, and killed if they fought back.

Abdur Rashid Bholi Miya, 75, a survivor, broke down as he remembered: "There was not a single night during the war when they [Pakistan soldiers] didn't kill men or assault women."

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Female migration declines amid abuse, unsafe conditions

MD ABBAS

The migration of female workers abroad has been gradually declining over the last four years due to multiple problems, including the lack of exploration of new labour markets, unsafe working conditions, and abuse in destination countries.

Most of them travel to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan, and Lebanon, where they mainly work as housemaids or garment workers.

According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), 40,088 women have migrated by September this year. Last year, 61,158 women went abroad, while the figure was 76,108 in 2023 and 105,466 in 2022.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, over 100,000 women migrated each year, according to BMET data.

Experts say women are increasingly discouraged from working abroad. Many see their dreams of a better life shattered due to abuse, lack of medical care, forced prostitution, long working hours, insufficient food, and sexual harassment.

Tuly Akhter (pseudonym), a resident of Khulna, spent Tk 1.5 lakh from her savings to travel to the UAE, hoping to earn a better income as a housemaid. However, her dreams soon turned into a nightmare.

Upon arrival in Abu Dhabi, she was taken to the Howard Johnson Hotel in Ajman, operated by Bangladeshi Sayem and Payel, also known as Ranu.

With the help of Payel's mother, Tuly was trafficked into forced prostitution. She recently returned to Bangladesh with the assistance of an NGO.

Tuly is not alone. Many women face similar challenges

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



ART BEYOND GALLERIES

First step towards CAFÉ EXHIBITIONS IN DHAKA

RBR

The possibility of an art exhibition taking place in a popular coffee shop can be as exhilarating as the smell of freshly brewed coffee. The warmth of the coffee diffusing through the air adds an extra dimension to the exhibition itself.

And so, Arabica Coffee Shop at Anabil Tower on Kemal Ataturk Avenue hosted an exclusive exhibition called Beans & Brushes. The show featured paintings by one of Dhaka's most talented artist couples, Fareha Zeba and Saidul Haque Juise.

The private opening celebrated art, culture, and creativity, aiming to support and nurture Dhaka's creative communities. The artists transported their own stories, emotions, and experiences to the café walls, giving their work a new and meaningful



platform while also adding character to the cosy coffee shop.

The exhibition aimed not only to highlight their artistic talent but also to provide visibility and recognition in a space that is not a gallery but a lively coffee place, where art could reach new audiences, spark conversations, and find its way into new homes," says Malika Hossain, founder and CEO of Arabica Coffee.

Artist Saidul Haque Juise adds, "The Arabica Coffee Shop is run by one of our students, and her idea to combine coffee with art had been brewing for a long time. In many places around the world, coffee shops also serve as art galleries, and this has become quite

popular. So why not here? Coffee culture is spreading rapidly in Dhaka, and art in coffee shops should spread along with it."

The goal was simple: visitors could enjoy their coffee while also engaging with art, looking at it, and perhaps feeling a connection.

"Malika spoke to us about this idea repeatedly, asking whether it could be possible. Eventually, we agreed to try it out and see how people responded. The response was encouraging. Many of the people who come here do not usually go elsewhere to see art. Dhaka has become divided in many ways, and people often remain within their own areas," Juise explains further.

The duo has taken the first bold step to bring their art out of galleries to popular cafes. This should encourage fellow artists to explore the possibility of transforming happening spaces into art galleries.

Coffee shops in Dhaka are already vibrant social spaces, drawing young people after work, on weekends, and even during late-night strolls. This culture can be a natural catalyst when paired with an exhibition. It allows young people to engage with art in a casual, familiar setting. Since many cafes are located close to residential areas -- often within walking distance -- the more this idea spreads, the greater its impact on art appreciation.

"Arabica Coffee has created a small vortex here, though only a few paintings can be displayed. Still, it is a beginning. The response has been strong. Visitors are looking carefully, trying to understand the paintings, and trying to connect with them. Although we could not arrange too many works, whatever was possible is being shared with the people who come to the coffee shop," says Fareha Zeba, adding that the paintings will be displayed throughout the month.

"I feel excited, as a teacher who has been moulding school children to practise art, culture, and creative work for the last 25 years, to see how this idea will pan out in introducing a new generation to fine arts exhibitions in everyday spaces. This accessibility to appreciating art in their favourite haunts is precisely why the community is embracing the effort with enthusiasm," Juise concludes.



Number of fire-prone structures triples

FROM PAGE 1

Chowdhury, director (operations) of fire service, said, "Since most owners of the buildings, listed as risky in the past, have not taken steps to improve safety, the number continues to rise, with new ones added every year."

He further said they have scaled up inspections, which have made available more data on risky buildings.

Asked what steps the fire service takes after identifying a risky building, Tajul said, "We serve notices to the building owners. But since we don't have magistracy power, we cannot take immediate action if anyone doesn't comply."

Noting that the fire service prioritizes awareness building, Brig Gen Muhammad Jahed Kamal, director general of the fire service, said "Awareness needs to be raised at all levels. Progress can be achieved if building specific safety and awareness at the individual level are ensured."

WEAK ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

According to section 18 of the Fire Prevention and Extinction Act, 2003, if

Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), the local administration or city corporations, which then assign magistrates to run mobile courts.

"During such drives, we either impose penalties or seal off buildings, depending on their condition."

"We can conduct 30 to 40 mobile courts across the country a month against a requirement for around 400. But to achieve the target, we need magistracy power," he added.

When asked, Md Jahirul Islam, chief executive officer (CEO) of Dhaka South City Corporation, said, "Whenever the fire service asks for magistrates, we cooperate with them."

Muhammad Asaduzzaman, CEO of Dhaka North City Corporation, said they stand ready to provide the fire service with magistrates to run mobile courts.

He further said the DNCC periodically inspects the city corporation markets to assess fire safety measures. "Besides, our head office and regional offices regularly arrange fire drills."

Rajuk officials said they have the authority to conduct drives through

measures typically apply to multi-storey buildings."

In reply to a query, he said, "We are currently revising the building construction regulations. Stricter fire safety measures will be included in the rules to help mitigate risks."

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Fire safety experts have stressed the need for effective safety measures and strict enforcement of regulations to reduce risks.

Brig Gen (retd) Abu Nayem Mohammad Shahidullah, former director general of the fire service, said, "The biggest weakness lies in initial response systems, fire alarms, and water supply -- all of which are part of fire management."

"Fire drills must be conducted regularly in commercial buildings and government establishments. Besides, there should be regular inspections of residential buildings," he added.

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said, "Most buildings in our cities lack effective fire safety systems. Fire risks are further compounded by the negligence

Health concerns, air ambulance delay stall plan

FROM PAGE 1

Khaleda's other daughter-in-law, Syeda Sharmila Rahman, wife of late Arafat Rahman Koko, and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir also visited the hospital last night.

Zubaida's last visit to Bangladesh was on May 6 this year, after nearly 17 years, to meet Khaleda. After spending a month with family members in Dhaka, she returned to London on June 5.

SPECIAL PRAYERS

Special prayers were held across the country for Khaleda's recovery after Juma prayers yesterday.

Fakhrul and other senior leaders participated in a prayer gathering organised in front of the central party office in Nayapaltan.

During the event, Fakhrul said, "Begum Zia dedicated her life to democracy. Her illness began in prison. She became gravely ill due to a lack of proper treatment."

BNP leaders and activists at all levels, along with people from all



Zubaida Rahman visits her mother-in-law BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Evercare Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

strata of life, from the capital and across the country, participated in the prayers.

Prayers were also held in temples,

churches, pagodas, and other places of worship for Khaleda's speedy recovery.

Female migration declines amid abuse

FROM PAGE 1

and are forced to return to escape abuse and unsafe conditions.

BMET receives numerous complaints from returning female workers every year.

A recent study by the Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Programme, titled "A Far Cry from Justice for Migrant Workers," also highlights the widespread abuse and violence faced by women abroad.

The study found that 94 percent of returning women experienced regular physical and mental abuse. Forty-seven percent reported sexual harassment, while 97 percent were denied medical care.

Eighty percent did not receive enough food, and 82 percent worked from early morning until midnight. Fifteen percent were locked in rooms without food or water, and 97 percent were denied weekly leave.

Most female workers did not receive employment contracts before leaving Bangladesh.

BRAC has reported assisting over 100 returnee workers over the last six years, most of whom are women. These workers suffered physical, mental, or sexual abuse, and many experienced severe trauma due to overwork and low pay.

According to the Wage Earners' Welfare Board, the bodies of 412 female migrant workers were returned over the last five years since 2021, with 84 of them having died by suicide.

From 2017 to 2022, 69 percent of female workers' deaths were officially

reported as natural. However, 48 percent of families do not trust the reports, according to the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit.

Migration and refugee expert Asif Munir said women are not adequately prepared to compete abroad, so most of them work as domestic help or garment workers.

"Society still views female migrants negatively. Most female migrants are unskilled, which limits their



40,088 women have migrated by September this year. Last year, 61,158 women went abroad, while the figure was 76,108 in 2023 and 105,466 in 2022, according to the BMET.

opportunities. The government has not provided sufficient training or explored new labour markets. As a result, the number of women going abroad continues to decline," he added.

Shariful Hasan, associate director at BRAC Migration Programme and BRAC Youth Platform, said socially

and nursing, helping them move from unskilled domestic work. Bangladesh has not yet taken any such steps," he said, adding that the government must focus on skill development for women.

"Only skilled women can migrate safely and obtain opportunities abroad to improve their fortunes."

Putin, Modi agree to boost trade, ties

FROM PAGE 1

Donald Trump on its goods over India's purchases of Russian oil.

Russia has said it wants to import more Indian goods in an effort to grow trade to \$100 billion by 2030. It has so far been skewed in Moscow's favour due to New Delhi's energy imports.

Describing India's enduring partnership with Russia as "a guiding star", Modi said: "Based on mutual respect and deep trust, these relations have always stood the test of time."

"...we have agreed on an economic

cooperation programme for the period up to 2030. This will make our trade and investment more diversified, balanced, and sustainable," he told reporters, with Putin by his side.

Modi, who warmly embraced Putin on the airport tarmac when he arrived on Thursday, also reiterated India's support for a peaceful resolution to the war in Ukraine.

Putin yesterday received a ceremonial welcome on the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the colonial-era presidential palace, with a 21-gun salute as his convoy drove in.

From 2017 to 2022, 69 percent of female workers' deaths were officially

Families struggle with rising dengue cases and costs

HELEMUL ALAM

Fifteen-year-old Rahat Miaji, who was recovering from severe electrocution near a madrasa in Chaudhogram, Cumilla, has fallen into danger once again after contracting dengue.

Rahat has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) since Wednesday. He was referred from the district hospital after two days of treatment due to the deterioration in his condition.

"It is a severe blow to us," said his mother, Aysha. "My son had been improving for the last 15 days after remaining in critical condition due to electrocution three months ago. Apart from him, two others were electrocuted, one of whom died after touching the same flagpole that had injured him. Now dengue has put him in danger again."

She said they had already spent around Tk



Dengue cases surge with 394 deaths, over 96,000 hospitalisations

Delayed hospital admission, late referrals increase dengue fatalities

Medical experts stress early detection, decentralised care to reduce deaths

Among the deaths, 181 were reported in Dhaka South City Corporation, 67 in Dhaka North City Corporation, 47 in Barishal,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

4 lakh on his treatment, most of it borrowed from relatives. Dengue fever has now forced the family to take additional loans.

"We are already in debt of about Tk 1 lakh, and now dengue has forced us to borrow another Tk 30,000 for treatment. We are in serious trouble," she said.

Aysha said her husband permanently shut down his tea stall two months ago to care for their son, and the family is now surviving on support from relatives.

Like Aysha, many families are already struggling to make ends meet due to various hardships, and the ongoing dengue crisis has only added to their burden.

According to the DGHS, at least 394 dengue patients have died, while 96,627 others have been hospitalised nationwide as of Thursday morning.

Among the deaths, 181 were reported in Dhaka South City Corporation, 67 in Dhaka North City Corporation, 47 in Barishal,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Buyers crowd a stall selling winter blankets and clothing at the 'Holiday Market', which appears every Friday in front of Motijheel Ideal School and College in Dhaka. Temporary stalls line both sides of the road, offering a variety of affordable items, including leather and jute products. The photo was taken at noon yesterday, a time when the market is typically busiest.

PHOTO: STAR

Looted heavy weapons already recovered
Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



One probe after another, still justice remains elusive

Despite 39 probe bodies and lakhs spent on allowances in JU, most reports are yet to see the light of day

SAKIB AHMED

After last year's mass uprising, students of Jahangirnagar University's law department staged a series of protests demanding the resignation of Associate Professor Tapos Kumar Das and Suprovat Paul, accusing them of physical and mental torture and harassment.

"Those looted arms are being recovered, and the process will continue," he told reporters during a daylong event at the Fire Service and Civil Defence Multipurpose Training Ground in Purbachal, in observance of International Volunteer Day 2025.

He made the remark in response to a question on whether the government had failed to recover SMGs, LMGs, and other lethal and heavy weapons taken from police stations during the 2024 uprising.

The adviser also claimed that all heavy weapons looted at the time have already been recovered.

Asked about the exact number of weapons recovered so far, he said he did not have the relevant list with him at the moment.

Speaking about the recently approved Police Commission Ordinance

SEE PAGE 8 COL 8



Key investigations involving teachers remain pending for over a year

Students accuse the admin of bias and delaying justice

Some people sit on multiple probe committees

Probes into July 14-17 attacks on students remain incomplete

VC cites overwhelming volume of complaints spanning 54 years

Nearly Tk 40 lakh spent on sitting allowances for probe bodies

Faiza Mehjabin, a postgraduate anthropology student, said the delays reflect "a lack of intent and efficiency" within the administration.

Many who previously protested corruption under the former

administration are now part of the current one, she said, but "have not initiated any meaningful investigation into past irregularities".

"The JU administration has repeatedly failed to hold teachers accountable for corruption and abuse of power," added Faiza, also president of Jahangirnagar Sangskritik Jote.

In October last year, another probe body was formed against Associate Prof Md Ikhitar Uddin Bhuiyan after a student alleged that he published her academic article under his own name without permission. One year later, the report is still pending despite an initial 15-day deadline.

Prof Mafruhi Sattar, head of the committee, said they hoped to submit recommendations soon. "We just need to hold a final interview with the accused," he added.

Meanwhile, the university formed three committees last September to investigate the involvement of 229 students, 19 teachers, two officers and one staff member in the Chhatra League attacks on protesting students on July 14-15 and the police assault on July 17 during the mass uprising. These committees were given 30 working days to submit their reports.

While the probe into the students has been completed -- leading to punishment for most of the accused -- the inquiries into

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Khaleda's life in danger due to abuse under Hasina regime
Says Tarique

BSS, Dhaka



BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said autocracy was defeated on December 6, 1990, in the country, which led to the liberation of democracy.

In a post on his verified Facebook page, he said, "December 6 is an unforgettable day. On this day in 1990, the era of autocracy came to an end on a bloody and slippery path."

Tarique Rahman noted that Ershad, on March 24, 1982, broke his professional trust and oath, used force to overthrow elected President Justice Abdus Sattar, killed democracy, and imposed unconstitutional rule.

This subverted the constitutional multi-party politics that was guaranteed by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, he said.

Tarique said, "To bring back democracy, Deshnetri Begum Khaleda Zia tirelessly fought for nine long years with firm determination. She built an unstoppable mass movement. Following this, on this day, December 6, 1990, democracy was liberated by defeating the autocrat through the combined strength of students and the general public."

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MIRPUR ZOO

Lioness escapes enclosure, put back in cage hours after

STAR REPORT



REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO: AFP

A lioness named Daisy got out of her cage at the National Zoo in Dhaka's Mirpur area yesterday afternoon, prompting authorities to evacuate visitors from the premises.

The incident occurred around 4:45pm, zoo director Rafiqul Islam Talukder told The Daily Star.

"The lioness escaped from the cage but was inside a six-feet high netting erected to prevent visitors from entering the compound. We administered sedatives, and a few minutes ago,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Man confesses to raping, killing 8-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A man arrested over the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar on December 2 has confessed to the crimes before a magistrate yesterday, police said.

The accused, Dulal Mia, 29, is from Shankarabad village in the upazila.

Ashraful Alam, judge of the Senior Judicial Magistrate Court of Brahmanbaria, recorded Dulal's confessional statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, said Maksud Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Nasirnagar Police Station.

Later, the judge sent him to jail, the police official said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

3 of a family killed in Faridpur road crash

Biker, pillion die in Jamalpur

STAR REPORT

Four people, including three of a family, were killed and five were injured when a bus rammed into a battery-run easybike on the Dhaka-Barishal highway in Faridpur's Bhanga upazila yesterday.

Three of the deceased were identified as Nurunnahar Begum, 45, of Purba Sadar village in the upazila; her daughter Rimu Akter, 23; and Rimu's two-and-a-half-year-old son, Md Raihan.

The fourth deceased was a male, over 50, who could not be identified immediately. All were passengers of the easybike, said Bhanga Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge Helal Uddin.

The OC said the accident occurred when a Meherpur-bound bus hit the easybike, leaving a total of nine people injured.

On information, police and firefighters rescued and rushed them to Bhanga Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared four of them dead. The bus involved in the accident was seized, but its driver managed to flee, the OC added.

Meanwhile, our Jamalpur correspondent reports, two men were crushed to death, and another was severely injured after a speeding truck ran over the motorcycle carrying them on the Tangail-Jamalpur

Highway in Jamalpur on Thursday night.

SM Nur Mohammad, investigation officer of Jamalpur Sadar Police Station, said the deceased were identified as Babu Ali Dipu, 25, and Rasel Hossain, 24. The injured is Shyamal Mia, 25.

Police said the three friends were returning to town on a motorcycle when a truck ran them over, leaving them critically injured.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals rushed them to Jamalpur General Hospital, where Dr Jamal Uddin, an emergency physician, declared Dipu and Rasel dead on arrival.

Police said the truck was seized after the incident, but the driver fled. "Efforts are underway to identify and arrest him," he added.



Sramik-Karmachari Oikya Parishad brings out a torch procession in front of Jatiya Press Club on Topkhana Road in Dhaka yesterday, protesting a government move to lease out several port terminals to foreign operators.

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NARSINGDI SADAR HOSPITAL

Staff shortage, poor facilities disrupt services

JAHIDUL ISLAM, Narsingdi

The Narsingdi Sadar Hospital has long been grappling with a severe manpower shortage and poor infrastructure.

Although it was upgraded to a 100-bed facility years ago, it still runs with the staff structure of a 30-bed hospital, leaving doctors overwhelmed by the rising number of patients seeking care every day.

Hospital sources said only one medical officer is posted at the emergency department, which receives around 600 patients daily. In the outpatient department, about 2,000 patients visit each day across medicine, cardiology,

further straining services already hampered by staff shortages.

Laboratory and X-ray services remain severely constrained due to a lack of technologists. Several diagnostic tests are unavailable, forcing patients to go to private centres at higher costs.

The infrastructure is in disrepair, with plaster falling from ceilings, discoloured walls and rainwater leaking through the roof.

