



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

RECLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS AS EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS

Human rights are "everyday essentials" for a functioning society -- the pillars of security, justice, and expression that people rely upon daily. However, recent data serve as a reminder that these essentials are being eroded in Bangladesh, and highlight persistent vulnerabilities that continue to challenge the rule of law and public safety. The most critical essential -- the right to security -- remains fragile. Sustained political instability has resulted in about 200 deaths and thousands of injuries between January and November, driven largely by internal factionalism and targeted attacks on activists, according to data compiled by rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra. This violence is further compounded by 29 extrajudicial killings and deaths in custody this year -- a recurring disruption to the fundamental guarantee of safety that every citizen requires. Equally concerning is the rise of vigilante violence, with 184 lives lost to mob beatings in the January-November period. This climate of impunity has also impacted religious minorities. Furthermore, the right to expression -- essential for accountability -- remains under pressure. Journalists, often the guardians of these everyday rights, have faced physical assault and legal harassment.

Extrajudicial killings, custodial torture still stalk Bangladesh

ASK reports 29 deaths in 11 months till November this year

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

When former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was deposed in the mass uprising last year, hopes ran high that the dark days of extrajudicial killings and custodial deaths would finally be over.

But over the past year, such deaths have continued across Bangladesh, with the interim government failing to take meaningful action to curb these grave rights violations.

Human rights campaigners say the persistence of such deaths and abuses reflects a long-standing culture of impunity, where those responsible are rarely held accountable.

The death of 30-year-old Hazrat Ali, an expatriate from Brahmanbaria, serves as a stark reminder of this.

On December 6 last year, Ali was detained during a joint force operation in Bancharampur upazila. His bruised body was handed over to his family the following day.

At that time, Morshedul Alam, the then officer-in-charge of Bancharampur Police Station, could not provide any explanation. He only said joint forces conducted the drive, and that Ali was wanted in several robbery cases.

When contacted on Saturday, Pias Basak, additional superintendent of police of the Nabinagar Circle in Brahmanbaria, said he heard of the incident but didn't follow up on it.

Another incident involving Md Abdullah from Brahmanbaria's Salimganj union adds to a troubling pattern of custodial abuse.

Suspected of theft, Abdullah was detained and tortured by locals on September 23. Later, he was handed over to police. His ordeal continued in police custody, where he died of his injuries five days later.

Sub Inspector Md Mohim Uddin was arrested over allegations of torturing Abdullah in custody.

Human rights activists say his death was one of many cases that point to systemic failures to prevent custodial torture.

According to data from Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), 29 people were killed extrajudicially or died as a result of torture in custody between January and November this year.

During the same period, 28 convicts and 55 under-trial prisoners

died in jail.

Throughout last year, 20 people fell victim to extrajudicial killing or faced death in custody while 23 convicts and 42 under-trial prisoners lost their lives in prison, ASK data shows.

Asked about deaths in prison, Jannat Ul Forhad, assistant inspector general of the Prisons Directorate, said 90 prisoners died of illness over the past 11 months.

He also claimed that no prisoner was subjected to torture.

When contacted, AHM Sahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general (AIG) at the police headquarters, claimed deaths by suicide and some incidents of mob beatings that led to fatalities were shown as custodial deaths in the reports by rights groups.

"In some cases, individuals were beaten by mobs and left critically injured. Police rescued them and

died by suicide; and two died of heart attack.