Although the hospital has two ambulances, there are no sanctioned posts for drivers, so the service is being operated through outsourced staff.

"We have to wait long hours



PHOTO: STAR



dermatology, gynaecology and paediatrics.

As a result, one doctor often ends up seeing 150 to 200 patients, limiting the time available for proper consultations.

Three of the 20 sanctioned posts for doctors and six of the 137 nurse posts remain vacant. Five posts of forward boys and cleaners are also vacant.

Patients complained that doctors cannot give adequate time during consultations, leading to dissatisfaction over the quality of care. The number of admitted patients is often double the hospital's 100-bed capacity,

in line with our children to get a chance to seek consultation in the outpatient department. It is frustrating," said Amena Begum, 45, from Alokbali union.

Ahmed Islam, 27, a patient's attendant, said ambulances are often unavailable during emergencies. "I had requested an ambulance to take my father to Dhaka from Narsingdi, but they only gave excuses. I was forced to hire a private ambulance later on."

Contacted, Dr Farida Golshan Ara Kabir, residential medical officer, said, "We have requested the higher authorities to take steps to resolve the crises soon."

Man confesses to raping

FROM PAGE 3

Citing Dulal's statement, the OC said the incident took place on the night of December 2. Dulal called the child, a class III student and his neighbour, to his home.

He then took her to a nearby abandoned house, raped her, and strangled her to death when she tried to scream.

Dulal told the court that he killed the girl, fearing

that she would disclose the incident, said the OC.

The next morning, locals spotted the child's body and police was notified.

The same day, the victim's father filed a rape and murder case against unnamed suspects.

Later, teams from the Criminal Investigation Department, Police Bureau of Investigation, and Rapid Action Battalion began probing the killing.

"There is no broken or

Dulal was arrested on Thursday noon as his behaviour also appeared suspicious in the aftermath of the incident, said the OC. Sub-Inspector Mahbub Alam Sarkar, the investigation officer, said the child's body was sent to Brahmanbaria 250-bed General Hospital morgue for autopsy, and the exact cause of death will be known once the report is available.

loose grille anywhere. A committee will be formed to investigate the incident," he added. Currently, there are five lions in the Mirpur Zoo.

PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 6

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:15 12:45 3:45 5:19 7:00

JAMAT 5:50 1:15 4:00 5:22 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Lost

I, Upashana Salam, daughter of Abdul Salam, lost my BRAC University Graduation Certificate (2010, ID: 06303002). A General Diary (No. 458) was filed in the Gulshan PS on 7/8/2023. Contact: 01886995551 upashanasalam@gmail.com

she was put back in her cage," he said at 7:20pm.

According to the director, the lioness wandered into an area that is also covered by the zoo's netted safety system.

All visitors who were

NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1433 OF 2025

An application under sections 81(2) and 85(3), read with section 396 of the Companies Act 1994, wherein the Petitioner, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel was pleased to pass an order admitting the same on 14.08.2025. If any related concern or anybody is interested to oppose the said application, he is entitled to do so by an advocate or in person. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned upon payment of prescribed fees.

Khondaker Nazmul Ahsan
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
LEGUM SOLUTIO
Flat No. H-1(1st Floor), Hashnoor Green Cottage 6/4, Segunbagicha, Dhaka

NATIONAL CREDIT AND COMMERCE BANK PLC.

COMMON SERVICES DIVISION
Head Office: NCC Bank Bhaban, 13/1-2, Toyenbee Circular Road
Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, Phone: 223390053
PABX: 223381901-4, 223383981-2, Ext-117

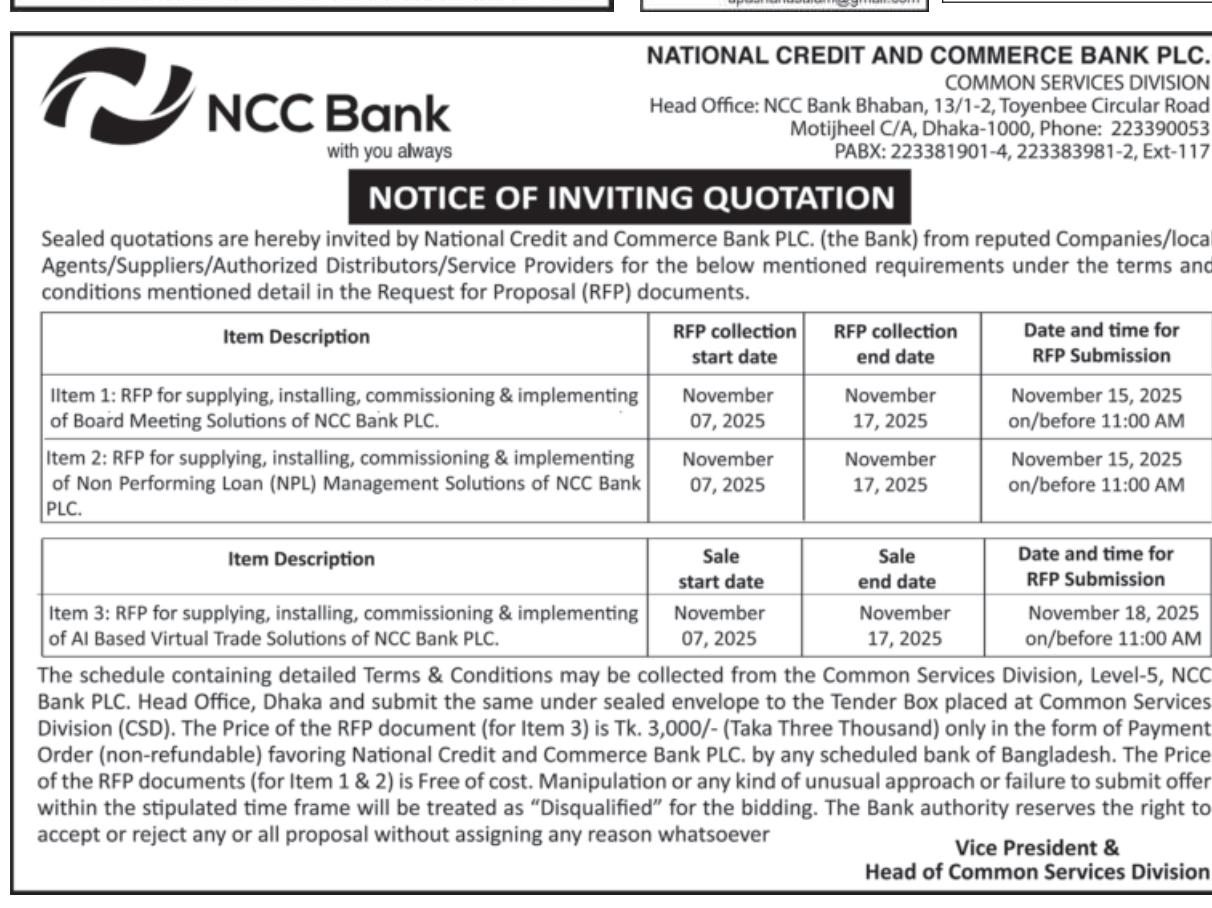
NOTICE OF INVITING QUOTATION

Sealed quotations are hereby invited by National Credit and Commerce Bank PLC. (the Bank) from reputed Companies/local Agents/Suppliers/Authorized Distributors/Service Providers for the below mentioned requirements under the terms and conditions mentioned detail in the Request for Proposal (RFP) documents.

Item Description	RFP collection start date	RFP collection end date	Date and time for RFP Submission
Item 1: RFP for supplying, installing, commissioning & implementing of Board Meeting Solutions of NCC Bank PLC.	November 07, 2025	November 17, 2025	November 15, 2025 on/before 11:00 AM
Item 2: RFP for supplying, installing, commissioning & implementing of Non Performing Loan (NPL) Management Solutions of NCC Bank PLC.	November 07, 2025	November 17, 2025	November 15, 2025 on/before 11:00 AM
Item Description	Sale start date	Sale end date	Date and time for RFP Submission
Item 3: RFP for supplying, installing, commissioning & implementing of AI Based Virtual Trade Solutions of NCC Bank PLC.	November 07, 2025	November 17, 2025	November 18, 2025 on/before 11:00 AM

The schedule containing detailed Terms & Conditions may be collected from the Common Services Division, Level-5, NCC Bank PLC. Head Office, Dhaka and submit the same under sealed envelope to the Tender Box placed at Common Services Division (CSD). The Price of the RFP document (for Item 3) is Tk. 3,000/- (Taka Three Thousand) only in the form of Payment Order (non-refundable) favoring National Credit and Commerce Bank PLC. by any scheduled bank of Bangladesh. The Price of the RFP documents (for Item 1 & 2) is Free of cost. Manipulation or any kind of unusual approach or failure to submit offer within the stipulated time frame will be treated as "Disqualified" for the bidding. The Bank authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposal without assigning any reason whatsoever

Vice President &
Head of Common Services Division



MADARGANJ IN JAMALPUR

School field turns into warehouse

Lease expired last year, but occupier still running sanitary business on playground

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB,
Jamalpur

The playground of Jorkhali Islambabad Wasim Uddin High School in Madarganj upazila of Jamalpur has been occupied for years by a sanitary business, despite repeated notices from the school authorities asking the businessman to vacate the land.

On the southwest side of the school, a tin-shed structure has been erected, filled with sanitary materials that are also scattered around the playground, as seen by this correspondent during a

recent visit.

Locals said M/S Alomgir Enterprise, owned by Alomgir Kabir, has been running the business there for several years after renting the space from the school's former managing committee. The previous committee reportedly leased the spot on a temporary basis for Tk 1,500 per month. The lease agreement expired in 2024.

"Whenever we play on the ground, we often get

hurt by hitting the sanitary materials," said Hasan Murzuza, a ninth grader.

Ninth grader Nabir Hossain said, "Sometimes we can't even enter the field as the space remains occupied by the sanitary items."

Headteacher Azharul Islam said, "The lease agreement has already expired. Moreover, it clearly mentioned that the space must be vacated whenever the school needed it.

We have already issued three formal notices to the business

owner to vacate the space."

He said the school is preparing to take legal action if the place is not vacated soon.

Contacted, Alomgir Kabir said, "The former committee leased me the space under a three-year agreement. The lease agreement expired last year. The school has sent two notices. I'll try to extend the lease if possible."

Sanuar Hossain, upazila secondary education officer in Madarganj, said, "Playgrounds of educational institutions cannot be used for any other purpose. We will investigate the matter and take necessary steps if a complaint is filed."

BNP fully prepared for Feb election
Says Rizvi

STAR REPORT

BNP has finalised all organisational preparations to participate in the national parliamentary election scheduled for February, said Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday.

Speaking to local journalists after the Juma prayers at Sardarpura Jame Mosque in Kurigram town, Rizvi said, "Unless a major national crisis emerges, the election will be held in February as per the schedule announced by the government. The plan is to hold the election before Ramadan. And accordingly, BNP has already completed all preparations to take part in the election."

Addressing questions about the return of Tarique Rahman, Rizvi said, "Tarique Rahman is the leader of the common people of this country. Considering his mother's critical illness, the political reality, and the overall situation, he will return home at an appropriate time. The people are waiting for his return." Earlier, a special prayer was held at the mosque seeking the speedy recovery of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Party leaders, activists, and locals participated in the prayer.

Police Officers Housing Society (POHS), Khilkhet, Dhaka

"EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)"

Inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) from eligible investors, developers, educational institutions to jointly establish and operate a premium English Medium School in Dhaka, following international standards (Cambridge/IB curriculum) in Police Officers Housing Society (POHS)

BOT and profit sharing:

1. Development Model: 33.29 khata land for school & 34.30 khata land for play ground provided by Police Officers Housing Society (POHS)

(A) Build Phase

Developer funds construction of campus, classrooms, labs, library, admin office, playground, transport shed, obtain regulatory approvals, fire & safety, RAJUK related NOCs

(B) Operate Phase

Developer runs the school including: Recruitment of teachers & staff, Branding, marketing, admissions Curriculum delivery, Maintenance of infrastructure

(C) Transfer

Negotiable

02. Profit Sharing Model

After school becomes operational, revenue from tuition fees, hostel fees, transport, admission fees etc. is shared (Negotiable).

Interested Parties Must Submit:

* Organization/Investor Profile

* Proposed Model of Partnership

* Experience in Education or Infrastructure (if any)

* Financial Capacity Declaration

Last date for collection of necessary documents for submission of EOI: 17.00 hrs, 26.12.2025

Final EOI Submission Deadline: 17.00 hrs, 31.01.2026

EOI Submission Email: aig.pohs-1@police.gov.bd

Contact Info (1) Nayer Bin Hossain
Architect, POHS, Level-14,
NCCOM Building, Police
Headquarters, Dhaka.
Phone: 0168 490 3028

(2) Salman Khan
Asst. Eng. POHS Site Office Khilkhet,
Dhaka. Phone: 01750343919

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MD. AZIZUL ISLAM
BP-7205121550
Additional DIG (Development Revenue-1)
Bangladesh Police
And Member Secretary
Project Implementation Committee (PIC)
Bangladesh Police Officers Housing Society
Police Headquarters, Dhaka.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Upazila Engineer

Nawabganj, Dhaka.

www.lged.gov.bd

e-Tender

Invitation e-Tender Notice No :01/2025-26.

MEMO NO: 46.02.2662.000.18.015.25-476

Date: 04/12/2025

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works;

Tender ID	Name of Scheme	Procurement Method	Last selling Date & time	Closing Date & time
1184411	Repair and Renovation work of NAWABGANJ UEO under PEDP4 in			

INTERNATIONAL

AI chatbots can influence voters: studies

AFP, Paris

A brief conversation with a partisan AI chatbot can influence voters' political views, studies published Thursday found, with evidence-backed arguments -- true or not -- proving particularly persuasive.

Experiments with generative artificial intelligence models, such as OpenAI's GPT-4o and DeepSeek, found they were able to shift supporters of Republican Donald Trump towards his Democratic opponent Kamala Harris by almost four points on a 100-point scale ahead of the 2024 US presidential election.

Opposition supporters in 2025 polls in Canada and Poland meanwhile had their views shifted by up to 10 points after chatting with a bot programmed to persuade.

Asim Munir named Pakistan's first chief of defence forces

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan Ministry of Defence yesterday officially notified Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir as the country's first chief of defence forces (CDF), a day after President Asif Ali Zardari approved the appointment on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The notification, a copy of which is available with Dawn, said: "In exercise of the powers conferred under Article 243 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, read with Section 8A of the Pakistan Army Act, the president on the advice of the prime minister, is pleased to appoint Field Marshal Asim Munir (N) M as the chief of army staff, concurrently the chief of defence forces for a tenure of five years."

A separate notification issued by the ministry also notified Zardari's approval of the prime minister's advice regarding the leadership of the air force.

The army chief has been named the first CDF in the most sweeping restructuring of the military command since the 1970s.

The new arrangement consolidates operational, administrative and strategic authority in a single office established through amendments to Article 243 of the Constitution under the 27th Amendment.

The amendment also abolished the office of chairman joint chiefs of staff committee (CJSC).



Rescuers help a woman trapped by floodwaters next to a logging truck in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, yesterday, after heavy rain caused the Citarum River to overflow, submerging homes and the main road.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Trump strategy shifts from global role

Vows 'resistance' in Europe, prioritises eliminating mass migration

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump laid out a radical realignment of US foreign policy yesterday, shifting the longtime superpower's focus from global to regional, brutally criticizing Europe as facing "civilizational erasure" and putting a top priority on eliminating mass migration.

The national security strategy, meant to flesh out Trump's norms-shattering worldview, elevates Latin America to the top of the US agenda in a sharp reorientation from longstanding US calls to focus on Asia to face a rising China.

"In everything we do, we are putting America First," Trump said in a preamble to the long-awaited paper.

Breaking with decades of attempts to be the sole superpower, the strategy said that the "United States rejects the ill-fated concept of global domination for itself."

It said that the United States would also prevent other powers, namely China, from dominating but added: "This does not mean wasting blood and treasure to curtail the influence of all the world's great and middle powers."

The strategy called for a "readjustment

of our global military presence to address urgent threats in our Hemisphere," starting with migration.

"The era of mass migration must end," the strategy said. The strategy made clear that the US under Trump would aggressively pursue similar objectives in Europe, in line with far-right parties' agendas.

The new US security strategy elevates Latin America to the top of Washington's agenda, shifting focus from Asia and China's rise.

It also said the administration would be "cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory within European nations." Germany quickly hit back. The strategy pointed to Europe's slide in share of the global economy -- which is the result largely of the rise of China and other emerging powers -- and said: "This economic decline is eclipsed by the real and more stark prospect of civilizational erasure."

Such sensitive

FROM PAGE 12

said, "The Arakan Army is not a state entity. Therefore, it is not possible to hold formal bilateral discussions with them. However, since our national interest is involved, the matter is being looked into seriously."

Touhid further announced that a 1,000-bed hospital funded by China, initially planned for Dhaka, will now be set up in Nilphamari. "The plan

to widen travel ban

FROM PAGE 12

as tourists, students and business travelers. Noem did not specify which countries would be added to the list.

Trump's administration on Thursday also cut the validity of work permits for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants to 18 months from five years.

The move came after two National Guard members were allegedly shot last week by an Afghan man who entered the United States as part of a resettlement program following the American

has been designed in such a way that people from the Rangpur division, as well as from India, Bhutan, and other neighbouring countries, can receive medical treatment here," he said.

Highlighting the lack of industries in Rangpur, he stressed that employment remains the region's biggest challenge. "We are moving ahead with plans to create jobs and attract investment," he added.

military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

Joseph Edlow, director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), cited the November 26 shooting in the US capital as reason for the work permit move.

"Reducing the maximum validity period for employment authorization will ensure that those seeking to work in the United States do not threaten public safety or promote harmful anti-American ideologies," Edlow said in a statement.

Argentina, Brazil

FROM PAGE 12

Haaland's Norway in Group I, which will be completed by an intercontinental play-off winner from either Iraq, Bolivia or Suriname.

The 2026 tournament will be held across the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, with 16 more teams added to the global showpiece, up from the 32 nations involved in Qatar in 2022.

That means a total of 104 matches, compared to 64 games last time.

While the US will host

Xi woos Macron with sightseeing trip

REUTERS, Beijing

Chinese leader Xi Jinping accompanied French President Emmanuel Macron to Chengdu yesterday, a rare gesture seemingly reserved for the head of Europe's second-largest economy that highlights Beijing's focus on Paris in its ties with the European Union.

Even when US President Donald Trump made a landmark visit to China early during his first term in 2017, and Xi lavished him with a private dinner within Beijing's Forbidden City, the trip was confined to the Chinese capital.

But despite the apparent bonhomie between Xi and Macron, the French president's visit so far has resulted in little beyond bolstering Beijing's diplomatic credentials, as world leaders turn to China seeking economic assurances due to Trump's tariffs, analysts say. It has also provided Macron with a

chance to project statesmanship after a tough summer in domestic politics.

Investors are watching to see whether a day that began with the French president surprising fellow joggers in the city's Jincheng Lake Park, before joining Xi at a historic dam site, will end with major commercial deals or a thaw in EU-China trade tensions, given that

Macron has been joined on his fourth state visit to China by the heads of some of France's biggest firms.

A meeting in the Chinese capital on Thursday only resulted in 12 cooperation agreements covering areas such as population ageing, nuclear energy and panda conservation, and no monetary total was disclosed.

"I think they (France) thought that Xi would be in a position to offer a lot because Europe is really preparing this economic security doctrine," said Alicia Garcia-Herrero, senior fellow at the think tank Bruegel.



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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Road Division, Narail.

www.rhd.gov.bd

Reference: 35.01.6500.450.07.004.25-2295/3(29)

Date: 04/12/2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of:

Tender ID	Tender Package No and Description	Last selling Date and Time	Closing & Opening Date and Time
1183783	e-GP/EE/NRD/Rev./04/2025-2026 Supplying of best quality 1st Class Bricks for Routine Maintenance Work of different Roads at RHD Stackyard under Road Division Narail During the year 2025-2026.	17-Dec-2025 17:00	18-Dec-2025 12:00
1183785	e-GP/EE/NRD/Rev./05/2025-2026 Supplying of best quality Pakur Stone (20mm & 12mm), Sylhet Sand (F.M-2.50), Local Sand (F.M-0.50) & Fire Wood for Routine Maintenance Work of different Roads at RHD Stackyard under Road Division Narail During the year 2025-2026.	17-Dec-2025 17:00	18-Dec-2025 12:30

- 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 Member of Schedule Banks for e-GP.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Sharifuzzaman
Executive Engineer
Phone: 02-479942042
e-mail: xen.bagerhat@lged.gov.bd

GD-2569

Md. Badsha Miya
Sub-Assistant Engineer, RHD
Road Sub-Division, Narail.

GD-2568

Md. Nazrul Islam
ID No. 60226
Executive Engineer, RHD
e-mail: cenararhd@gmail.com

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 6, 2025

AGRAHAYAN 21, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

5

Digital Bangladesh's governance failures

White paper unmasks corruption and patronage in ICT projects

The government-commissioned white paper on Bangladesh's much-publicised journey towards "Digital Bangladesh" has delivered a sobering verdict. What was once marketed as a transformative national project has now been revealed—through the task force led by Professor M Naz Asadullah—to be mired in systemic governance failures, entrenched corruption, and pervasive political capture. The conclusion drawn by the task force, after reviewing 52 ICT Division projects, should worry anyone concerned with the country's development trajectory.

The white paper documents how political influence seeped into the very architecture of the previous Awami League government's digital modernisation drive: at least 12 major projects and 65 components were named after political personalities or directly leveraged for partisan visibility. Flagship connectivity initiatives such as Info Sarker II and III devolved, in the report's words, into "a textbook case of triple rent seeking." The Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority—tasked with fostering innovation and industrial diversification—fared no better. Instead of nurturing a technology ecosystem guided by demand and feasibility, the authority found itself redirected towards political pageantry and patronage. IT parks and training centres were launched not on the basis of market need, infrastructure readiness or the capacity to attract tenants, but on where they could deliver the most partisan mileage.

Irregularities revealed, includes: equipment priced at up to four times the global rate, cartel-like vendor networks, manipulated tenders, weakened state control over critical infrastructure, and an unhealthy reliance on private monopolies in connectivity projects. To shield themselves from scrutiny, some project authorities allegedly adopted "dual governance" models that enabled donor-affiliated consultants to influence procurement and programme design. Even education-focused initiatives such as the Sheikh Russel Digital Lab (SRDL) and School of Future were found to be non-functional. Meanwhile, the Digital Sylhet City Project has been one of the stinkiest examples of politicised failure. Conceived as an urban connectivity solution, it collapsed under the weight of patronage politics. Wi-Fi coverage reached less than five percent of targeted beneficiaries, and no agency accepted responsibility for its operations. These failures represent more than just wasted public funds—they constitute a profound lost opportunity for young Bangladeshis as the world accelerates into an era defined by digital capability. Reviewing one of the most celebrated projects of the previous regime is a necessary step towards understanding how the absence of democratic accountability erodes public institutions and drains scarce national resources. It shows that patron-client politics does not simply distort priorities; it often cripples entire governance mechanisms. The interim government must take the task force's recommendations seriously. And political leaders—whether in office or aspiring to be—would do well to absorb the lesson at the heart of this white paper: without transparency, oversight, and genuine accountability, no grand vision, however dazzling in rhetoric, can deliver the transformation it promises.

Stop industrial waste from ruining our farmlands

Unregulated wastes are contaminating crops in Savar and Dhamrai

A recent Prothom Alo report on farmlands in Savar and Dhamrai upazillas offers a stark picture of how unplanned industrial expansion is erasing agricultural land and the livelihoods built on it. Farmers who once harvested enough paddy to sustain their families now stand in fields submerged in foul smelling industrial wastewater. Fertile land has turned into black, stagnant marshes where paddy cannot take root, and where even standing barefoot brings skin infections. Test results, jointly analysed by Prothom Alo and Jahangirnagar University laboratories, reveal excessive phosphate, nitrate, ammonia and dangerous levels of heavy metals in water and soil. This contamination is near-lethal for aquatic life and deeply harmful for crops.

Industrial pollution has spread across Dautia and Jaipura mouzas of Dhamrai and areas of Koltashuti mouza in Savar. Drainage canals have been filled or encroached upon, factory effluents are channelled into low-lying plots, and persistent waterlogging has rendered hundreds of acres uncultivable. Farmland in Dhamrai has shrunk by more than a thousand hectares in less than a decade, while Savar has lost more than double that. During the same period, the number of factories in these two upazillas increased from 1,094 to 1,832. Heavy metals from tanneries, dyeing units, pharmaceutical factories and ceramic industries—chromium, cadmium, nickel and lead—have seeped into soil, rivers and crops. Studies on the Turag and Bangshi rivers confirm concentrations beyond World Health Organization (WHO) limits. The results are visible in declining yields, empty rice grains, altered crop quality and a growing fear among farmers that their land is being poisoned into permanent uselessness.

Factory owners have long been allowed to flout environmental regulations, often without installing effluent treatment plants. Local administrations act only after complaints, rarely through preventive monitoring. Farmers say that when canals are filled illegally or wastewater is diverted into fields, those responsible face no meaningful consequences. Smallholders are now being forced to sell ancestral land at throwaway prices to the very industries causing the damage.

The crisis demands decisive political will. Factories discharging untreated waste must face immediate punitive action, including shutdowns for non-compliance and the cancellation of licences. Drainage canals must be restored and protected from future encroachment. Coordinated monitoring of water and soil—across both dry and monsoon seasons—should be mandatory, along with public reporting to ensure transparency. Finally, the government must enforce land use laws and expedite agricultural land protection legislation. Unless action is taken now, more farmers will be pushed out of agriculture, and the country risks losing vital food producing land to reckless industrialisation.

EDITORIAL

The primary teachers' strike is a mirror held up to Bangladesh



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

A primary school teacher on strike was seen bleeding profusely from the wounds inflicted by the agitated guardians who blamed him and his colleagues for turning their wards into hostages to push for better pay and benefit. There was a lot to unpack from the image. As I scrolled down to the comment section, there was no sympathy for the striking teacher or protest against the violence. "Good, he deserves it" reads one comment. What does such a reaction say about where our sympathies lie as well as how our institutions fail? This crisis over primary school exams operates across four interlocking axes: ethical, financial, moral, and political. And none, it seems, can be solved in isolation.

The teachers have the legal right to indulge in civic protest. But is it ethical to do so by compromising their primary duty towards their students? Additionally, what about the children's rights to education enshrined in the Unesco mandate? Adults' financial concerns should not infringe on the basic rights of children, who are right-bearing entities. The cry for a raise is not unique to the teachers: inflation and household costs have hit every sector. Then again, is it moral to use exams as bargaining chips with children as the currency? Is it ethical to betray the guardians who have entrusted their children, hoping the teachers will ensure their education? The guardians feel the added pressure that the disruption caused by the teachers will create a session lag costing more both in terms of time and money. Conversely, the striking teachers can well argue that their demands are far from sudden. They have voiced their resentment over pay grade anomalies, promotion bottlenecks, and perceived humiliation relative to other cadres in different forums and formats. Regular political dialogues have failed, and the failure of preventive governance has now pushed the teachers towards last-minute brinkmanship around exams. So, it is necessary to reflect on the issues that gave rise to the current situation.

The assistant teachers of 65,000-plus government primary schools

have been pressing for a three-point demand. They want to upgrade their pay scale (from grade 13 to grade 10/11), resolve higher-grade benefits after 10 and 16 years of service, and ensure 100 percent departmental promotion from assistant to head teacher. The protest intensified in November with a call for the complete shutdown and boycott of the annual exams starting December 1.

As a result, many schools failed to hold exams. In some cases, the headmaster, with assistance from guardians, held or invigilated the



FILE PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

In the long run, we must develop a contingency plan for dispute resolution so that classrooms aren't used as bargaining arenas.

exams. The authorities served legal notices to absent teachers, issued transfer orders, and even threatened to take actions under criminal law. Social media is rife with images of heated arguments, scuffles, or symbolic acts (tearing up question papers, locking school gates, shouting matches with head teachers or local officials).

I wish the conflict was a mere sectoral wage dispute. It is a confrontation staged on the bodies and futures of children. The guardians and teachers are only addressing a small portion of the problem, while the teachers' councils continue to battle the financial issue with the overburdened interim government.

have come to the scene, the patience of the government has withered away. And they responded, not with carrots, but with sticks. And some teachers lost their last vestige of prestige by grasping the feet of marauding police constables. The irony lies in the expectation of low-paid teachers to uphold the moral standards of those unaffected by pay rigidity.

Head teachers and local government officials intervened to provide a lifeline. Caught between ministry orders and teacher resentment, they allowed exams to continue, creating friction with both groups. The crisis also showed the urban/rural rift where the city-based guardians tend to react more assertively than the rural ones.

In this tussle, parents blame teachers, educators blame the ministry, and children remain voiceless.

The same ethical scripts were seen earlier, where the bargaining chips were patients during the health sector strike, passengers during transport blockades, or ordinary citizens as collateral damage in struggles between organised groups and the state. Can we call this yet "another government-versus-everyone stand-off" a "labour dispute"?

The deeper political truth is uncomfortable. All the promises of reform were doomed because everyone wants a slice of the pie. Nobody wants to bake it. They believe that the only way to achieve something is by making disruption unbearable. The formula is simple. Negotiation requires disruption. Unless you block a road or boycott an exam, no one listens. Primary teachers have attempted to follow the national strategy. But by the time they

The announcement of the strike's suspension serves as a rehearsal for a mediated agreement. In a few weeks, we will go back to an uneasy calm, and our teachers will return to their classes pretending nothing had happened. The cracks, however, will remain unhealed and unattended.

A more honest approach would require endorsing a teacher pay scale that maintains transparency and parity; developing a contingency plan for dispute resolution so that classrooms aren't used as bargaining arenas; and creating exam alternatives to protect children from the adult's power struggles. After all, schools exist for children. They shouldn't be used as pawns in our political game. The other stakeholders of the school are our teachers, who must be respected as essential workers building the nation's foundational blocks. Treating them like vocational workers cannot be beneficial for the country's future.

The image of a bleeding teacher, cursed by the public with no moral support to hold him, is a national crisis. We can consider it an outburst of the guardians' anger or frustration over their fear for their children's future or a self-reflective concern about paying more for coaching or an extra year caused by the teacher's work absence. Regardless, the hostility mirrors how there is a structural faultline that causes occasional tremors in our social life—an issue not unique to the primary teachers' protest but a cross-sectoral phenomenon affecting our country.

Let's uplift the women who build our city



Major Shajeda Akter Moni
is deputy director at Research Centre of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).

SHAJEDA AKTER MONI

Each morning, long before the city awakens, I envision the women who bear its bones—the bricks, the sand, the mortar—in their hands and upon their heads, walking into the dawn of Dhaka. They are the unseen architects of our skyline, yet so frequently overlooked in every discussion of the city's future. Their faces are weary, their backs bear the load of society's disregard. Yet they rise—sisters, mothers, daughters—constructing not merely buildings, but hope. How may Dhaka truly flourish without nurturing those who hold it up?

The difficulties these women endure are daunting. A whopping 78 percent toil under verbal agreements without contracts or protection, and nearly none enjoy proper sanitation, safety equipment, or maternity leave—according to researchers at South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (Same). Almost none of these workplaces have toilets, which forces women to endure unimaginable discomfort, jeopardising their physical well-being, and stripping them of dignity. Added to this, the sun burns them mercilessly, with no respite given even in the most sweltering heat.

Sorrow calls for action, not sympathy. It is within our power

to change their lives with tangible measures that are equal parts straightforward and humane.

Let us first formalise their work. Start by registering all women on construction sites, even under a rudimentary ID system. This acknowledgement is not symbolic: it opens doors to healthcare, accident compensation, decent wages, and access to labour protections. Bangladesh's Industrial Policy promotes formalising the informal sector; this is the time to apply it to them.

Second, render worksites gender-responsive. Each site must have a hygienic toilet, shaded resting area, drinkable water, and private corners where women may take a breather. These are not indulgences; they are rights.

Third, offer heat relief and mobile health care. When the heat rises, cooling centres or shaded rest areas with first aid close to work sites can be lifesavers. Even simple water stations would be the difference between falling apart and continuing to construct our city.

Fourth, create childcare options. These women often juggle bricks and babies. Trusted, community run

daycare centres near construction hubs can give them the peace of mind to work without guilt or distraction—and their children the security they deserve.

Fifth, we need to provide training and upward mobility skills. Most come into the industry as unskilled workers and thereby decreasing their bargaining potential and options.

Dhaka cannot be built on bones that break. Let us not only recognise these women's labour, but uplift it through dignity, safety, and opportunity. Encourage collaboration between city planners, health departments, labour ministries, and women's wings to ensure their inclusion in every relief plan, design proposal, and training initiative.

Classes could be conducted in evenings or on weekends by women trainers so that the women can earn while they learn.

Sixth, provide social protection and representation. Workers are threatened with eviction, irregular payment, and harassment. Their representation in labour unions must be strengthened and their voices heard in policymaking.

Seventh, change public perceptions through storytelling. Social stigma still surrounds women in male-

dominated spaces. Let's make their presence normal through stories and media—a mother working for her child's education, a daughter saving for tuition fees, a neighbour providing shade and water. These stories can create empathy and respect, not sympathy.

Eighth, utilise NGOs and microfinance networks. Institutions such as the Bangladesh Homeworkers Women Association (BHW) have a long history of organising informal sector women workers. Collaboration with them can promote micro-credit schemes, health funds, and community savings groups—all based on trust and local accountability.

Ninth, it is necessary to integrate them into gender policy structures. Informal women construction workers must be included in all reports, strategies, and budgeting decisions.

Dhaka cannot be built on bones that break. Let us not only recognise these women's labour, but uplift it through dignity, safety, and opportunity. Encourage collaboration between city planners, health departments, labour ministries, and women's wings to ensure their inclusion in every relief plan, design proposal, and training initiative.

Such actions should not be categorised as acts of charity; rather, they represent investments. These investments result in more robust, healthier, and inclusive growth. When women construct Dhaka under equitable circumstances, they create not merely housing but also resilience. When they are recognised, safeguarded, and empowered, they serve as the cornerstone of our collective future.

'Air pollution does not discriminate; it impacts everyone'

Pema Gyamtsho, director general of Nepal-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), shared his views with **Porimol Palma** of **The Daily Star** on the challenges and potential solutions to air pollution during a workshop in Nepal in late November.

According to a Lancet report this year, Bangladesh recorded 225,000 deaths linked to air pollution in 2022. The situation is similar in other South Asian countries. Could you tell us more about this?

We cannot attribute all deaths directly to air pollution because it is not like someone shooting another person. Air pollution kills gradually, often in combination with other factors. However, it is one of the leading causes of mortality, including premature deaths. In South Asia—one of the most polluted regions in the world—air pollution is a major cause of premature deaths and illnesses such as tuberculosis, cancer, and more. It also impacts quality of life; people with respiratory diseases suffer constantly. Statistics from Nepal indicate that air pollution reduces the average life expectancy by three to four years. This is likely true for many countries in the region.

Air pollution also creates social and psychological impacts—schools close, children remain indoors, flights are disrupted, tourism declines, and businesses sometimes shut down because people cannot go outside. Seasonal pollution from wildfires and the burning of crop residue can be severe and cause major economic damage. Pollution also harms agriculture; plants covered in dust or black carbon cannot photosynthesise properly.

What are the main causes of air pollution in this region?

At the household level, many families still lack access to clean cooking energy. They burn firewood, biomass, or even dried dung, especially at high altitudes. Indoor cooking is a major problem, with many remote homes having poor ventilation. In urban centres such as Kathmandu, Delhi, Dhaka, and Karachi, the transport sector is a significant contributor, particularly through fossil fuel use. Industries, including brick kilns and cement factories, emit large quantities of fine

particulate matter like PM2.5. Workers in these sectors are among the most vulnerable. Wildfires, whether deliberate or accidental, particularly in March and April, also significantly degrade air quality. These are some of the principal causes.

Many of these factors are related to the economy. We cannot shut down industries or transport immediately. Where can we begin?

It's true, we cannot halt these overnight, but we must find ways to address them. Some issues are behavioural. For example, people still burn rubbish even when waste collection services are available. These practices can be changed. There is a significant shift towards electric vehicles, but we need to go further. Cities like Kathmandu and Dhaka should prioritise developing public transport systems, such as electric buses or trams. Individual electric vehicles alone will eventually congest roads. Countries like Nepal and Bhutan have abundant hydropower and should invest in clean, mass transit options.

Electricity is available for clean cooking, but cost remains a challenge for poor households. Governments must prioritise subsidising clean cooking technologies; many still rely on kerosene or other fossil fuels. Public transport subsidies, cleaner industrial technologies, and affordable solutions are vital. Technology exists—in Nepal and Pakistan, brick kilns have successfully been converted to ZigZag technology, reducing black carbon emissions by around 60 percent and carbon dioxide by about 50 percent. Bangladesh is also promoting this. We need to expand these initiatives.

Pollution is transboundary. For example, polluted air blows from Punjab and Lahore into Bangladesh. How should we address this?

Many pollution sources are not local; emissions drift across borders. We need an airshed approach, similar to a watershed approach. An airshed is the shared airspace linking emission sources to their final sinks across regions. That's why we are working across the Indo-Gangetic plains, Himalayas, and foothills, bringing together Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan for real-time data sharing. We need standardised monitoring, measurement, and modelling systems so that data collected in Kathmandu can be understood in Bhutan or Bangladesh. Our monitoring working group, starting in 2022, is developing this capacity.



Pema Gyamtsho

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What progress have you made over the past two years?