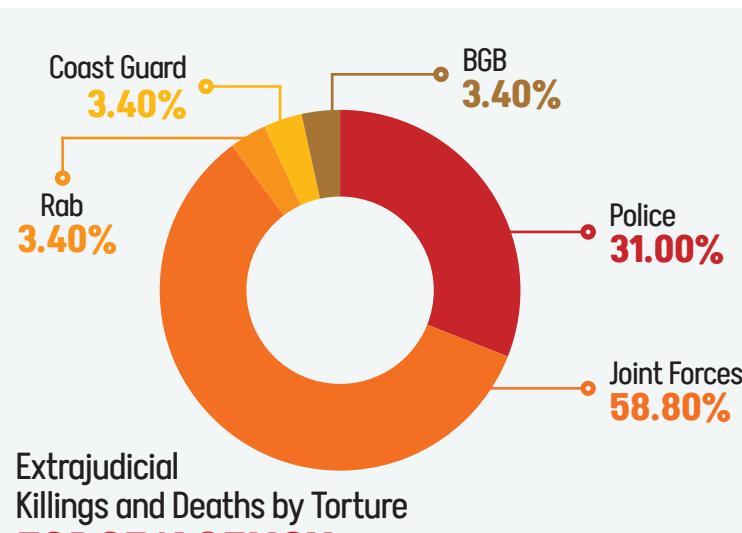
ACTIVISTS CALL FOR EFFECTIVE MECHANISM

Human rights advocates have called for independent investigations into all extrajudicial killings and custodial deaths, along with stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability within law enforcement agencies.

Rights activist Nur Khan Liton said the country witnessed "alarming continuation" of torture and abuses under previous regimes.

"The perpetrators of these crimes remain in positions of power... No one has been held accountable. There is no sign that justice will be served."

Liton, also a member of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, warned that the entrenched culture of rights abuse and custodial deaths will continue if the next government fails to act.



then took them to hospital where they died. These incidents were also counted as custodial deaths in the reports."

He claimed that investigations have been launched into all allegations of extrajudicial killings or custodial deaths. "Some probes are complete while others are ongoing."

Citing probe reports on seven custodial deaths, he said two people were beaten to death by mobs; three

Tawohidul Haque, an associate professor at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research at Dhaka University, pointed out that the lack of transparency surrounding arrests often fuels suspicion.

"Family members must be informed when someone is detained, and they must be allowed to verify that the detainee is alive and unharmed. This will help prevent torture and abuse," he added.

Political parties must tolerate dissent and embrace diversity

Sara Hossain in an interview with Star

ZYMA ISLAM

Justice and accountability for the egregious human rights violations of the past is crucial, but the challenge lies in ensuring this is not done by repeating patterns of reprisal and retaliation, warned Sara Hossain, a senior lawyer at the Supreme Court, as she spoke about the role of political parties in protecting human rights.

"We are undergoing a transition from prolonged autocratic rule marked by severe suppression of civil and political rights," she said, noting that the former ruling party captured key institutions and repressed opponents through enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, restrictions on expression, and pervasive surveillance.

"Judicial harassment was a key tool for political repression, complementing the role of security and law enforcement agencies in suppressing fundamental rights."

"All of this was met with blanket denials from the ruling party and its allies, and strategic silences from aligned civil society groups who continued to assert that any change in the political order would disrupt the march of development. Some remained silent even in the face of the mass killings of July."

She said they also deny the findings of the OHCHR's Fact Finding Mission while selectively citing its recommendations.

"One of the most positive changes we have seen in the past year following the July uprising is the unequivocal condemnation by political parties -- other than the Awami League -- of the most horrific violations of the past years, in particular enforced disappearances, and their unanimous pledges to ensure such cases never recur."

But even as women led these campaigns, she said, they are now being pushed out of public life, facing increased denigration and continued denial of their right to equality.

"Human rights encompass not only the rights to life and liberty, but also equality and non-discrimination, alongside economic, social and cultural rights. Beyond the July Charter's promise to 'expand rights', the parties have not clarified their positions on addressing



Human rights encompass not only the rights to life and liberty, but also equality and non-discrimination; and economic, social and cultural rights.

discrimination or promoting inclusion.

"We are also observing a cycle of revenge politics and the parties are, in too many cases, part of initiating and fueling this process."

"Under the last government, many members of opposition groups were criminalised and faced the full force of the law simply for exercising their right to support a political party other than the ruling one. Many know they will likely never have their suffering acknowledged or receive justice. They could have been at the forefront of changing these practices, yet some are now accused of perpetuating them by using legal processes to retaliate against political opponents."

Hossain said members of previously allied parties are also resorting to "lawfare" against one another.

She noted that parties continue to use draconian laws -- many from the colonial era -- including those related to "hurting of religious sentiments" against their opponents.