We have made significant progress. The first step was recognising that air pollution requires a regional, transboundary approach because air does not respect borders. In December 2022, we held a stock-taking conference with reports from all countries and developed the Kathmandu Roadmap for Air Quality Improvement, supported by the World Bank and other partners, such as the

UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). We identified key stakeholders and shared best practices. In 2023, in Thimphu, Bhutan, we held the second science and policy dialogue, involving banks and the private sector. One key recommendation was to include finance in the strategy. Now, we have a science, policy, and finance dialogue, and three thematic working groups focused on monitoring, solutions, and investment. We are also planning a fourth group on communication to connect all stakeholders.

Cooperation at the regional level often faces fragmentation. How do you see this cooperation evolving?

We must be opportunistic. Air quality is one of the least politically contentious issues in the region. Everyone recognises its profound impact on health, environment, climate, and economy. This consensus provides a strong

First, we must help ourselves. If developed countries see us taking action, they are more likely to support us. Waiting passively for aid won't lead anywhere. Countries like India and China are investing heavily in renewable energy and electric mobility. Nepal has one of the highest per capita electric vehicle use, and Bhutan and Nepal are rich in hydropower. These examples reflect commitment. Historically, developed nations have moved many polluting industries to our region, cleaning up their own backyards. Now, they need to support us in cleaning ours. This isn't begging—it's justified. Their support should focus on technology transfer, affordable clean technologies, targeted investments linked to emission reductions, and measurable outcomes. We must demonstrate our own commitment and provide evidence of progress.

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You emphasise communication. How can the media contribute?

We want the media to be a key partner. Scientific data needs to be translated into policy, practice, and public awareness. Journalists can communicate in local languages and accessible formats. The media should act as a bridge between science, policy, and communities. That's why I propose including communication as a key pillar in the dialogue on air pollution.

How agricultural innovations can feed a nation and keep emissions low



MOHAMMAD KAMRUZZAMAN MILON

For five decades, Bangladesh's agriculture has powered food security and rural livelihoods, yet climate change now threatens that success. Average temperatures have risen by 0.24 degrees Celsius per decade since 1981 and could climb another 1.5–2 degrees Celsius by mid-century according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) and IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). Rainfall is erratic, groundwater is declining, and salinity, drought, and flash floods increasingly converge. My own analyses across Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) research stations show rice yields could fall by 15–20 percent unless irrigation, fertiliser, and varietal strategies are re-engineered for resilience.

The data are sobering, but they also reveal how transformation is possible. Over the past decade, field trials in Gazipur, Rajshahi, and Sylhet proved that a portfolio of low-carbon agronomic practices—Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD), Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), short-duration stress-tolerant varieties, and the locally fabricated Prilled Urea Applicator (PUA)—can simultaneously raise yields, conserve resources, and cut greenhouse-gas emissions. As documented in an article in *Rice Today*, these innovations show that Bangladesh can pioneer climate-smart intensification: producing more rice with less water, energy, and carbon.

Precision water, smarter nitrogen
The irrigation method AWD is one of the most promising interventions for rice cultivation. In Bangladesh, multi-location experiments during 2018–19 found that AWD reduced cumulative methane (CH₄) emissions by approximately 37 percent compared to continuous flooding, while grain yields were unaffected. Meanwhile, global meta-analysis indicates AWD reduces CH₄ emissions by approximately 51.6 percent and global-warming potential (GWP) by almost 46.9 percent, though nitrous oxide emissions increase by 44 percent. The broader water-saving potential of AWD is supported in Bangladesh: pilot work reports water savings of approximately 25–30 percent in regions where farmers pay volumetrically for irrigation. However, widespread adoption

remains constrained by three critical enablers: reliable electricity for pumps, disciplined scheduling of dry-rewet cycles, and transition to volumetric water billing instead of flat per-area charges. Without these enablers, AWD's full potential will remain restricted to demonstration plots rather than scaling across the national rice landscape.

The second innovation DSR replaces labour- and fuel-intensive puddled transplanting and has been shown to reduce methane emissions by up to 47 percent and save both diesel and groundwater. Yet its national adoption rate remains below 10 percent. At pilot sites in Rajshahi and Bogura, DSR plots reduced irrigation cycles from 10 to six, but weed management and lack of mechanised seeding remain major constraints. Without affordable seed drills and technical guidance, most farmers are reluctant to risk an entire season's harvest.

A third frontier in rice sector innovation is genetic adaptation. Short-duration and stress-tolerant varieties, for example, BRRI dhan74, BRRI dhan81 and BRRI dhan84 (maturing in about 120–135 days), allow farmers to escape late-season heat or flood damage. Coastal strains such as BRRI dhan97 and BRRI dhan99 have been developed for high-salinity environments. Meanwhile, submergence-tolerant varieties such as BRRI dhan51 and BRRI dhan52 have demonstrated survival for up to two weeks under water. When these genetic tools are integrated with irrigation practices like AWD or DSR, there is a dual benefit—mitigation (via reduced flooding duration) and adaptation (via risk avoidance).

Finally, the PUA exemplifies Bangladesh's capacity for frugal, high-impact innovation. Developed by BRRI engineers and refined through field trials I have supervised since 2016, this lightweight device delivers prilled urea precisely to the crop's root zone. It enhances nitrogen-use efficiency by around 30 percent, cuts nitrous-oxide emissions by 10–20 percent, and typically boosts rice yield by about 10 percent. Considering that rice cultivation uses roughly 25 lakh tonnes of urea annually in Bangladesh, nationwide deployment of the PUA could reduce

fertiliser demand by nearly 7.5 lakh tonnes each year—saving over \$300 million while simultaneously lowering import costs and agricultural greenhouse-gas emissions.

From relief to resilience finance

Technology is not the main barrier in adopting these practices, finance and governance are. Farmers rarely profit from saving water, face frequent power outages, and lack credit for mechanisation. Although

labour hours. Digital advisory tools—Khamari App, Krishoker App, and e-Krishi—further improve decision-making and credit access. Embedding gender and youth indicators in national monitoring systems will ensure that participation is measurable and rewarded. For instance, the Khamari App's recommendations led to about 18 percent reduction in fertiliser cost and about six percent yield increase in Boro trials.



Smart irrigation and nutrient management can halve the climate penalty on rice yields.

agricultural lending has grown (with a target of Tk 380 billion in FY 2024–25), climate-related allocation to 25 ministries in FY 2026 was lower than the previous fiscal year.

What we need is National Risk Mitigation Facility—a blended fund pooling government, banking, and donor capital to underwrite climate-smart loans and weather-index insurance. A linked digital finance dashboard between the Ministry of Agriculture and Bangladesh Bank could track every climate-smart agricultural (CSA) loan against hazard maps and gender inclusion metrics. Such integration would turn resilience data into bankable collateral.

Lightweight mechanisation reduces women's labour burden, while youth-run service hubs are emerging as viable enterprises. Female farmers using the PUA reported saving roughly one-third of fertiliser

Evidence from the climate frontline
Crop-modelling simulations project that Boro yield can decline by about five percent by 2030s and 20 percent by 2050, with smaller but significant losses for Aman and Aus. Combining AWD, stress-tolerant varieties, improved drainage, and staggered transplanting can recover 10–15 percent of these losses. In short, smart irrigation and nutrient management can halve the climate penalty on yields.

But Bangladesh is not uniform. The Barind uplands face heat and drought; the haor basin suffers flash floods; coastal deltas battle salinity and cyclones; and southeastern hills erode under heavy rain. Each landscape requires a tailored CSA "menu": heat-tolerant rice with micro-insurance in the Barind, drainage and submergence-tolerant cultivars in the haor, salt-tolerant varieties with solar

drainage in the coast, and agroforestry in the hills. One policy cannot fit all.

Five strategic measures can help tackle the challenge. First, ensure that climate and satellite datasets from the BMD and Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization are publicly available. Open data will empower financial institutions, insurers, and researchers to quantify risk, design climate-linked credit, and verify carbon-saving outcomes across agriculture. Second, integrate verified efficiency and mitigation indicators—such as AWD, DSR, and PUA—into the agricultural credit scoring framework of the Bangladesh Bank. Linking finance to verified resource efficiency will reward innovation and accelerate low-emission farming. Third, introduce performance-based incentives that pay farmers per tonne for carbon-dioxide-equivalent reduction through climate-smart practices such as AWD, DSR, or mechanised fertiliser deep placement. A digital finance dashboard jointly managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Bangladesh Bank could automate these payments and ensure transparent tracking. Fourth, expand concessional credit and capacity-building programmes for women mechanisation entrepreneurs and youth-led agri-tech ventures. Digital tools like e-Krishi, the Khamari App, and Krishoker Janala demonstrate scalable pathways to enhance financial inclusion and technology access and lastly, build a unified monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) framework that links agronomic data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) with financial data from the Bangladesh Bank. This system will align agricultural performance measurement with national adaptation and mitigation priorities outlined in the National Adaptation Plan 2023–2050 and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.

Also, traditional metrics—tonnes per hectare—must give way to emissions per tonne and resilience per taka invested. When every subsidy or credit line carries a climate-performance tag, Bangladesh can shift from counting inputs to accounting for impact. That transparency will unlock green finance and link local adaptation to global mitigation.

Bangladesh has policy blueprints, but integration is slow. What's missing is a unified delivery system connecting climate data, finance, and field adoption. Success will hinge on institutional coordination and the courage to move from demonstration to delivery. If that resolve is found, Bangladesh's rice fields could become a global example, proving that innovation, inclusion, and investment can align to feed a nation, while keeping carbon emission minimal.



Water chestnut cultivation turns wetlands into profit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

Farmers in Jamalpur's Dewanganj upazila are turning fallow, waterlogged lands and marshes into productive fields by cultivating water chestnuts (*Fleocharis dulcis*).

As a result, neglected wetlands are becoming a steady source of income for many families.

Water chestnut is a grass-like sedge native to Asia, tropical Africa and Oceania. It grows in marshes, underwater or in mud, and is cultivated as an aquatic vegetable in many countries for its edible bulbs.

Dewanganj upazila, surrounded by rivers and vast wetlands, offers ideal conditions for its cultivation.



With production on the rise, a wholesale market has sprung up beside Dewanganj Railway Station, drawing traders from across the country. According to the market's leaseholder, 8 to 10 tonnes of water chestnuts are sold daily.

Data from the Dewanganj Upazila Agriculture Office show water chestnut has been cultivated on 39 hectares this season.

"I cultivated water chestnut on four bighas, spending Tk 7,000. I have already sold bulbs worth Tk 35,000 and expect to earn another Tk 35,000 from the remaining 25-26 maunds in the field," said Alfaz Hossain of Dalbari village.

In retail markets, ripe water chestnuts sell for Tk 30 and unripe ones for Tk 20 per kilogramme, while wholesale prices range from Tk 1,300 to Tk 1,400 per maund for ripe ones and Tk 500 to Tk 600 per maund for unripe bulbs.

The seasonal market runs from early October till late December.

"Water chestnuts can be cultivated in any waterlogged land or wetland. We are encouraging farmers to expand cultivation to make better use of fallow land in the upazila," said Ratan Mia, upazila agriculture officer in Dewanganj.



Visitors enjoy boat rides amid blooming red water lilies in Dibir Haor (Shapla Beel) of Jaintapur upazila, Sylhet. Each winter, the haor attracts tourists as thousands of lilies cover the water against a backdrop of surrounding hills. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

BARGUNA LIBERATION WAR MUSEUM

Looted and left in ruins for over a year

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

The Barguna Liberation War Museum, which was vandalised and looted on August 5 last year following the ouster of the Awami League government, now stands abandoned, empty and padlocked.

The museum once housed a collection of over 300 rare historical photographs, books and memorabilia from the Liberation War, including rifles, clothing, cooking pots and various wartime items used by freedom fighters.

It also displayed archaeological pieces from the centuries-old Shahi Mosque in Betagi, the historic Majidbaria Mosque in Mirzaganj, Patuakhali, and relics from the temple built by Parbati Ranjan Mukhopadhyay in Betagi's Kauria area, as well as old radios and televisions. Among the museum's notable exhibits was a 48-foot-long whale skeleton recovered from Joyalbhanga in Taltali in 1990 and nearly a thousand metal and paper currencies from different countries. Many of these items are still missing.

According to museum records, the war photographs were collected by local organisers since 1995 and displayed at various district-level national events. In 2013, a Liberation War gallery was set up in a room on the ground floor of Barguna District Shilpkala Academy. The gallery

formally became an institution in 2018, and on November 30, 2019, it was upgraded to a full-fledged museum, attracting regular visits from students and visitors on national days.

Chittaranjan Shil, trustee of the museum, journalist and cultural activist, said the initiative traces back to 1985-86, when local journalists and cultural activists began collecting photographs of the

Liberation War and organising exhibitions. "Over time, journalists, intellectuals, civil society groups, the local administration, Rover Scouts and Red Crescent volunteers supported the effort."

The attack on August 5 last year was described as "systematic vandalism" by an eyewitness who wished to remain anonymous. "The attackers smashed every glass-covered table and display unit, looted many artefacts and tore apart books and documents outside the building. Whatever remained, people took away as they wished," the eyewitness said.

Three days after the attack, members of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement visited the site in an attempt to salvage what was left.

Despite repeated calls from museum trustees and local civic groups, none of the stolen items have been returned.

Yousuf Mridha, convener of Barguna District Mukti Joddha Sangsad, has also urged the district administration to restore the museum and recover the stolen items.

Taslima Akter, deputy commissioner of Barguna, could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts via phone and WhatsApp.



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Chittaranjan Shil, trustee of the museum, journalist

ATISH DIPANKAR UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (ADUST)

Convocation 2025

6 December 2025



CHIEF ADVISER
Government of the People's Republic
of Bangladesh

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Glory

21 Agrahayan 1432
06 December 2025

Message

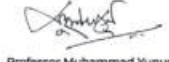
On the auspicious occasion of the 4th Convocation of Atish Dipankar University, Bangladesh, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and sincere felicitations to the graduating students, their guardians, the esteemed faculty members, and the University authorities for their collective efforts in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the students.

I am deeply impressed to learn that Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology has established a Skill Development Institute to address the unemployment challenges in Bangladesh. This forward-looking initiative will help create new job opportunities and strengthen collaboration with industries both at home and abroad.

The historic events of July August 2024 have opened new horizons for shaping a renewed Bangladesh. A proud graduate of Atish Dipankar University, I urge you to channel your knowledge, creativity, and values toward contributing meaningfully to this national transformation. Education remains a powerful catalyst for empowerment and positive change in every sphere of endeavor.

I am confident that the graduates of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology will apply their acquired knowledge, skills, and patriotism to help build a prosperous Bangladesh we all envision.

I wish the 4th Convocation of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology every success.


Professor Muhammad Yunus



Professor Dr. S. M. A. Falz
Chairman
University Grants Commission
of Bangladesh

Message

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST) on the joyous occasion of its 4th Convocation. This memorable event is a celebration of collective achievement, perseverance, and institutional excellence. Convocation is not only a day of pride for graduates and their families, but also a reflection of the university's unwavering commitment to nurturing capable, ethical, and socially responsible citizens who will contribute to the progress of the nation.

My sincere appreciation goes to the graduating students, their proud parents, faculty members, and the university authorities for their tireless dedication and contributions to this success. The conferment of degrees marks the culmination of years of hard work and intellectual pursuit, and also the beginning of a new journey of responsibility and service to society.

Established by the Honourable Former President Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, ADUST has remained steadfast in its mission to provide quality higher education to talented and underprivileged students at an affordable cost. In the rapidly evolving global landscape, higher education institutions must now place even greater emphasis on assuring and enhancing quality, fostering research and innovation, and building graduates equipped with 21st-century skills and strong moral values.

It is also encouraging to learn that ADUST has recently established a Skill Development Institute to address unemployment and create new opportunities both at home and abroad. This initiative reflects the university's forward-looking approach and its sense of social responsibility in contributing to human resource development and sustainable national progress.

I firmly believe that the graduates of ADUST are now prepared to take on the challenges of an increasingly interconnected and competitive world with confidence, competence, and integrity.

I extend my best wishes for the success of the 4th Convocation and for the continued growth and academic excellence of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology.


Professor Dr. S. M. A. Falz



Professor Dr. Mohammad Anwar Hossen
Member
University Grants Commission
of Bangladesh

Message

It gives me immense pleasure to know that Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST) is going to hold its 4th Convocation on December 6, 2025, to confer degrees upon its graduates. This joyous occasion stands as a testament to the hard work and achievements of the students, faculty members, and the university management. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the graduating students and their proud parents, the faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees.

It is praiseworthy that the university bears the name of the great Bengali scholar and sage, Atish Dipankar, the eleventh-century Chancellor of the ancient Nalanda University. His lifelong dedication to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge remains an inspiration for all learners. Following the philosophical footprint of this great scholar, I hope ADUST has been designing its curriculum and incorporating the historical glory of this region for better Bangladesh. In this context, we must ensure that our students are equipped with knowledge, integrity, and resilience to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

I wish the 4th Convocation of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology every success and hope that the graduates will serve society with patriotism, sincerity, and excellence.


Professor Dr. Mohammad Anwar Hossen



M Shamsul Alam Liton
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Message

It is with profound pride and heartfelt joy that I extend my warmest congratulations to all graduates of the Convocation, 2025 of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology. Today marks not only the culmination of your academic journey but also the beginning of your greater responsibility as global citizens, innovators, and ambassadors of truth and excellence.

As an institution founded on the enlightened vision of the former President Late Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, ADUST has always upheld the values of integrity, knowledge, and service to humanity. Guided by this philosophy, we continue to create an academic environment where students learn to think critically, act ethically, and contribute meaningfully to society.

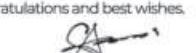
The Convocation 2025 has given us opportunity to declare the commencement of the transformation of ADUST from a Centre of Excellence to "A Skill University". We want our graduates equipped them with one or more practical and market driven skills that'll keep them to shape their bright career. We are giving priority on Entrepreneurship as they can uplift them employer rather employees.

To achieve these goals, we already established a great institution SDI under the leadership of a successful educational reformer and walking on the way to make it as a flagship program. Together we will be able to transform ADUST as an institution of life, hope and dignity. I strongly believe our hard working and visionary faculties, admin members, graduates and fellow students will move forward by keeping the motto and will create huge differences.

I express my deep appreciation to our distinguished faculty, dedicated administrators, supportive guardians, and the Board of Trustees for their unwavering commitment to excellence. Together, we continue to uphold ADUST's mission of nurturing enlightened minds and responsible leaders.

To our graduates believe in yourselves, dream boldly, and let your journey illuminate the path for others. May your success bring pride to your families, your university, and our beloved nation.

May your future be bright, meaningful, and full of promise. Congratulations and best wishes.


M Shamsul Alam Liton



Transforming Excellence into a Skills-Driven University

Since its inception in 2004 under the Private University Act of 1992, Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST) has been committed to fostering minds that combine knowledge with character and service. Founded under the guidance of the Atish Dipankar Foundation (ADF), the university reflects a vision rooted in scholarship, social responsibility and the pursuit of national progress.

The guiding vision of ADUST was shaped by Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed (1931-2012), Founder of ADF and President of Bangladesh (2002-2009), whose foresight and dedication established the university's moral and intellectual compass, ensuring that excellence, integrity and societal contribution remain central to its mission. Equally pivotal was Professor Dr. Anwara Begum (1934-2018), the first female Vice Chancellor in Bangladesh and founding Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, whose remarkable academic career and visionary leadership, alongside a distinguished line of founders, transformed the vision of ADF into an enduring institution of higher learning. Under their guidance, ADUST adopted the North American system of education, with curricula reviewed by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of California, Berkeley, ensuring international standards.