"Emerging from a prolonged period of autocracy, many had hoped to see significant efforts to rebuild the criminal justice system. Disturbingly, we are seeing renewed use of laws long known as tools of repression and applied again to harass political opponents, including laws on sedition, terrorism, defamation and 'hurting' religious sentiment. These laws are also being used to threaten civil society."

"During the AL-era, the jailing of baul singers like Rita Dewan and Shariat Boyati on trumped-up charges of 'hurting religious sentiment' was clearly considered an abuse of process. Should the arrest and incarceration of Baul Maharaj -- following a case filed by a political party member, among others -- now be seen any differently?"

Hossain called it "unfortunate" that parties have failed to ensure meaningful participation of women and diverse groups in consultations and political actions.

"We've seen renewed patterns of targeting vulnerable groups," she said pointing to recent public commitments by some political figures about declaring Ahmadiyas as non-Muslims.

"When the chief adviser first took office, it was heartening to see how he firmly condemned the attacks and intimidation of Ahmadiyas. Unfortunately, some political leaders have made disturbing public statements threatening this community, in derogation of their own constitutional duties to respect the rights of others."

She stressed that Bangladesh is a country of people of diverse faiths and beliefs, shaped by progressive interpretations of rights through legal changes, court judgments and social mobilisation. "It's crucial to build a common political agenda and consensus about driving this process forward. Consensus is needed to move away from our culture of retaliation and denial, and to instead foster tolerance of offence and enable genuine dissent."

"We have seen a clear regression in women's visibility in public dialogue and discourse, accompanied by a sharp rise in visible misogyny, especially online."

She added that while women's rights are constitutionally guaranteed, political parties have yet to commit to many recommendations made by the Women's Affairs Reform Commission. "Some have not only rejected these, but sought to threaten and vilify the commission's members."

Hossain underscored the need to address the demands that catalysed the uprising. "How are the demands SEE PAGE J2 COL 3

Only political will can break cycle of violence

Nur Khan Liton in an interview with The Star

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Years of political hostility and the misuse of state agencies have kept political violence alive in Bangladesh, and only a newly elected government with the goodwill to act can break this cycle, said human rights activist Nur Khan Liton.

In an interview with The Daily Star, he said political hostility has become entrenched through long-standing practices such as false cases, harassment and intimidation.

Such practices have persisted across administrations and shaped citizens' relationship with politics, deepening mistrust between people and the state, said Liton, a member of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearance.

According to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), political violence between September 2024 and September 2025 left at least 160 people dead and over 8,000 others injured in 1,047 incidents.

Intra-party clashes accounted for the highest number of fatalities, with 85 deaths in BNP infighting alone.

Another 34 people were killed in BNP-Awami League confrontations, and two in clashes involving the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

Liton said citizens expected improvement after the August 5 political changeover, but the continuation of harassment, intimidation, and politically motivated cases under the interim administration showed "how deeply rooted the problems are".

He said many believed political violence and the misuse of legal mechanisms to corner opponents would decline after the shift, but that expectation did not materialise.

The rights activist said political violence cannot be viewed merely as clashes between rival groups; it is tied to deep-rooted hostility between parties and institutional habits that have built up over years. Tensions and distrust have grown to a point where political competition has become adversarial rather than constructive.

"To stop this violence and bring back a fresh breeze into politics, all political parties must work together to resolve the distances and conflicts among themselves," he said.

Unless parties take responsibility to reduce hostility, he warned, political violence will continue regardless of who

holds power.

This requires clear instructions that violence, harassment, and intimidation will not be tolerated, and that cases will not be used as instruments of political pressure.

He said the responsibility to take the first steps lies especially with the next elected government, which will have the authority and strength to initiate changes that an interim government cannot. This must begin with ending harassment through false or fabricated cases.

"Opponents must not be subdued through fabricated charges," he said, adding that such cases also drag in ordinary citizens, draining their resources, time, and dignity.

The rights activist said institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission and any police oversight bodies must be able to operate independently. For meaningful reform, these bodies need an environment free from fear and political pressure.



Independence, he stressed, is not optional but essential.

Reforms, Liton added, cannot be one-off. "Reform activities should be kept timely and ongoing," he said, noting that years of entrenched practices cannot be undone through short-term measures. A continuous reform process is needed to rebuild public trust.