Guided by visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to academic excellence, the university continues to nurture graduates who carry forward the luminous legacy of Atish Dipankar Sirjhan – ambassadors of wisdom, integrity and service. As ADUST celebrates its 4th Convocation, it proudly honours its founders, faculty and the enduring inspiration of Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, whose vision for wisdom, peace and progress lives on in every graduate who carries the name of ADUST into the world.

ADUST visualises becoming a centre of excellence in higher education within South Asia by creating an inclusive learning environment open to students, irrespective of their class, caste, creed, or socioeconomic status. The university looks beyond conventional boundaries, embracing technological advancement, creating new opportunities and preparing students for a rapidly evolving world. Its long-term vision includes: (1) **delivering sustainable education**, (2) **reducing unemployment and promoting social mobility**, (3) **ensuring gender equity and social justice** and (4) **creating a sustainable and knowledge-driven society**. ADUST was established with the sole aim of spreading and deepening higher education. The university is committed to producing enlightened citizens, visionary leaders and highly skilled professionals.

The ADUST-SDI Model: A Forward-Looking Vision

Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST) has taken an exemplary step through the establishment of the Skills Development Institute (SDI). As a sister concern under ADUST, the Skill Development Institute (SDI) carries a bold vision: to help build a skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial nation. It equips students, professionals and current workforce members with the digital, technical, vocational and soft skills required in the age of automation, globalisation and rapid technological change. With its integrated model of practical learning, hands-on training and enterprise-focused capacity building, SDI directly addresses and has taken an initiative to solve the problem of a long-standing mismatch between academic education and employable competencies.

The ADUST-SDI advances a new paradigm built on several core principles: (1) **Dual Pathways**: blending academic knowledge with job-ready skills so graduates possess both intellectual depth and practical capability. (2) **Industry Integration**: aligning curricula with real labour market needs through employer involvement in course design, assessment and training. (3) **Applied Learning**: transforming classrooms into laboratories of experience through project-based learning, internships and hands-on training. (4) **Entrepreneurial Ecosystems**: encouraging innovation and nurturing student-led ideas so that graduates are prepared not only for employment but also for enterprise creation. (5) **Workforce Readiness**: strengthening digital literacy, communication, adaptability and professional conduct for both domestic and international arenas. This model demonstrates how universities can become hubs of innovation, capability development and national transformation.

To this end, ADUST initiates a flagship programme called Tarunney Biniyog "Invest in Youth". This is the moment for ADUST to transform itself from a centre of academic excellence into a truly skills-driven university. Its core vision is to establish a national flagship programme for millions of unemployed NEET youth (Not In Education, Employment, or Training) and to engage employers, industries and entrepreneurs in supporting and empowering young people to acquire skills and become entrepreneurs.

Academic Excellence & Research Commitment

ADUST aims to foster a dynamic academic culture where both students and scholars are engaged in meaningful research, innovation and community service. With an emphasis on STEM fields, business innovation, social sciences and public health, ADUST continuously upgrades its teaching methodologies, research facilities and laboratories. The university encourages publications, seminars, workshops, industry partnerships and cross-disciplinary collaborations.

It is undoubtedly a remarkable contribution to research by the academics of ADUST through publications in the recognised high-impact-factor journals worldwide. It is noteworthy to mention that within the last 20 years journey of the university ADUST published a large number of articles in the journals like *International Journal of Engineering and Manufacturing (IEM)*, *Cellular and Molecular Biology*, *European Respiratory Journal (ERJ)*, *Frontiers in Nutrition*, *Biochemical, Pharmacology, Animal Models and Experimental Medicine*, *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research and Reviews*, *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics (PCCP)*, *Journal of Biological Inorganic Chemistry*, *Helyon*, *Clinical Pharmacology, Biological Trace Element Research*, *Future Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences*, *Sage Open Medicine*, *Plants Molecules Health Science Reports*, *Vaccines*, *Journal of Sustainable Development*, *Avicenna J. Medical Biotechnology*, *Pharmacognosy Journal*, *Iranian Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences*, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Biomedicine*, *The Journal of Antibiotics*, *Asian Business Review*, *Oncology Letters* and so on. The total number of publications in about 220 H-index journal covers nearly 550 publications and citations of these articles are around 5,000. Proudly, we can say indeed this is a clear reflection of the high academic excellence of the teachers of Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology.

A University for All

True to its founding vision, ADUST is committed to expanding access to higher education for talented, underprivileged and deserving students across Bangladesh and South Asia. Through comprehensive scholarships, financial assistance and flexible learning pathways, the university empowers students from all backgrounds to pursue academic excellence and personal development. Rooted in the legacy of Atish Dipankar Sirjhan and the distinguished academic tradition of its founder and former Head of State, Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, the university upholds the values of wisdom, compassion and social progress – preparing students to build a future defined by knowledge, integrity and meaningful contribution.



Professor Dr. Md. Zahangir Alam
Vice Chancellor

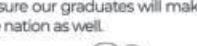
Message

It is a matter of great pride that we are going to celebrate the Convocation 2025 of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST). On this special occasion, at first I extend my warmest congratulations to my dear graduating students for their achievements. I also would like to congratulate and convey my best wishes to the proud parents, members of board of trustees, faculty members and all the concerned people for their continuous supports. Personally, I am grateful to Almighty Allah for giving me the rare opportunity to be present in the convocation of ADUST as its Vice Chancellor for the 2nd time. In the last four years it has been a delight for me to witness the transformative journey of our students to proud alumni and skilled individuals ready to serve the nation. I am incredibly happy to have been a part of this journey.

Two decades have passed since the inception of ADUST. Meanwhile, it achieved permanent certification from the Ministry of Education which makes us more responsible for better service in education. We are committed to do so. From the very beginning of my joining at ADUST it was my dream to see this institution among the leading universities in Bangladesh. Undoubtedly, we improved to some extent; but yet far way to go.

Our society needs progressive, responsible, compassionate and skilled graduates with mankind. Our graduates are the ambassadors of our university. I am sure our graduates will make their alma mater proud by means of their works for the society and the nation as well.

I wish every success of the graduates of Convocation 2025.


Professor Dr. Md. Zahangir Alam



Professor Dr. Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar
Adviser
Ministry of Education
Govt. of the People's Republic
of Bangladesh

Message

I am very glad to learn that the 4th convocation ceremony of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST) is going to be held on 06 December, 2025. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the graduating students, their proud parents and the university authority.

Convocation is both a celebration of success and the beginning of a journey towards the future. The knowledge, skills and values acquired here are important tools to address the diverse challenges of our country and the world. I encourage you to apply this education to justice, equality, and the greater good of humanity, both in your professional and personal lives.

I have been informed that ADUST has been pursuing excellence with unrelenting efforts to improve and strengthen its academic programs and services to make it relevant and responsive to the needs of the time.

Our Government is committed to ensuring better teaching and learning environment, governance and student welfare with the objectives to attain desirable quality education in comparison with internationally recognized universities. I believe ADUST is providing resourceful and potential graduates whom the nation can be proud of.



Mr. Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb
Special Advisor to Hon'ble Chief Advisor
Information and Communication
Technology Division
Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications
and Information Technology
Government of the People's Republic
of Bangladesh

Message

It is indeed a great pleasure to learn about the 4th convocation of Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology (ADUST). I am privileged and honored to extend my sincerest congratulations to all graduating students and their proud parents. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who steered the university to achieve the present success and creativity in the academic area of Bangladesh.

In line with the mission of the university to develop young minds to their fullest potential, nurturing the next generation of responsible and caring citizens for our nation and the world, it is essential to learn to think critically and communicate effectively. You are indeed very fortunate to have studied and grown at this leading institution as you prepare for the next phase of your life. Whether it is further studies or employment or entrepreneurship, I am confident that the values and skills that you have acquired at Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology will enable you to serve humanity. Because as Aristotle put it so beautifully, "at the intersection where your gifts, talents and abilities meet human need, there you will discover your purpose."

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Board of Trustees for their vision, values and dedication to promoting liberal studies in Bangladesh. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the distinguished and devoted faculty members, supported by the administrative team for creating an inspiring learning environment and providing valuable support to the students. This convocation stands as a testament to the collective dedication and hard work of the entire ADUST community.

Once again, I warmly congratulate YOU the graduates, as you embark on the next step of your journey. I have every confidence that you will embody the values and knowledge you have gained here. I look forward to witnessing the positive impact you will make in society and the pride you will bring to the Atish Dipankar University of Science & Technology.

I wish the graduating students great success in their life.


Mr. Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb



Dr. A. N. M. Ehsanul Hoque Milon
Former State Minister, Ministry of Education
Convocation Speaker, Convocation 2025

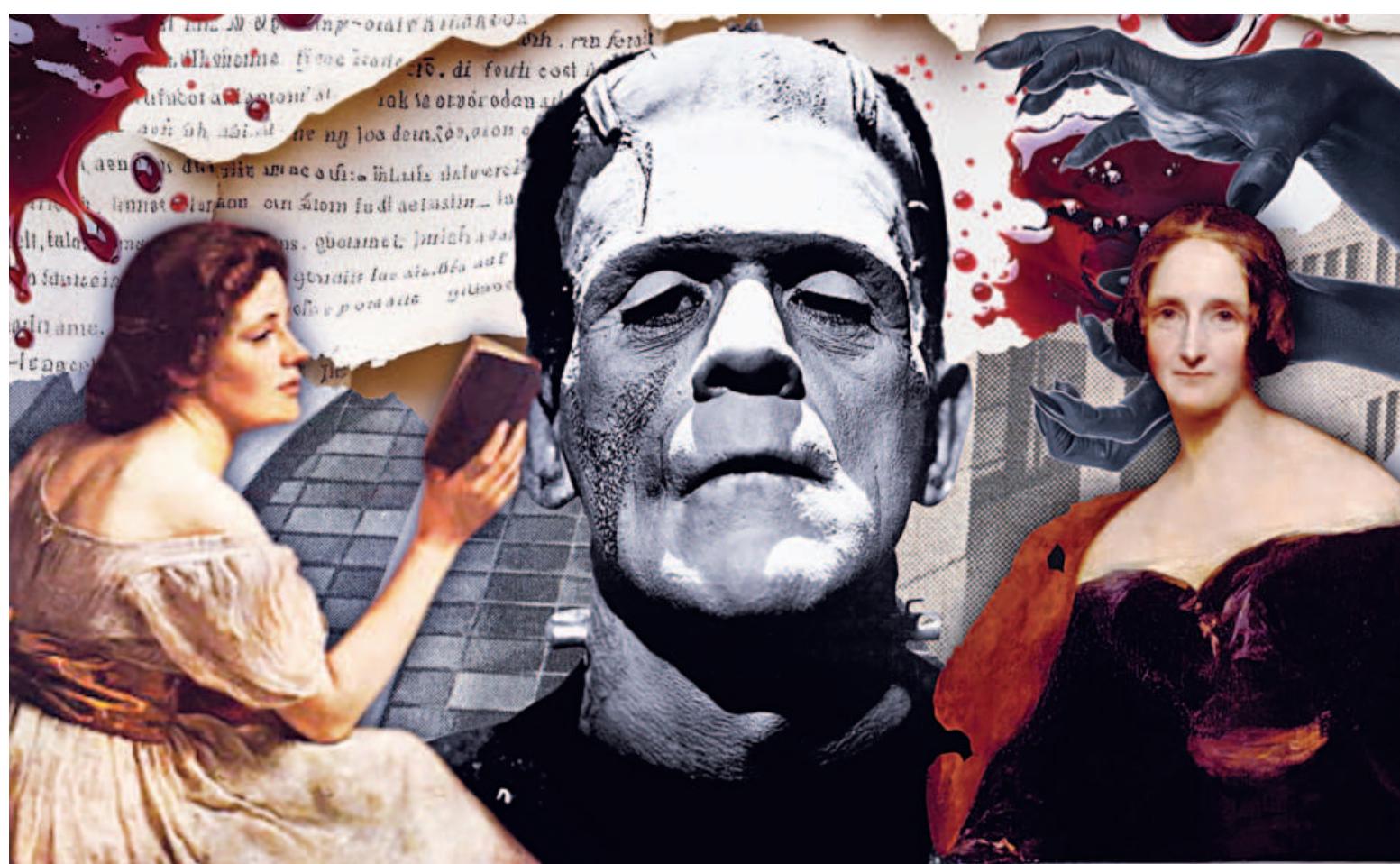


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

ESSAY

On mothers, monsters and myths: A look at the Mary before the Mary

MRINMOYI

In a wilting summer swelter of 1797 in London, a name was born twice—mother Mary Wollstonecraft wound the clock of daughter Mary Wollstonecraft (Godwin's) life, for the very first time.

At that moment, both Marys stood at the brink of their lives—one with a foot in the grave, the other crawling toward a future of myth, invention, and literary resurrection. The daughter writhing into the world would soon go on to become the Mary we all know and love, the Mary Shelley who authored the undying monster of *Frankenstein* (1818).

Unfortunately, Wollstonecraft does not survive to influence the little girl alive, but undoubtedly slithers her way through to her as a haunting ghost of social and literary legacy, which nurtures Mary Godwin into her creative flowering. Although seldom a topic at the table, the mother behind the monster is pivotal to igniting the flare in the teenage genius, setting the ravishing responses against hypocritical politics, the Gothic ardour with which she lived, and the unconventionality that became Shelley's blueprint.

For the sake of clarity, the essay will be viewing the mother as Wollstonecraft, through the lens of the daughter, Shelley, to fully dissect the often overlooked pillars she left behind as parent, philosopher, and the proto mother of feminism.

Wollstonecraft's bequest bears several pieces of work strewn throughout her life revolving around society, its schemes, and the inequality that governed the crises of the time. As an early supporter of the French Revolution, her earliest critically acclaimed work was a clapback at British statesman and political theorist Edmund Burke, who wrote a political pamphlet defending the monarchy and empathising Antoinette in what Mary characterises as “unnecessarily gendered language” that only achieves a sexist undertone and supports “tradition for the sake of tradition.” In her curt feminist rebuttal titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Wollstonecraft criticises the bias for passivity in women, the theatrical tableau that is reserved for only the “sublime and beautiful” queen and not the starving housewives driven to the streets because they lacked the means to feed their families.

Unfortunately though, despite its pinch-hitting take that caused it to sell out in just three weeks, the year of 1790 was not particularly attributed to the acceptance of female writers, and the piece was soon thrown down. It was only until the late 20th century when sustained critical study was carried out by feminist scholars like Claudia Johnson who praised it to be “unparalleled in its argumentative force”.

However, the preeminence of her moral compass is illustrated best in her most incandescent work, the 1792 essay “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”, in which Wollstonecraft abandons the ornamental niceties expected of female writers and instead performs a kind of ideological vivisection on the culture that manufactures feminine weakness. Far from depicting women as innately fragile, she insists they are made so “rendered weak and wretched” by an education designed to stunt them into “spaniel-like affection” rather

than moral independence. This argument is not merely moral but anatomical: she dissects how society engineers its own monsters by denying women the rational training that forms virtue, which is a mesial structure, creating what she calls “artificial, weak characters”—creatures built for pleasing rather than thinking.

She went on to demolish Rousseau's ‘Sophy’, making the critique especially telling. Rousseau's ideal woman was a deliberately dependent, docile creature trained to exist only for men's comfort and to reflect male virtue rather than possess any of her own. Wollstonecraft called his pedagogical fantasies “absurd sophisms,” exposing how his notions were nothing more than a carefully curated dependency for the loophole for means of control over them. Reading it now, the text feels like an early autopsy of social monstrosity, an almost Gothic recognition that grotesques are not born but assembled, piece by piece, by the environments that betray them.

Jane Austen's sly rebellions and observations of society, Eliot's ethical gravity, Woolf's reclamation of Wollstonecraft as “alive and active”—all attest to the force of a mind that refused conventionality. And while posterity has been quick to credit Godwin or the influential men around Mary Shelley for shaping a literary prodigy, the deeper inheritance lies elsewhere, specifically in the mother whose writings Mary devoured before she ever wrote a word of her own.

This very conceptual phantom almost glides into her (Wollstonecraft's) daughter's imagination. Shelley's creature, abandoned and misshapen, isolated from community, is not far from the ideology, turning it into the living (or undead) proof of Wollstonecraft's thesis that society, not nature, is the true manufacturer of monsters.

The work provides a faint galvanising pulse that Shelley would later amplify in ways uniquely her own.

Mary grew up in Godwin's radical household, a place where she received an unlikely education for a girl of her time. This home, curtained by the absence of the mother Godwin openly revered as the most extraordinary woman of the age, led Mary to learn of her mother first as myth, then as a political and emotional inheritance. Even her relationships echoed that lineage, notably her relationship with Gilbert Imlay with whom she had Fanny Imlay, Mary's half-sister.

Her carefree romances, and sentiments published in the *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796) must have

deeply shaped the emotional codes in Shelley. Wollstonecraft's turbulent past; the charged, unconventional environment that taught Mary to feel, see and think, is displayed animatedly in her relationship with the married Percy Shelley, who she, ironically, is rumoured to have met at her mother's grave. In an elaborate way, her mother's grave played Cupid, tying her strings to the person whose early encouragement and editorial involvement in *Frankenstein* ushered her towards an unleashed potential.

Shelley's imaginative framework, then, emerges as both an extension and a divergence from Wollstonecraft's legacy. Growing up without her mother's presence nurtured no stabilising maternal reference, a condition that shaped Mary's earliest understanding of selfhood and emotional precariousness. This absence forms a clear parallel to the Creature's first consciousness in *Frankenstein*—being confronted with existence but denied guidance, left to interpret the world without protection or instruction. Where Wollstonecraft had identified the social mechanisms that create the cultivation of weakness for the sake of compliance, Shelley internalises that insight and transforms its scale. Her mother's moral horror, rooted in systems that deform individuals through inequality, allowed Shelley to illuminate an acute view concerned with what happens when the one who holds power simply withdraws and care is withheld at the very moment it is most needed.

While Wollstonecraft believed that rational improvement could correct injustice, Shelley's narrative offers a more austere verdict, that the damage produced by abandonment can become irreversible. It is here, in this difference between reformist optimism and lived disillusionment, that Mary Shelley's own experiences most clearly refract her mother's theories into a darker, more unforgiving moral landscape.

Predominantly, Wollstonecraft's legacy moved through the world in spite of attempts to bury it. After Godwin's memoir exposed the full, unvarnished contours of her life with all aspects of her loves, failures, and defiance, she was met with a near-instant revilement that pushed her name into a cultural hush. Yet, even in that imposed silence, her ideas persisted.

Jane Austen's sly rebellions and observations of society, Eliot's ethical gravity, Woolf's reclamation of Wollstonecraft as “alive and active”—all attest to the force of a mind that refused conventionality. And while posterity has been quick to credit Godwin or the influential men around Mary Shelley for shaping a literary prodigy, the deeper inheritance lies elsewhere, specifically in the mother whose writings Mary devoured before she ever wrote a word of her own.