Looking ahead, Liton said democratic stability depends on ending political violence.

Without strong political will, he warned that the country risks falling into yet another cycle of fear, hostility, and suppression.

"Only then can Bangladesh move beyond a politics sustained by fear and hostility. Whoever comes to power must take responsibility and show the will to change," Liton told this correspondent.

Put rights issues at the heart of polls pledges

Odhikar's Elan urges political parties

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Bangladesh now needs a government prepared to confront long-standing issues such as custodial torture, extrajudicial killings, and border violence instead of repeating earlier patterns of inaction, rights activist ASM Nasiruddin Elan has said.

In a recent interview with The Daily Star, he stressed that human rights must be central to election pledges and that the next administration must demonstrate from the outset that it is serious about ending these violations and ensuring accountability within law enforcement agencies.

According to Odhikar's latest report, at least 40 people were victims of alleged extrajudicial killings, and 35 Bangladeshis were killed allegedly by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) between August 9, 2024, and September 30 this year.

Most extrajudicial deaths occurred in custody rather than in "crossfire", while border killings continued with little change in pattern, said Elan, director of the rights body.



He said the recurring custodial torture and persistent BSF shootings show no meaningful improvement in internal reforms or border protection.

The overall pattern over the past year mirrors that of the previous 17 years, with most killings happening inside police stations, during remand, or while in custody of joint forces.

Elan noted that the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 remains largely unenforced, as victims or families often lose the motivation to pursue cases, rendering the law ineffective.

Responsibility for custodial deaths ultimately lies with the government in power, he said, but the roots of the problem run deeper. Years of political influence over law enforcement have fuelled allegations of enforced disappearance, torture, and other abuses. Actions by certain agencies during the July uprising further eroded public trust.

Reforming a force shaped by long-standing impunity is difficult, he said.

Reports persist of individuals being tortured or threatened with false cases

unless they pay large bribes -- practices that continued from the previous administration. Although the frequency may have dropped, "the mindset within the force has not changed and genuine accountability remains missing", Elan said.

"The interim government faced political divisions and instability, limiting its ability to deliver the reforms people expected. This is why the next elected government must take early and decisive steps."

According to him, those steps include ending extrajudicial killings, stopping torture in custody, and ensuring proper forensic investigations in every allegation.

He warned against using the police as a political instrument again. "Recruitment and deployment have long been shaped by partisan considerations. If a new government maintains that pattern, the same crises will return," he said.

Elan also questioned the need for multiple specialised security units with no clear mandates. In a democracy, a well-trained, accountable police force should be enough to maintain order. "Special forces often take on political responsibilities rather than serving public interest," he added.

He pointed out that fabricated cases remain a serious issue, used for political or financial gain. Officers responsible for false arrests must be held liable to end the practice, he said.

On border killings, he blamed a long-standing subservient foreign-policy approach, deepened under the previous Awami League government, which allowed Indian border forces to act with significant impunity. Children, teenagers, and women were among those shot dead, he said. He also noted that push-ins from India have increased since the July uprising.

According to Elan, such incidents send intentional signals of dominance, and their recurrence shows Bangladesh has yet to demand accountability effectively.

He urged the next government to pursue foreign policy "with its head held high" and raise border-killing cases in international forums when necessary.

"Killing unarmed civilians is a grave human-rights violation and cannot be justified by claims of illegal border crossings. The proper remedy is a legal process," he said.

As the nation heads toward the polls, Elan said the next government faces a defining test: whether it will finally address custodial torture, extrajudicial killing, and border violence, or continue the patterns of the past.

"The public has waited a long time. This time, the commitments must be real."

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

DIGITAL ABUSE

The new frontier of rights violations

NAZIBA BASHER

Every generation inherits new rights to defend. This Human Rights Day, Bangladesh confronts a frontier expanding faster than laws or institutions can manage: the digital world.

What once promised connection and empowerment has become a terrain where women face hostility, humiliation, and targeted abuse. Digital abuse is no small inconvenience. It violates privacy, dignity, bodily autonomy, freedom of expression, and equal participation.

The UN, including UN Women and UNDP, states clearly that "online harassment is violence -- and a human rights violation".

With artificial intelligence in the mix, people no longer need personal content to weaponise a woman's image. A single photograph is enough.

As Supreme Court lawyer Priya Ahsan Chowdhury noted, "With AI, it has become very easy to create fake or sexually suggestive images -- even if offenders don't have any personal photos."

THE SCALE OF THE CRISIS

Last December, social media was flooded with an AI-generated photocard dragging Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan and actress Mehazabien Chowdhury into fabricated controversy, falsely showing Mehazabien in an "environment-friendly condom dress" and implying the adviser had endorsed it.

Such distortion is part of a larger pattern.

The Violence Against Women Survey 2024 shows that 8.3 percent of women, particularly young and urban women, have already faced technology-facilitated violence. A NETZ Bangladesh study found 78.4 percent of young, digitally active women encountered harassment ranging

from threats and coercion to the non-consensual use of their images.

These numbers represent lives shaped by fear of what someone online might do next.

For women in the public eye, abuse often begins the moment they post a photograph or opinion. Actresses such as Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Ashna Habib Bhabna, Nusraat Faria, and Azmeri Haque Badhan have spoken about the unrelenting stream of sexualised insults they receive.

When Bhabna once captioned a photo "99" to highlight the number of abusive comments she got in a week, some replied with "Tasted 99, one more will make a century" or "Is 99 your body count?"

Women in sports face similar vitriol. Cricketer Rumana Ahmed said negative comments and rumours affect performance, especially when strangers invent stories about her personal life during even brief dips in form.

Shooter Kamrun Nahar Koly described targeted trolling before competitions and harassment from fake accounts that may even be linked to people within sports communities. "Not knowing who is behind the attacks makes the pressure even heavier," she said.

Footballer Ritu Porna Chakma recalled drawing a match and immediately being told to "give up football" or "go and become a TikToker". "One bad game, and they say things that can be quite unbearable."

LAWS EXIST, PROTECTION DOESN'T

Bangladesh's Cyber Protection Ordinance 2025 criminalises AI-generated or manipulated sexual images, but protection remains largely theoretical.

Investigations often stall because forensic capacity is limited and metadata is missing. Many survivors withdraw complaints due to stigma; many never file

one at all.

Offenders, meanwhile, adapt faster than institutions.

Police officials, including AIG (Media) AHM Shahadat Hossain, acknowledge that shame and fear prevent many women from seeking justice. The gap between legal text and lived experience grows wider each year.

NOT JUST A WOMEN'S ISSUE

Digital harassment is often minimised as something women should ignore or manage alone. But this is no trivial matter to just "ignore".

It undermines autonomy, restricts movement, distorts career paths, damages mental health, and forces self-censorship -- it denies women full participation in public and private life.

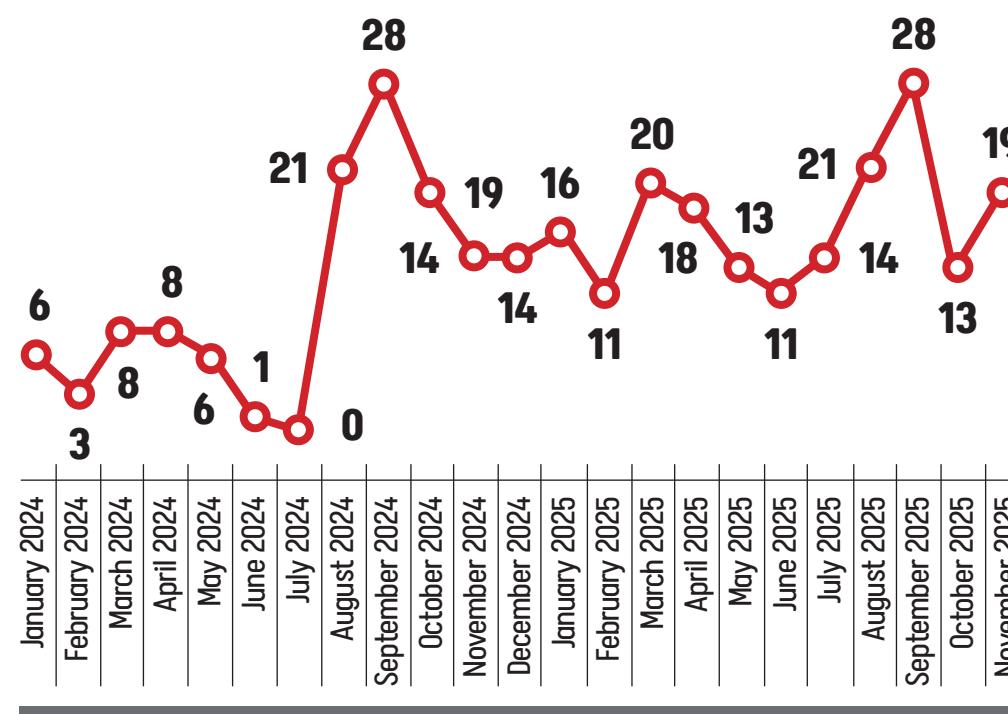
The right to exist online without humiliation is now as fundamental as the right to walk down a street safely, and when technology becomes a tool for silencing women, it becomes a human rights issue.