Strip away the scandals, the miscrediting, and the original current that set the course for Mary Shelley's success is unmistakable—it is in the womb of Wollstonecraft—the legacy before the legend, the mother in the margins, the forgotten Mary before the one celebrated.

Mrinmoyi is a cat enthusiast who likes her pottery by feminist icons and her poetry in fickle feathers. To learn an absurd amount of gossip on Godwin's group, contact her @uzma31989@gmail.com.

LITERATURE

POETRY

SELECTED POEMS

AMRITA NANDINI

The Little Boy

He sold magic
mostly for free,
wrapped in candy wrappers,
joy and spring-coloured rosettes,
and, at times, priced at
a few tufts of dandelion threads.
His eyes—ablaze and fiery,
too bright for one to see
the sigh resting on his eyelids,
a secret he claimed as his truth,
shared only with the midnight moon,
or silenced in layers
of his incantations.
But the silly boy didn't know,
his truth was not his secret
but his soul,
lighted by a thousand suns,
as free as the dawn-bright sky,
where a thousand dandelion threads
could leap to reincarnate
and grow.



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

Pariah

She grew like a weed
in the rose thicket
of the moonlit hill,
and so was weeded
by the polar wind.
But—
like the stubbornness of lint
clinging to its being,
like the deciduous hopes
of the refugees,
like the rhythm
in a flurry of broken leaves,
she roots again
to claim her place
in the history
of unsung
melodies.

Hope

The leaf-dead promises
hold fast to the frays of my jeans.
Perhaps they are not dead;
perhaps they are just sleeping,
dreaming,
waiting for spring...

Amrita Nandini's interest in poetry began early and has remained a constant alongside her 16-year career in marketing and communications across Bangladesh and abroad. She writes primarily in Bangla, with work published in literary outlets such as *Kali O Kalam* and more. Now based in Hong Kong, she is taking a break to focus on writing, reading, and travel, and hopes to dedicate herself to writing full-time. She also has a keen interest in music and theatre.

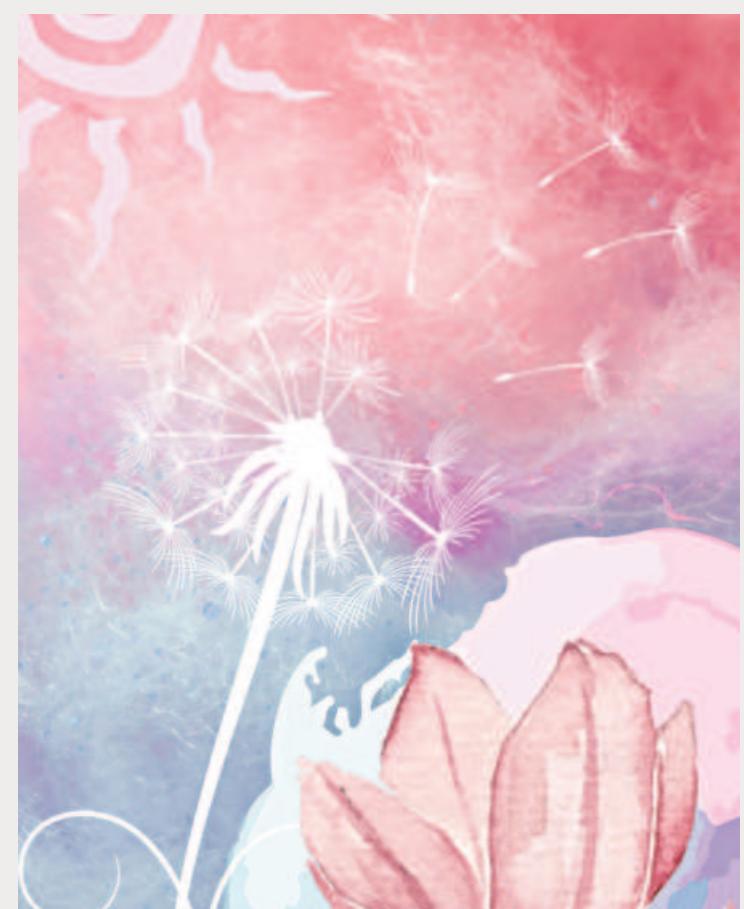


ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD



Bangladesh Women's U-19 team beat Pakistan by three wickets in the second of the five-match T20 series at the Cox's Bazar Academy Ground on Friday to level the series 1-1, after suffering a 13-run defeat in the opener. The third match will be played at the same venue on Sunday.

PHOTO: BCB

NCL set for exciting finish

SPORTS REPORTER

The 27th National Cricket League (NCL) is set for an exciting finish, with six of the eight teams still in contention for the title as the final round begins today.

Table-toppers and defending champions Sylhet will take on Barishal at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium. Barishal currently have 18 points, and a win would allow them to match Sylhet's tally of 26. However, under NCL rules, teams can earn bonus points for winning by an innings or by 10 wickets, scenarios that may come into play in this fixture.

Sylhet remain in a strong position for the title following their 10-wicket victory over Rajshahi in the previous round.

Veteran batter Shamsur Rahman, representing Barishal this season, is set to retire from first-class cricket after this match, and the 37-year-old hopes to end his career "on a good note".

Mymensingh, the newest team in the NCL, trail Sylhet by just two points and are also well-placed to challenge for the title in their debut season. They will face Rajshahi at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Rangpur, who have faced setbacks this season -- drawing three and losing one of their six matches -- will take on Khulna in Bogura. Khulna, who have drawn their last three games, also remain in contention.

With bonus points also available for consecutive wins, Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Chattogram all stand to gain extra points if they secure victories in the final round.

Dhaka, who are not in the title race, could hamper Chattogram Division's title aspirations as they face off at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

LABUSCHAGNE FIRST TO 1K RUNS IN PINK-BALL TESTS

A relentless Australia seized a 44-run lead over England on Day 2 of the second Ashes Test in Brisbane on Friday, with Marnus Labuschagne (65) becoming the first-ever batter to reach the 1000-run milestone in pink-ball Tests. Labuschagne has now scored 1,023 runs across 16 innings at an average of 63.93. Alongside Labuschagne, Australia stand-in skipper Steve Smith (61) and opener Jake Weatherald (72) also smashed fifties to help the hosts end the day on 378 for six -- the most by a team in a day's play in pink-ball Tests, bettering 348 by England against West Indies on Day 1 in 2017 -- after England made 334 all out in first innings.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Can hybrid wickets solve Mirpur conundrum?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The conversation around the Mirpur wickets has been a long-standing issue in Bangladesh cricket.

A generation of players have had to curate their game to the low and slow tracks usually on offer, impeding growth across formats. Players such as Litton Das and Nazmul Hossain Shanto had been vocal in their demands for decent playing surfaces, but in Bangladesh cricket, talks of sporting wickets being equated to the production of quality cricketers have hardly ever been discussed seriously.

Over the last six months, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul has also heard the pleas of several national team stars who talked about not just match wickets but bad practice wickets.

Mirpur, however, has been a precarious challenge. With 218 matches since the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium's inception in 2006, the venue is sixth in the list of the most international matches in a single stadium. Four out of the five venues in the top five are over a hundred years old, giving an impression of the high frequency of matches and why tired wickets became a Mirpur issue.

Soil inconsistencies have often prevented proper preparation of

wickets, according to BCB sources.

This is where the conversation around hybrid wickets has come in. The wickets are easier to maintain and more durable, known for having quicker recovery time and, as per sources, easier to install as well. The benefits are that natural grass is still in play. The process involves



intertwining fibres with natural grass. Most importantly, it produces consistent bounce.

The BCB boss also confirmed that the discussion around hybrid wickets has come up. "The cost has come up as one of the issues," Bulbul told The Daily Star.

"Since labour cost is lesser here, we have to decide whether we will

bring hybrid wickets at that cost," he added, noting a hybrid pitch costs around 30,000 AUD. The BCB boss felt that instead of buying at high costs, sending curators abroad to learn the technology would help the board implement such wickets here if and when purchase of required materials take place. In Tony Hemming, BCB has someone well adept at building these wickets.

The board plans to dismantle the greenhouse facilities at Mirpur, as those wickets were unused. With more pitches needed, hybrids are an option. The ICC has approved them for T20Is and ODIs, while the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) trialled hybrids for a year in the County Championship.

But all is not rosy when discussion comes to adaptability. Last year, a Gloucestershire vs Northamptonshire county match was abandoned owing to safety concerns for batters on a hybrid wicket. BCB officials say hybrids could be trialled on a "test case basis" to see if reliability outweighs costs, as "what the wickets will be like in our conditions is still unknown".

For now, the main question is whether hybrid wickets can solve the Mirpur conundrum. With batters complaining about practice turfs, it may be the answer, depending on adaptability to Bangladesh's conditions.

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1

The ashes
Australia vs England
2nd Test, Day 3
Live from 10:00 am
T SPORTS
New Zealand vs West Indies

1st Test, Day 5
Live from 4:00 am
India vs South Africa
3rd ODI
Live from 2:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1 AND HD2
Premier League

Aston Villa vs Arsenal
Live from 6:30 pm
Man City vs Sunderland
Live from 9:00 pm
Bournemouth vs Chelsea
Live from 9:00 pm
Leeds vs Liverpool
Live from 11:30 pm

A course correction forgotten?

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

The 2021 ICC T20 World Cup was a disaster for Bangladesh.

The campaign began with a defeat to Scotland in the preliminary round and ended with five losses and zero wins in the main phase.

The Tigers had come into the tournament with a false sense of confidence, having just registered two landmark series wins at home against second-string Australia and New Zealand sides on heavily doctored wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

Those matches left the players unprepared for what was waiting for them in the UAE and they looked like fish out of water on proper T20 wickets.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), to its credit, learned its lesson and corrected course before the next T20 World Cup. The board arranged a tri-series against Pakistan and New Zealand in New Zealand on November 2022, right before the event kicked off in Australia that same month.

The board couldn't arrange a high-profile preparatory series in the build-up to the 2024 edition, but it sent the side to the USA -- one of the host countries -- for a series against the Associate side.

Although the Tigers lost 2-1, they exceeded expectations in the main tournament, registering three wins -- most ever for them in a single edition -- and making it to the second round. The Tigers even had a great chance of making it to the semifinal for the first time, which they squandered.

Bangladesh are now

approaching the 2026 edition, set to take place in India and Sri Lanka starting from February 7. But rather than building towards the event as a team, the players will be busy vying against each other in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), beginning on December 26.

The Tigers have already completed their last T20I



assignment before the World Cup, a home series against Ireland which they won 2-1. Before the Irish, the Tigers played three T20Is against West Indies in Chattogram in October and lost all of those.

Unlike the previous two editions, Bangladesh will neither face top sides nor play matches in the host country in the build-up.

Bangladesh have played a lot of T20Is in 2025 -- 30 in total which is also the highest ever for them in one year -- but the results have been a mixed bag. They have won 15 matches -- most ever in a year for them, lost 14 and one game ended

in a no-result.

They have blown hot and cold away from home, winning series over Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, while also losing 2-1 to the UAE and getting clean-swept by Pakistan. At the Asia Cup at the UAE in September, they progressed to the Super Fours but could not make it to the final.

At home, before the humiliation against the Caribbeans and the triumph over the Irish, they won series against Pakistan and the Netherlands.

As the T20 World Cup is set to begin just two weeks after the BPL final, it leaves no room for the board to arrange a preparatory series for the Tigers. But there was enough scope to do that before the BPL. Such laissez-faire attitude from the BCB before a T20 World Cup seems like courtly disaster, much like they had done in 2021. Whether it leads to a similarly disastrous campaign is left to be seen.

Kings put five past Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Bashundhara Kings extended their winning run in the Bangladesh Football League with a resounding 5-1 victory over a spirited Brothers Union at the Shaheed Birshreshtha Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

Dorielton Gomes bagged a brace while Emmanuel Sunday, Faisal Ahmed Fahim and Sohel Rana Jr scored one apiece.

The fourth successive win strengthened the five-time champions' grip on the top of the 10-team table, taking them to 13 points from five matches.

It also preserved their unbeaten record against Brothers Union in professional league encounters -- eight wins and two draws in 10 meetings.

Nasrin make dreadful start in SAFF tourney

SPORTS REPORTER

Nasrin Sports Academy made a dreadful start to their SAFF Women's Club Championship campaign, suffering a 4-0 defeat to Nepal's APF Football Club in the second match of the opening day in Kathmandu yesterday.

Fielding several players from the national U-17 and U-20 women's teams, Nasrin initially showed promise and matched APF in the early exchanges. However, the more experienced Nepalese side, powered by a brace each from Rashmi Ghising and Mina Deuba, ultimately proved too strong.

Nasrin even appeared to have the upper hand for a brief spell before a defensive lapse allowed APF to take the lead in the 38th minute, with Rashmi scoring from close range after a goalmouth melee. Mina doubled the advantage in the 70th minute, breaking an offside trap to slot home.

Rashmi extended the lead to 3-0 in the 80th minute, and Mina completed the rout by netting her second goal in stoppage time.

Nasrin will face Pakistan's Karachi FC in their second match. Karachi were held to a goalless draw by Bhutan's Transport United in the tournament opener at the same venue.



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'Bangladesh will never tolerate fascism again'
Jamaat ameer tells rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman warned yesterday that Bangladesh will never again tolerate fascism on its soil, saying that while the fascist has fallen, the grip of fascism endures.

He made the remarks at a divisional rally at the Laldighi Maidan in the port city, organised by the eight-party alliance, which is currently waging a movement over its five-point demand, including the implementation of the July charter and holding a referendum on the issue.

Criticising the Awami League, he said, "They [Awami League] came to power with weapons in their hands and left power with bloodstained hands."

He continued, "When they came to power in February 2009 at



SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Such sensitive matters can't be resolved quickly

Says adviser Touhid on Hasina's extradition

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday said Bangladesh has formally requested India to return Sheikh Hasina, describing her as a "convicted fugitive sentenced by the highest court of Bangladesh."

He noted that no positive response has yet been received from India, adding, "Sensitive matters like this cannot be resolved quickly. We are closely observing what kind of reaction India provides."



Speaking to journalists at the Rangpur Circuit House, Touhid also addressed questions about BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, saying he had no information on when Tarique might return to the country.

He confirmed that Khaleda Zia's planned travel to London has been delayed due to a technical issue with the aircraft.

On Bangladeshi fishermen being abducted by the Arakan Army, he

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



On a winter morning, two women tend to their red spinach field in Munshiganj's Sirajdikhan upazila. Farmers here cultivate cauliflower, cabbage, and a variety of leafy greens during the season. With supplies rising, vegetable prices in Dhaka's kitchen markets have begun to ease. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Israeli warplanes strike eastern Gaza

Settlers carry out attacks in Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank

AGENCIES

Israeli warplanes launched a series of raids targeting the eastern areas of Gaza City yesterday, as settlers cut water pipelines in Khrbet ad-Dir in the Jordan Valley of the occupied West Bank.

Eastern and northeastern parts of Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis came under Israeli attack by artillery shelling, gunfire and a helicopter gunship, locals said.

In the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Prisoners' Media Office (ASRA) has reported that Israeli forces launched raids and arrests in several governorates at dawn.

The advocacy group said the operation included the storming of Palestinian homes, vandalising their contents and assaulting residents. A number of people were also arrested.

Israeli settlers cut water pipelines in Khrbet ad-Dir in the northern Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank, according to the Wafa news agency.

They also set fire to two vehicles and wrote racist slogans during their attack on the village of Taybeh, east of Ramallah.

Meanwhile, Israel's defence budget for 2026 has been set at 112 billion shekels (\$34.63 billion), the defence minister's office said yesterday, up from 90 billion shekels budgeted in an earlier draft.

Defence minister Katz said the military will continue its to address the needs of its fighters and reduce the burden on reservists.

In a separate development, the Foreign Press Association in Jerusalem on Thursday said it "firmly opposed" another delay to the Israeli supreme court's decision on its petition



- ▶ Press group opposes access delay to enclave
- ▶ Israel sets 2026 defence budget at \$34bn
- ▶ Anti-Hamas Gazan tribal leader killed

demanding independent access to the Gaza Strip.

Since the start of the Gaza offensive in October 2023, Israeli authorities have prevented foreign journalists from independently entering the devastated territory, reports AFP.

Israel has instead allowed, on a case-by-case basis, a handful of reporters to accompany its troops into the Palestinian territory under Israeli blockade.

The head of an armed Palestinian faction that opposes Hamas in Gaza died while mediating a family dispute, the group said on Thursday, in what would be a blow to Israeli efforts to support Gazan clans against the Islamist movement, reports Reuters.

US widens travel ban to more than 30 countries
Slashes work permit time for asylum seekers to 18 months

REUTERS

The US plans to expand the number of countries covered by its travel ban to more than 30, US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said on Thursday.

Noem, in an interview on Fox News' "The Ingraham Angle," was asked to confirm whether the administration of President Donald Trump would be increasing the number of countries on the travel ban list to 32.

"I won't be specific on the number, but it's over 30, and the president is continuing to evaluate countries," she said. Trump signed a proclamation in June banning the citizens of 12 countries from entering the United States and restricting those from seven others, saying it was needed to protect against "foreign terrorists" and other security threats.

The bans apply to both immigrants and non-immigrants, such

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Onion prices go up by Tk 40 in 3 days

Traders blame supply shortage

Argentina, Brazil get easy draws

AFP, Washington

Holders Argentina and leading contenders Spain and England were all handed kind draws for the 2026 World Cup in a star-studded ceremony on Friday which saw US President Donald Trump receive FIFA's new peace prize.

Five-time winners Brazil play 2022 semi-finalists Morocco as well as Scotland and Haiti in their group, while France take on Senegal, Norway and a qualifier from the playoffs in their group.

The event in Washington started the final countdown to the tournament, six months out from the first-ever 48-team World Cup, with much-fancied France among those receiving a harder task.

Lionel Messi's Argentina will begin their defense of the trophy they won in Qatar in 2022 against Algeria, and will also face Austria and debutants Jordan in Group J.

Heavily-fancied Spain, the European champions, will kick off against first-time qualifiers Cape Verde before also taking on Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in Group H.

Thomas Tuchel's England will meet Croatia, Ghana and Panama in a kind-looking Group L.

Two-time winners France, meanwhile, face awkward tests against Senegal and Erling

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



Over a hundred families in Bishnupur union of Bijoynagar upazila in Brahmanbaria keep alive the traditional craft of making molasses or "Lali Gur". The photo taken yesterday shows farmers pressing sugarcane with a buffalo-driven granary in their yard. The collected juice boiled for two hours under the night sky becomes the rich, golden Lali Gur. In winter, this delicacy pairs perfectly with rice cakes, or "pitha".



Ukrainian drone strike sparks fire at Azov port

REUTERS, Moscow

A Ukrainian drone attack caused a fire at Russia's Azov Sea port of Temryuk, the local emergencies centre said yesterday.

Temryuk handles liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), oil products and petrochemicals, as well as grain and other bulk food commodities.

"There was a fire... Special and emergency services are working on site," the emergencies centre said in a statement on Telegram.