Meaningful action requires more than symbolic laws. Bangladesh needs stronger forensic capability, faster content removal across platforms, survivor-centred reporting systems, and better training for police and judges. But what it needs more is a cultural shift that refuses to blame survivors and recognises digital safety as inseparable from gender equality.

Until every woman can step into digital spaces without fear of being hunted, mocked, manipulated, or erased, our commitment to human rights will remain incomplete.

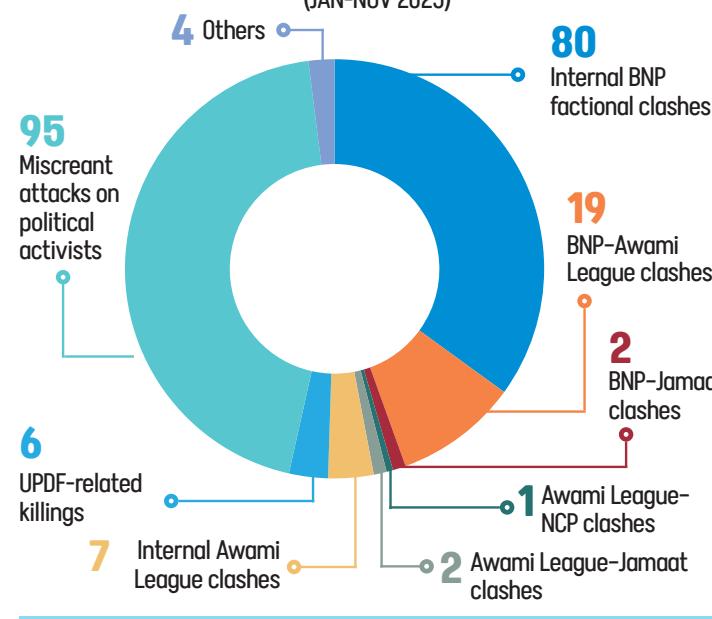
(The Daily Star's reporter Nilima Jahan, Sports reporters Samsul Arefin Khan and Anisur Rahman, and Arts and Entertainment reporters Sharmin Joya and Rakshanda Rahman Misha contributed.)

Rising deaths due to mob violence

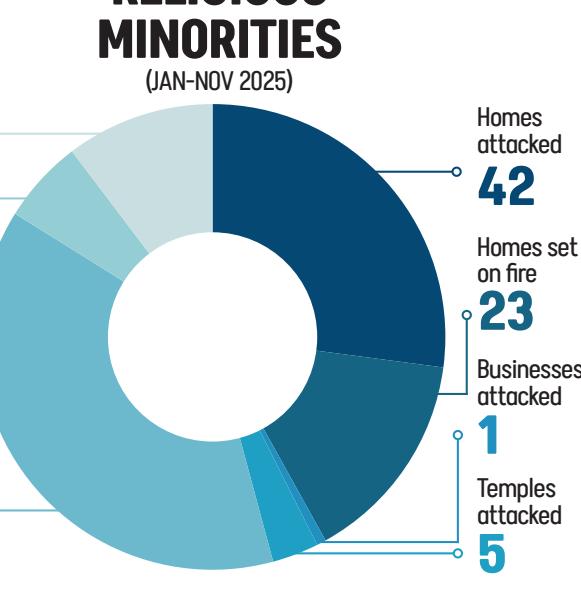


POLITICAL ACTIVISTS KILLED

(JAN-NOV 2025)



Types of Attacks on RELIGIOUS MINORITIES



Political parties must tolerate

FROM PAGE J1

of the anti-discrimination movement reflected in the current political consensus or in different parties' demands? How are inclusive practices being built?" she asked.