Two industry sources told Reuters that the fire broke out at the Maktren-Nafta LPG transhipment terminal, which loads LPG from Russian and Kazakh producers for export.

In the first 10 months of 2025, the terminal handled about 220,000 tonnes of LPG, traders said.

The Russian Defence Ministry said air defence systems intercepted and destroyed 41 Ukrainian drones overnight, including one over the Krasnodar region where Temryuk is located.



A TASTE OF DHAKA

Street snacks you shouldn't miss

I strongly believe that the history, heritage, flavours, and variety of street food in Dhaka are nothing short of the African American soul-food culture, where the impoverished improvised their limited resources, which became a source of comfort and a cultural connection.

I decided to compile a random list of street snacks for the bohemian souls of Dhaka. The range of street food in Dhaka is so extensive that some of us have yet to taste new treats at any random street corner or alley in this maze of a city.

I strongly believe that the history, heritage, flavours, and variety of street food in Dhaka are nothing short of the African American soul-food culture, where the impoverished improvised their limited resources, which became a source of comfort and a cultural connection.

Similarly, the best from our meagre kitchen took to the street and earned our toiling people a plate of dinner. It could be a full-fledged research topic, and one could document thousands of reasons to understand the "why" and "how" of our desi snacks -- some popular, some not so much.

Let's put the big talks aside and start listing. With the slightest drop in temperature, you will notice a distinct shuffle in the menu and offers from these roadside pop-up food carts, thatched shops, and vendors walking around parks and residential areas.

Chitoi pitha wallis (walli is the feminine gender of wallah, meaning vendor) come out from every nook and cranny with their portable mud

stoves and terracotta woks that have multiple moulds made in them, so that you can make two or three at once and meet the rush hour demands.

Chitoi Pitha, or steamed pancakes, are a traditional food from Bangladesh, and they rule the street food scenario during the short winter. The thin but not runny rice flour batter is poured over the hot pan and covered with a lid to trap the steam inside. The pithas are white small discs with a slightly crisp base and a soft, bubbly, porous top. Bland and slightly salted, these steamed rice cakes must be savoured piping hot with mustard, mint, and dried fish paste or duck curry. Chilly evenings are meant for this delight. It can also be had with jaggery and coconut shavings or just soaked overnight in sweetened milk.

Dhakai jhuri chanachur makha, which is not the same as the all-famous jhalmuri, is the perfect sinus-clearing street delight. Casually served in a rolled paper cone, often made from the torn pages of an old book with a stiff paper slip tucked inside, doubling as a makeshift spoon, this fiery mix is mind-blowing. My favourite spot for this is DCC Gulshan 2 market, opposite the doughnut place. Tk 20 for a cone, it is basically crispy matchsticks made from chickpea and lentil flour,

called jhuri chanachur in Bangla. The accompanying condiments are onions, green chillies, coriander, lemon juice, and rock salt, all tossed together in a repurposed condensed milk can and given a rhythmic shake with the palm of the vendor's hand.

To spice it up further, people request slivers of the hottest chilli pepper or naga morich, while faint-hearted ones like me request no chilli. The savvy vendor half-listens to your order and generally sticks to his tried recipe and may add boiled chickpeas to tone down the heat a little. In winter, the vendor adds his own secret touch -- half-ripened tomatoes with garam masala and some kind of flavour enhancer.

The crammed footpath of Salimullah Road in Mohammadpur serves the best street food of all -- a bowl of steaming corn soup peppered with chunks of soft bone-in chicken pieces floating perfectly with vegetables like papaya, carrots, and beans. An unusual combination in corn soup, but one spoon and you are flying; add a dash of the served chilli-vinegar

condiment and you are in heaven.

Sweet corn roasted over open coals in Dhaka is a must-try; now is the perfect time to find the sweetest corn in town. The melt-in-the-mouth corn kernels get a smoky flavour from the hot coals, and the tangy mix of lemon juice, rock salt, and red chilli powder makes it a perfect evening snack.

Nowadays, an import from the streets of Nepal has become extremely popular with Dhaka's street food lovers: the refreshing taste of steamed chicken momos served with a spicy red chilli garlic or a minty, runny chutney is a healthy choice for a light dinner on the go.

Meanwhile, the area surrounding Shilpakala Academy in Segun Bagicha, in my understanding, is the epitome of liveliness and raw energy. Besides all the cultural heavyweight programmes related to performing and fine arts, the place also adds pages to my street food documentation. Food carts, tea stalls, street traders, music, and the melodious chorus of the youth -- all these elements together bring out the vivacious atmosphere.

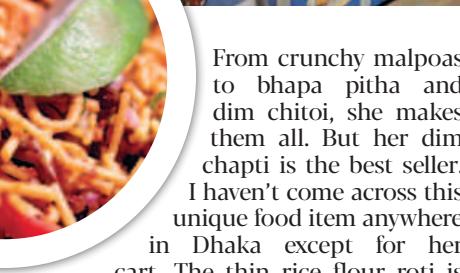
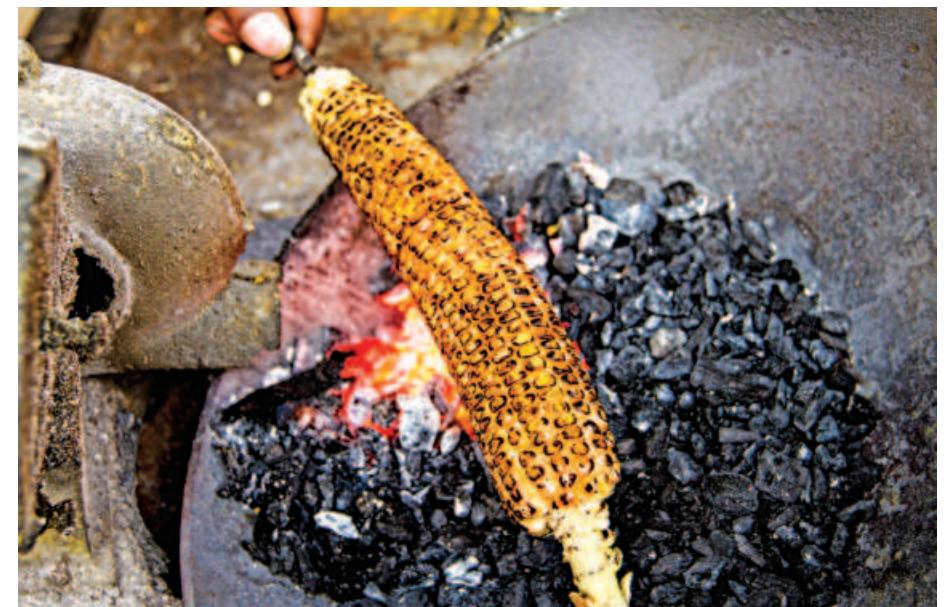
I gave my heart to a middle-aged woman who sells all kinds of sweet and savoury rice cakes with her children as her helpers.

the skillet makes this healthy street snack warm and nourishing, which keeps you all happy and snug inside. My hats off to this dexterous mother whose simple food items bring home the bread.

Eskaton Garden residential area is a story of a few quaint and posh streets and beautiful alleys. The greenery lends a suburban quietness to the character of the place, which houses the government officers' apartment complex and other administrative offices. And right after dusk, cute little food carts are parked by the pavement, dotted with plastic stools and tables. The carts, standing under the streetlamps, are lit by fairy light strings, giving the place a blue-tinted aura. The mouth-watering aroma of food, and smart kids behind the counter, put on a food show performance every day.

There are many appetising options, but I was impressed with a snack called Afghani momos. A ravioli-kind of dish, where the homemade soft dumplings are stuffed with chicken mince and served in white sauce, sprinkled with chilli flakes. Though Afghanistan and momos are like chalk and cheese, the gimmicky name for this light ravioli has done them right in attracting customers.

Street food can be this appetising and



healthy; it is an example to follow. An old man sitting a few carts away from this momo stall makes the best grilled sandwich in town. His tools are soft burger buns, sub sandwich buns, freshly made chicken schnitzel, and a sandwich grill skillet. Crispy, hot, and smeared with a mayo dip, this sandwich gives the student's burger stand stiff competition.

Student's discount cart is run by a teenage boy who just finished his higher secondary and is awaiting university admission. Setting up a pop-up food cart and armed with his personal favourite burger recipe, he is earning himself good pocket money.

These are some of the not-so-popular but extremely satisfying street foods of Dhaka. And I leave out the established and time-honoured food streets for another day.

I write about these little-known carts that sell home-made food on the streets because, firstly, the foods are either steamed or grilled with little or no oil, which makes them a healthy snack. And most importantly, teenagers, young couples who are in between jobs, underserved women, and grand dames all sit with their secret recipe and feed the laid-back crowd of Dhaka, adding a thrill factor to Dhaka nights. I do want to encourage them.

Footnote: All these carts may face restrictions from the city corporation and might have changed location. Kindly spare me if you get a wobbly tummy.



STRUGGLE, SURVIVAL, SUCCESS

The untold stories of Bangladeshi young migrants in France

MARIE PERCOT

I live in a small town in the west of France with a population of 7,500 inhabitants — hardly a union's ward for Bangladesh. Four years ago, on my way back from the market, I stopped to chat with a neighbour at the corner of the small lane leading to my house. Suddenly, I thought I heard people speaking Bangla — something very surprising, since the Bengali community in France is still quite small. I walked a few steps closer and saw two young people looking at the few words in Bangla that decorate my front door. I asked them if they were from Bangladesh — a surprise for them as well, since most people in France would more likely assume they were "Indian." This is how I came to know Sahel and Shimul, who were 17 and 18 at the time, respectively, and were apprentices in the two nearby fine-dining restaurants. Since then, we have stayed in regular contact, and I've been introduced to a dozen of their friends living in the area or in Nantes, the nearby metropolis. Over time, I've gathered their stories and it was encouraging to see that — although they had to go through many hardships — many of them have eventually been following rather successful paths in France.

The exact number of Bangladeshis living in France is not accurately known since not all of them are documented migrants. The most reliable sources estimate that there would be somewhere between 50,000 and 80,000 people who started to arrive by the end of the 80s. Most of them arrived claiming political asylum, which many were eventually granted; however, many too were denied this status, and thus remained in France under an irregular status. Almost all of

of trained candidates. Their salaries increase quickly, reaching over €2,000 within just a year or two — even without counting overtime — when the minimum salary in France is €1,400.

All the young Bangladeshis I met were focused on saving as much money as possible, since their goal is to open their own restaurant as soon as they can. For instance, Sahel Mia, who is now 21, opened his a few weeks ago, and his friend Joynal, who is just two years older, moved to the south of France a year ago to take over a fast-food restaurant, just like Sahel. Their maturity and remarkable entrepreneurial spirit are truly noteworthy. Opening a traditional French or "Indian" restaurant — with a large dining room, waitstaff, and so on — would be financially out of reach, at least as a first venture. However, thanks to their savings, securing a bank loan to open a fast-food establishment is relatively feasible, and such a business can become profitable fairly quickly.

Of course, among those who arrived in France, there are also young people whose paths have been far more chaotic. They are difficult to get to know, since as undocumented migrants they are forced to live extremely discreet lives — rarely going out and working off the books, often in the back of restaurant kitchens as dishwashers or cleaners. Among those who left, there are also those — though their number is impossible to determine — who never managed to reach their intended destination, having been deceived by smugglers, and whose journeys ended tragically in Libya or the Mediterranean Sea. For all of them — regardless of future success — the path is marked by a series of hardships that must be overcome.

Not so long ago, I was invited for lunch at the apartment that Sahel shares with a group



Main photo: An improvised camp for unaccompanied migrant minors in Ivry-sur-Seine, France, 24 October 2022. Credit: InfoMigrants.
Inset: Sahel Mia, from Shimulbuk in the Sylhet district, standing in front of his recently opened restaurant in La Roche-sur-Yon.

of friends. The Bangla food was plentiful and delicious. The atmosphere was warm and joyful. Each of them shared their plans with me: one wanted to learn how to prepare Japanese sushi because "it works well in France," another told me about the girl his family had suggested he marry — someone he would certainly bring back to France — and a third asked me to help him fill out a visa application for a trip to Canada, etc. I left feeling happy for them and full of respect for these young men — so enthusiastic and full of energy.

It would certainly not be wise to encourage young Bangladeshis to take this path, as it is fraught with obstacles and exposes them, from the outset, to the mercy of often unscrupulous smugglers. It is also clear that not all teenagers have the strength or ability to face such an ordeal. Finally, the care provided to unaccompanied minors in France is becoming increasingly strained and will eventually leave more and more youths abandoned by the system. Still, those who succeed despite everything deserve recognition and admiration.

Marie Percot is currently Visiting Professor at the International Institute for Migration and Development (IIMAD), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India.

UNHEARD VOICES



Women in Kalabagi village shoulder much of the burden, working both indoors and outdoors to keep their families afloat.



A woman from Kalabagi village traces the boundary of her home with her index finger — now in the middle of the river.

STORIES FROM THE HANGING VILLAGE

A community left to fight the sea alone

RAFIQUL ISLAM MONTU

Sagar Sardar and Nasima Begum have no time off. After working outside all day, they now have to repair their house. Their home has collapsed under the pressure of a sudden tide. If they cannot repair it, all the family members will have to live under the open sky. Here, people build hanging houses supported by bamboo poles. River water flows beneath the wooden floors of their homes.

This is the reality in Kalabagi village, set beside the Sundarbans in Dakop upazila of Khulna district on the west coast of Bangladesh. The people of this village live in elevated houses to escape the tidal water. The Fakirkona part of the hanging village became an island after Cyclone Amphan. More than a hundred families are now completely isolated. During high tide, the houses of the hanging village appear from a distance as if they are floating on the water. Once upon a time, people in this area farmed and fished in the river for a living. Now some still fish in the river and work in the Sundarbans. However, many are forced to go elsewhere in search of work. Sagar Sardar and Nasima Begum are among them.

"My house was here, where the waves of the Shiba River now flow. My days were going well with work. I used to cover my family expenses by cultivating a little land. But Cyclone Aila came and wiped out everything. We lost our land. Now our means of income are gone. We do not even have a place to live. In the end, we build a house like this. When the tide rises, we raise the wooden platform. Now this is our house. But it is temporary. It breaks down again and again," said Sagar Sardar, pointing towards the Shiba River.

Hanging village, Cyclone Aila's wound

Like Sagar Sardar's house, hundreds of homes in Kalabagi village hang from bamboo poles. People have been living in these structures for years. No, no one taught the people of this area this survival technique. They learned from disasters that if they want to live here, they must build houses in this way. All the houses in this village were once on land. There was no need for such hanging structures. Back then, there were courtyards in front of the houses. Children used to play in those courtyards. There were vegetable gardens around the homes. But that life was taken away by the devastating Cyclone Aila in 2009. These were the words of Mobarak Hossain, 65, a daily wage worker from the hanging village.

Abdus Sobahan Gazi, 70, lives in a small hanging house next to Kalabagi market. Even at this age, he goes to

the river by boat. He earns his living by catching crabs. He has changed houses ten times in his life. Once he had a house on solid ground. Now he lives in a hanging house. Sobahan Gazi said that the 1988 cyclone caused the most damage in this area. After that came Cyclone Sidr. The 2009 Cyclone Aila caused extensive damage to Sutarkhali and Kamarkhola unions of Dakop upazila. Among them, Sutarkhali union suffered the most. The area remained underwater for about five years. The houses of Kalabagi were turned into hanging houses after Cyclone Aila struck. The village, once surrounded by greenery, has now become a barren expanse.

Cyclone Aila took away the good times of the people here. Kalabagi earned the new name, 'hanging village.'



Numerous children in Kalabagi cannot attend school as they must contribute to supporting their families.

The village changed even more after Cyclone Amphan on May 20, 2020. The hanging village broke into two parts due to the strong impact of the cyclone. Now a portion of the village has become an island. About 100 families live on that small island adjacent to the Sundarbans. Local residents said that the level of the tidal waves gradually increased. Finally, people began building houses on high platforms to survive the rising tide. They have been living a very inhuman life for a century.

The misery is increasing

"The hungry river is coming towards us. Where will we go now? Our village has been completely destroyed. We have changed houses five times since Cyclone Aila hit. Natural disasters have changed the field of work and reduced income. Our precarious life is becoming more precarious," said Solaiman Sheikh, 65, of Kalabagi village. Similar experiences were shared by Nani Gopal Mandal, 30, Arun Mandal, 50, and Kamrul Islam, 45.

Solaiman Sheikh said, 'Whenever a

disaster strikes, we face some kind of loss. And we need money to overcome that loss. Employment opportunities have also shrunk because of the disaster. There is no longer any chance to earn a living by working in the area. Collecting shrimp from the river was our main source of income. But for a few years, the government has banned catching shrimp from the river. As a result, we have to go to outside cities for work. We cannot earn the necessary income there either. Now it has become difficult for us to pull our lives together.'

Rafiqul Islam Khokon, executive director of a Khulna-based non-governmental development organisation, said, 'After Cyclone Aila, this area has become more vulnerable. Local residents have lost their land due to erosion. As a result, their suffering

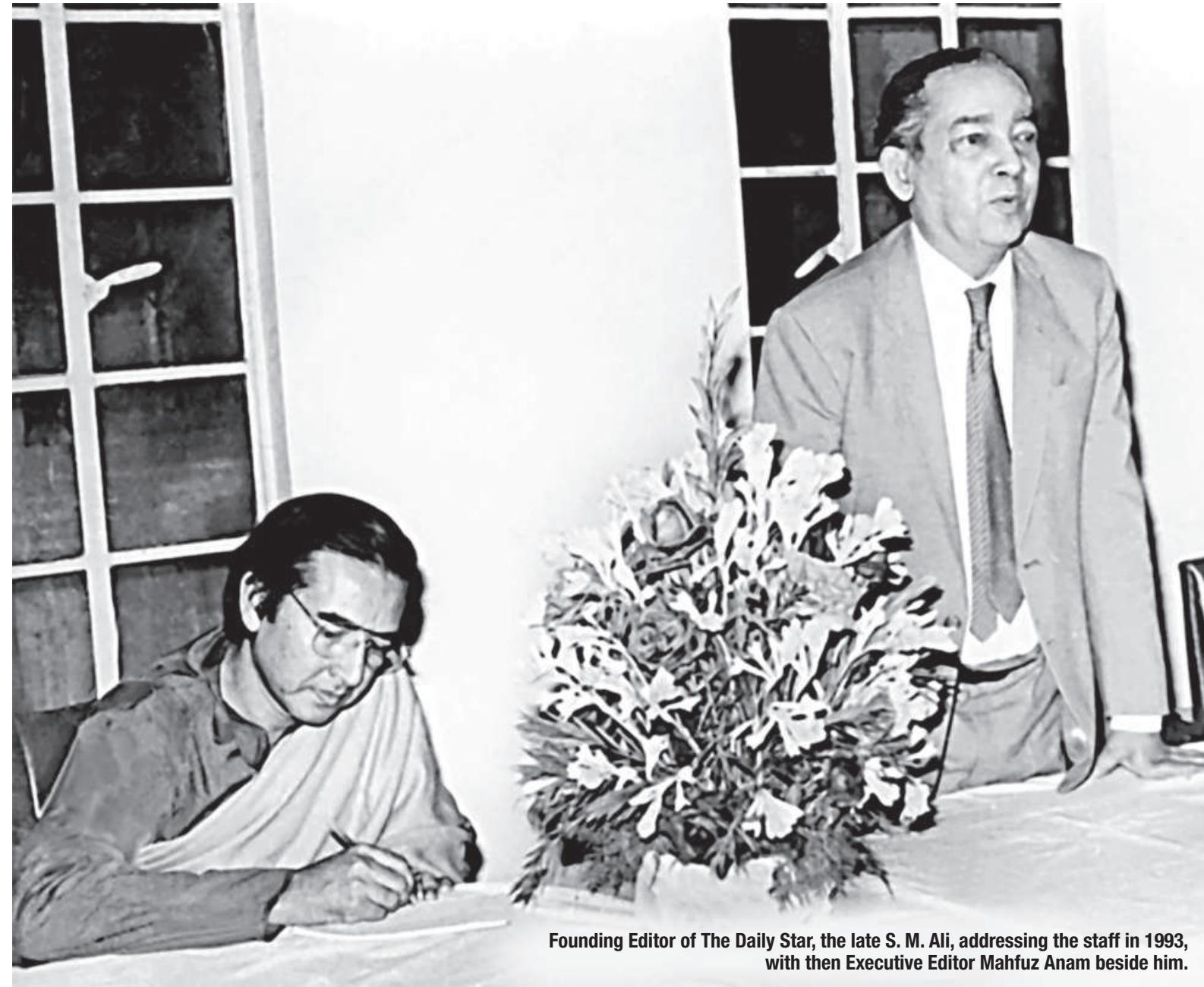


Residents of Kalabagi village live in these precariously built hanging houses.