She noted that although disinformation campaigns and "gross lies" have been spread about the state of minorities, "the lies being told does not mean there are no underlying facts".

"A consequence of that is, when we see attacks on indigenous people, women or

religious minorities, we see a denial or dismissal -- a minimisation of their ordeal."

Hossain also criticised the failure of political parties to take strong action against mob violence. "Unless political parties set some red lines, we will see these shifts -- in intolerance, discrimination and exclusion -- becoming more deeply entrenched."

She said it is imperative to stop dividing and excluding people from participation in public or political life or access to opportunities,

based on political or religious belief or other identity.

"Promises of constitutional and institutional reform will mean little unless we see political actors play a strong role to call out and change the culture of violence and denial that we have seen in the past."

"This means political parties need to stand up against the reiteration or reflection of past practices, to break the cycle of revenge. Will this happen?"



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Seat-sharing talks change gear as polls schedule imminent

MAMUNUR RASHID, SAJJAD HOSSAIN and AHMED DEEPTO

Political parties are accelerating preparations for the coming polls, with aspirants nearly finalised, alliances taking shape, and seat-sharing talks at full throttle.

Across the country, the election mood is unmistakable: posters are all over the streets, rallies are large, and processions vie for public attention.

The spotlight now shifts to the Election Commission, which has completed preparations for the nation's first-ever twin exercises -- the 13th national polls and the referendum on July charter reforms -- slated for February.

The timeline for these polls is likely to be announced either this evening or tomorrow, setting the election process in motion, according to senior EC officials.

Following tradition, the commission will meet President Mohammed Shahabuddin at Bangabhaban today at

- ⦿ BNP insiders say it may keep 15 seats for its allies
- ⦿ Jamaat sources say it is unwilling to give its allies more than 70 seats
- ⦿ NCP to share seats with AB Party, Rastro Songskar Andolan
- ⦿ 2 Jatiya Party factions and 16 other parties form new alliance

noon. It met Chief Justice Syed Refat Ahmed yesterday and held talks with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Sunday.

State-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar have already been asked to record Chief Election

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus poses for a photo with the winners of this year's Begum Rokeya Padak -- footballer Ritu Porna Chakma, labour leader Kalpona Akter, physician Rubhana Raqib, and human rights activist Nabil Idris -- at a ceremony at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka yesterday. Story on page 14. PHOTO: PID

Human rights report paints a grim picture

HRSS says mob killings, political clashes, sexual violence dominate 2025

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 156 people were killed and 242 injured in 276 incidents of mob violence till November this year, according to a report by the Human Rights Support Society. That's an average of about 14 deaths per month from mob violence.

The Human Rights Observation Report 2025 was prepared on the state of law and order and human rights between January and November this year from coverage in 15 national dailies along with the organisation's own data and was released yesterday through a press statement.

During this period, at least 31 people were killed in clashes with law enforcement or from torture in custody, while 80 prisoners died in jails across the country.

At least 1,909 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence, of whom 789 were raped. Over half of the victims (455) were under 18.

Since the interim government took office in August last year, the expected improvement in human rights and law and order has not materialised; instead, the situation remained alarming between January and November this year, the report said.

Despite having hopes for overall progress in the new year, the report mentions that previous patterns of rights violations have continued, with

new patterns emerging.

Although incidents of enforced disappearances and crossfire (extrajudicial killings) did not occur, according to the report, political violence, mob killings, sexual violence against women, vandalism at shrines, and attacks on journalists have all increased.