PHOTOS BY RAFIQUL ISLAM MONTU

THOUGHTS ON PRESS FREEDOM

and about a Dhaka weekly that died without a bang



Founding Editor of The Daily Star, the late S. M. Ali, addressing the staff in 1993, with then Executive Editor Mahfuz Anam beside him.

So, when (and if) we have a comprehensive history of the media of this country, with special reference to the struggle for press freedom, this little known weekly (East Bengal Times) that came out from Wari should provide more than a footnote; it should be a full chapter.

SM ALI

On the occasion of the 97th birth anniversary of S M Ali, a distinguished journalist and the founding editor of The Daily Star, we are reprinting one of his articles, originally published in this newspaper on June 28, 1991.

My memory gets a jolt whenever someone brings up the subject of press freedom in this or in any other country, the latest case being the observance of the Black Day, commemorating the closure of all but four newspapers in Dhaka by the then government of Bangladesh in 1974.

It surprises me that our governments, first in the then East Pakistan and then in Bangladesh, so quickly lost their patience with the press, curbed its freedom and often succeeded in turning it into a docile institution.

What is particularly sad is that so often this systematic exercise was carried out by national leaders who, when they were out in the cold, had gained most from support of the media. Why was it so? And, what's more important, how can we be sure that the pattern will not be repeated in the future?

Here, my interest lies in seeing an authoritative research study on the history of our struggle for press freedom, from 1947 to 1990, undertaken by an organisation like the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), perhaps in collaboration with the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ). A well-documented work would, I believe, contain such materials as

the "offending" reports, articles and editorials which brought troubles for publications concerned, copies of executive orders, unless they were just verbal instructions, closing down newspapers, as in 1974, and testimonies of journalists who, in one way or another paid a price for standing up for press freedom.

The study would fill in many gaps in our knowledge of the history of the media in this country, especially in the field of press freedom.

For instance, which publication in the then East Pakistan earned the dubious distinction of being the first victim of the government's assault on the press?

When the question was raised during an informal discussion with some journalists at the PIB a few months ago, the answer seemed unanimous. It must have been the then Paksitan Observer which, thanks to its courageous editorial on corruption among associates of the then Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin got closed

down, probably in 1952, and remained shut for several months. But no one was quite sure of the dates.

I suggested that the answer might be wrong. I named the East Bengal Times, a little known English-language weekly which, owned by an aristocratic Dhaka family that I remember only as the Guhas, used to come out from an old style palatial house in Wari. The building served as both the residence to the owners and the office of the weekly. The printing press, with rows and rows of wooden case of hand-set types and a treadle machine, placed in a tin shed, was also in the same compound. It was

quite a compact operation.

At the time of independence in August, 1947, the East Bengal Times was a fairly well-established weekly in a city which was yet to have its first daily newspaper. Despite some difficulties that the owners had in adjusting to the changed political realities in the country — the head of the family had already migrated to Calcutta, leaving behind his son and daughter-in-law to look after the properties and the publication — the East Bengal Times carried on, along an uncertain course, without being fully aware of the distrust it caused in the mind of the Muslim League-dominated provincial administration.

Sadly enough, the weekly was on borrowed time. It seldom published critical pieces on the administration that, in matter of months, had virtually lost all its credibility with the people. However, an exception was a commentary the paper published on corruption — the subject that kept cropping up for media during the past 42 years — and immediately invited the wrath of the government of Khwaja Nazimuddin. The office of the publication was raided and ransacked. The man who paid a price was an exceptionally docile Hindu school teacher who had a part-time job in the publication. Since he admitted being the writer of the so-called offending article and took the full responsibility for its publication without any authorisation of the editor and knowledge of the other member of the staff, the police had a relatively straightforward job in hand. They took the teacher into custody and closed down the publication — for good.

The two lucky ones who were spared by the police were the Editor Ms. Kalyani Guha, the daughter-in-law of the family, and a young assistant editor — well, that's me.

I happened to be out of Dhaka, spending a vacation at Maulvi Bazar, during the police raid on the East Bengal Times. The school teacher cum journalist — I do not think, he cared to work for another publication again — had been released by the police when



SM Ali in his early years.

PHOTO: COURTESY

I returned to Dhaka after a couple of weeks. But the Guhas had left for Calcutta. Within a year or so, when we had the Observer, the Morning News and the Azad dominating the media scene of Dhaka, the East Bengal Times was nothing more than a faint memory for most of its former readers. After all, it had a small — we jokingly called it a select — circulation, an unimpressive advertising support and hardly an impact on the political scene of the province. It died without a bang, not even with a whimper.

Among the publications I have worked for, the East Bengal Times still occupies a special place in my recollections.

After all, it was this publication that gave me my first job as a journalist. It hired me, without any introduction, just by glancing through a set of clippings of a dozen or so of my articles which had been published by a Sylhet weekly. Incidentally, it was the same clippings which had earned me a seat in the Salimullah Muslim Hall and a place in the 'honours' class of English Language and Literature, despite my poor performance in the Intermediate Science examination. Like Dr Syed Moazzem Hossain, the then Provost of the Salimullah Hall and Prof. A.G Stock, the Head of the English Department, Kalyani Guha had simply looked at the faded pages which carried my byline, without really reading any of my masterpieces, the whole exercise being only a formality for hiring me.

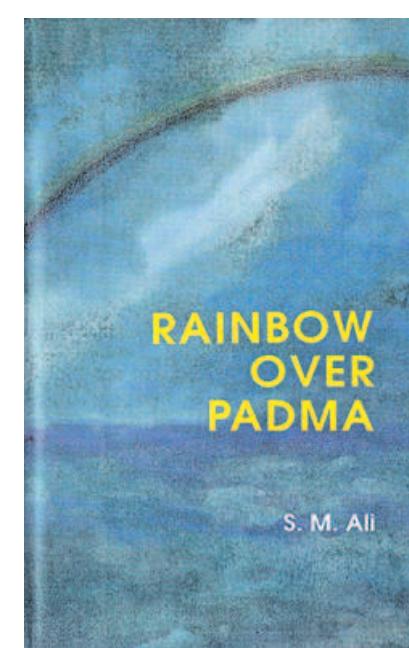
Since the Guhas had apparently never hired a young man who was still in his teens as a journalist and were blissfully unaware of my potential, they decided to be on the safe side, from their perspective, when it came to the question of my salary. It was so low that Ms Guha could not utter the figure. She wrote it on a piece of paper, showed it to me and blushed. Then, it was my turn to blush, in a mixture of embarrassment

the background, thus leaving me alone with my work. Once in a while, she would send me a Charles Lamb type of essay, written in a sentimental vein, together with a little note asking for its publication. I would put it in, with reasonable promptness, on an inside page, but giving it just a bit of extra prominence than such a piece deserved.

For an aspiring journalist like myself, there could not have been a better training ground than the East Bengal Times. Every week, the 12-page tabloid weekly was very much my handiwork. I wrote the major pieces and provided the headlines. I edited the articles from contributors and managed to get photographs to illustrate their pieces. I did the proof-reading and laid out the pages which were printed, two pages at time, every Friday night.

After all these years, I find it a little difficult to believe that I was given such total freedom in editing the publication. I could carry out any number of journalistic experiments, including some bad ones, and introduce all kinds of imaginary bylines of non-existent writers for pieces that I wrote myself. I got most of my ideas from Calcutta publication and some from books on newspaper editing and layouts which I borrowed from the British Information Services. Thus, we got such ideas as "The Week in Review," based on news items we picked up from the Calcutta press, a "Capital Diary," a page on the international scene and another on the university. Quite a bit that went into the publication every week was surprisingly professional, but there was much which was extremely amateurish.

This strange mix hardly bothered the Guhas or the few contributors I had lined up among my friends in the university. All these writers were my seniors and, in a matter of years and decades in some cases, they made their mark on the national scene. They included A.K. Naziruddin Ahmed who

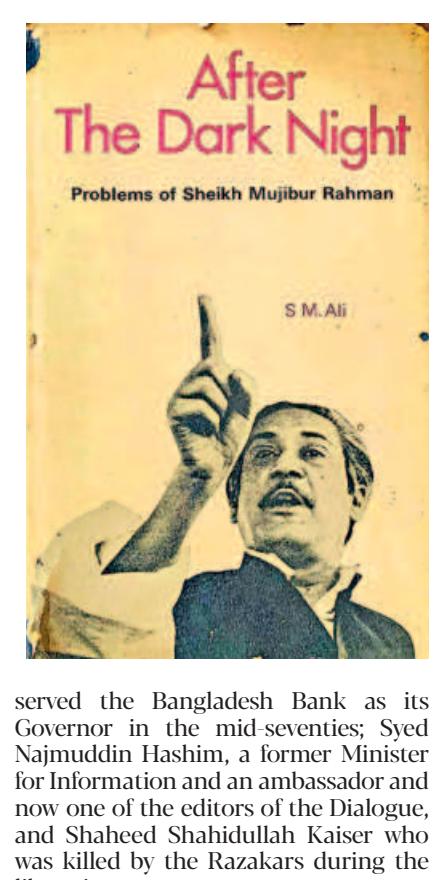


and delight. With both of us blushing, it was a touching moment. Then, Kalyani Guha who was one of the exceedingly good-looking women I had seen in Dhaka in those days, stopped blushing and said in a reassuring voice, "it is really a pocket allowance." Instead of asking what her idea of a pocket allowance was, I nodded my immediate acceptance of the offer. As far as I knew, there was no other English-language weekly in Dhaka in those days where I could try for a job.

Whether Guha suffered from a case of bad conscience over my salary or because they were basically decent people, they treated me very well indeed, almost like a member of the family. There were occasional free meals, endless cups of tea and snacks and an acceptance of the fact that I was

the man in charge of the publication, which was really the case until the school teacher came along to share my work on the writing side and eventually to get the paper closed down.

It was a blessing that Kalyani Guha who had no journalistic experience and hardly any writing ability, remained in



served the Bangladesh Bank as its Governor in the mid seventies; Syed Nazimuddin Hashim, a former Minister for Information and an ambassador and now one of the editors of the Dialogue, and Shaheed Shahidullah Kaiser who was killed by the Razakars during the liberation war.

The East Bengal Times was just not simply a training ground for an aspiring journalist but it had also won a place for itself among budding intellectuals in Dhaka University.

So, when (and if) we have a comprehensive history of the media of this country, with special reference to the struggle for press freedom, this little known weekly that came out from Wari should provide more than a footnote; it should be a full chapter.

There will also be other chapters about publications which no longer exist and about fighters for press freedom who have also disappeared from the scene. We will talk about a few of them in this column one of these days.

SM Ali was the founding Editor of The Daily Star



EU'S GSP+ The lifeline Bangladesh must win before 2029

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

For more than 20 years, Bangladesh has lived under a kind of economic sunshine in Europe. Garments stitched in the country's industrial belts entered European markets without any import tax under the EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme. This access helped turn the South Asian country into one of the world's largest apparel exporters.

In four years, that duty-free facility will cease to exist. And what replaces it will determine whether Bangladesh can hold its place in the EU market or watch

competitors pull ahead.

Bangladesh is set to graduate from least developed country (LDC) status in November 2026, a milestone signalling progress but also triggering the phasing out of the duty-free treatment that underpins its export strength.

International studies, including warnings from the World Trade Organization, suggest Bangladesh could lose as much as \$8 billion annually, around 14 percent of export earnings, once the benefit disappears.

The EU has granted a three-year transition, allowing Bangladesh to enjoy EBA benefits until November 2029. Beyond that, the path is narrow – to get access to the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), or sign a free trade agreement, which is much more complicated.

For a country where more than half of all exports go to the EU, and garments alone account for 92 percent of EU-bound shipments, this is not just about trade anymore. Much of the country's economic future now rests on how it navigates this uncharted territory.

EBA-OWED SUCCESS

Bangladesh's journey in European markets stretches back more than 50 years. In the 1970s, it exported under the EU's GSP scheme, which offered developing nations reduced import taxes. Yet, the garment industry faced stiff restrictions under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, which capped exports to Western markets.

The turning point came in 2001, when the EU launched the EBA scheme, granting LDCs duty-free access for all exports except weapons. Previously, Bangladesh's garments had entered Europe under basic preferences, still constrained by quotas.

The EBA lifted these limits almost overnight. It was effectively an open gate. Factories expanded, investment poured in, and Europe became Bangladesh's largest and most reliable buyer.

Today, the EU accounts for 58 percent of Bangladesh's total exports and over 64 percent of its garment shipments, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). One in every three garments sold in Europe is made in Bangladesh.

This success also made Bangladesh the single largest beneficiary of LDC trade preferences globally, accounting for 67 percent of all LDC-duty-free exports. It is a position built over decades, but one that will soon become harder to defend. Things will change drastically in the post-LDC era when Bangladesh will lose its access to the EBA scheme and will face steep tariffs.

GSP+: THE POST-LDC LIFELINE

Economists and businesses say after November 2029, Bangladesh must either secure GSP+ or negotiate an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

An EPA is a two way deal. Bangladesh would receive duty-free access but must also reduce tariffs on certain European imports. It is a more complex, politically difficult route.

GSP+, by contrast, is conceptually similar to EBA. Most products can enter Europe at zero duty. But the scheme is far more demanding. The original GSP scheme is expected to come to an end in 2027. From 2028, the GSP+ could be Bangladesh's new lifeline.

Essentially, GSP+ is a contract under which the EU offers tariff-free access, but only to countries that can

THE COST OF FAILURE

Businesses are anxious.

If Bangladesh fails to secure GSP+, its garments are likely to face EU tariffs of 9-12 percent, the standard most-favoured-nation rates, warned Newage Group Vice-Chairman Asif Ibrahim.

"This could result in \$2-\$3 billion in annual export losses, job cuts, and slower industrial growth. Competing countries with better market access could attract more orders, putting Bangladesh at a disadvantage.

It may push the country to accelerate labour, governance, and

NEGOTIATING AGAINST THE CLOCK
The government has begun initial discussions with the EU on both GSP+ and a possible EPA.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said, "We have sent a proposal to start negotiations for signing an EPA, and an inter-ministerial meeting has been held to gather opinions. We are moving forward with both GSP+ and EPA negotiations with the EU."

But industry leaders and experts argue that negotiations must accelerate.

"Bangladesh must launch intense negotiations, including seeking a waiver, without leaving it until the last minute. A dedicated working committee should be formed immediately," recommended Razzaque.

Others caution that lobbying for a waiver of the safeguard clause, the rule that currently disqualifies Bangladesh, is essential.

BGMEA president Mahmud Hasan Khan said, "If the 6 percent and 37 percent thresholds are not removed, the Bangladeshi garment sector will not benefit. We have raised this issue multiple times in buyers' forum meetings and also brought it to the attention of the government.

EuroCham is also actively working on this issue."

He also stated that the association has been in talks with the government, international trade partners, and diplomats to extend the LDC transition period by at least six years, while also discussing GSP+ negotiations with the EU.

The European Union Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (EuroCham) Chairperson Nuria Lopez stressed the urgency of extending the LDC transition period and pushing for GSP+. "Continuing negotiations with the EU for GSP+ is more beneficial than signing an EPA."

Mostafa Abid Khan, former member of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, said, "The new GSP+ rules are still in draft form, giving Bangladesh room to negotiate with the EU for relaxation or a waiver of the safeguard provisions. Bangladesh should start negotiations immediately, focusing on two options: obtaining GSP+ or signing an EPA."

"Negotiating an EPA may be easier and quicker, while GSP+ requires more time to meet all conditions. Once Bangladesh secures GSP+, it can enjoy trade benefits under the scheme until it reaches middle-income status, though there is a risk of losing the status as the country may become a middle-income country by 2032."



demonstrate full implementation of 32 international conventions covering human rights, labour standards, environmental protection, and governance – and, crucially, to prove that these rules are enforced.

Bangladesh has already ratified all the conventions and amended labour laws. Yet, ratification alone is insufficient. The EU will closely examine implementation – factory safety, worker rights, environmental compliance, governance, and overall accountability.

According to Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), "We must implement them effectively to avoid any doubts about compliance. If needed, Bangladesh can seek EU support to strengthen its capacity."

On top of these conditions sits a safeguard mechanism. A country can only qualify for the scheme if its exports stay below 6 percent in any product category and below 37 percent of the EU's total imports.

Bangladesh has exceeded both limits. Apparel exports make up 22 percent of an EU product category and nearly 58 percent of its total imports. This places Bangladesh outside the eligibility threshold, meaning the country must negotiate special treatment.

In other words, Bangladesh is too successful to enter GSP+ under normal criteria. It must negotiate an exception.

(EPA)

Bangladesh-EU trade and issues



Bangladesh seeking GSP+ and EPA with the EU



It has ratified all 32 conventions required for GSP+



In 2024, Bangladesh was the EU's 36th trading partner (0.4% of EU trade)



EU-Bangladesh goods trade in 2024: €22.2bn



Bangladesh enjoys trade surplus of €17.5bn



Bangladesh has proposed signing an EPA with the EU



92% of EU imports from Bangladesh were textiles



EU exports: machinery, appliances 35%, chemicals 23%



EU-Bangladesh services trade in 2023: €2bn (EU surplus €0.8bn)



Bangladesh is the largest EBA beneficiary: €17.1bn in exports (91% utilisation) in 2023



Total goods & services trade in 2023: €23.9bn



EU FDI stock in Bangladesh (2023): €2.1bn; Bangladesh FDI in EU: €95m