- ⦿ 1,909 women, girls subjected to sexual violence
- ⦿ 293 attacks targeted journalists
- ⦿ 24 attacks on minority communities
- ⦿ More than 50 shrines were attacked

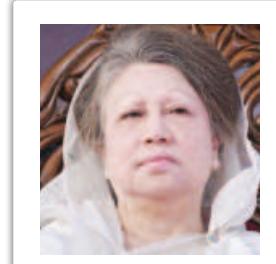
The report further noted interference with freedom of expression, deaths in law enforcement custody due to torture, attacks on workers, child abuse, attacks on minorities, deaths in prison, and obstruction in assemblies.

There have been 852 incidents of political violence, of which 474 stemmed from internal conflicts within the BNP

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KHALEDA'S HEALTH

Medical board finds no fresh deterioration



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's condition remains unchanged and is under the supervision of her medical board at the capital's Evercare Hospital.

Her medical board held a routine review meeting and found that no fresh deterioration was noticed as of yesterday evening.

Doctors advised that until the former prime minister's condition stabilises enough for her to fly for advanced treatment, she will undergo treatment at the healthcare facility.

Around 7:00pm, BNP media cell, quoting Khaleda's personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain, said her condition remains the same.

Zubaida Rahman, wife of BNP acting chairman

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16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

Despite decades of advocacy, women in Bangladesh continue to face entrenched barriers, from weak policy implementation to low political representation and persistent violence. The Women's Affairs Reforms Commission issued 423 recommendations, yet only a fraction have been implemented. On the final day of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, veteran rights activist Shireen Parveen Huq, also head of the commission, spoke to The Daily Star's Nilima Jahan about progress, setbacks, and the urgent reforms still waiting to be realised.

TDS: The Women's Affairs Reforms Commission made 423 recommendations. How much has been implemented?

Shireen: Of the 423 recommendations, 71 were prioritised by the women and children affairs ministry. It is currently working on 13; the rest fall under other ministries.

A significant achievement has been Bangladesh's ratification of ILO Convention C190, setting an international standard to prevent workplace violence and sexual harassment. This makes Bangladesh a regional leader, being the first in South Asia to ratify C190 and the first in Asia to ratify all 10 of the

ILO's "fundamental" conventions.

The main challenge is implementation, requiring coordinated efforts by the government, trade unions and employers. The government must monitor progress, identify obstacles and ensure accountability.

Since the convention came into effect only on November 17, 2025, its impact is not yet measurable.

Recently, the expatriates' welfare ministry approved a reintegration policy for returning migrant workers.

With the government nearing the end of its term, major new initiatives are unlikely, with the focus on advancing ongoing work.

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No illegal gatherings after polls schedule
Warns govt, curbs to continue until election day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday urged all to refrain from "illegal and unapproved" public gatherings and movements after the announcement of the election schedule, expected today or the day after.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the home ministry yesterday afternoon on the instruction of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, according to a statement issued by the CA's Press Wing.

"From the announcement of the election schedule until polling day, any illegal and unauthorised public

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Will the dystopia for women ever end?

Star INTERVIEW



Biggest hurdle for reforms is bureaucracy

Says Iftekharuzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's reform trajectory depends entirely on how far the bureaucracy is willing to let it proceed, said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, yesterday.

"The prospects for state reform will only be realised when the nation's political and bureaucratic cultures change."

He made the remark at a discussion titled "Post-Authoritarian Media Environment" organised by TIB at its Dhanmondi office to mark International Anti-Corruption Day and to announce this year's Investigative Journalism Award.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Civic space 'repressed' even after reform steps

CIVICUS Monitor says Bangladesh a 'bright spot'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Global watchdog CIVICUS Monitor has once again classified Bangladesh's civic space as "repressed", maintaining the same rating as last year.

Bangladesh's status had been upgraded to "repressed" from "closed", the lowest category, in 2023.

Even so, the country was cited as a "bright spot", with CIVICUS noting the resilience of civil society in defending civic freedoms.

"Since its 2024 political transition, when mass protests forced a change of government, Bangladesh has taken notable steps toward accountability and human rights reform," the Johannesburg-based organisation said in its report yesterday.

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A worker stirring unprocessed moong dal for drying at a mill in Baneshwar Bazar of Rajshahi's Puthia upazila yesterday. Once processed, the dal will head to wholesalers. Pulse farmers across the district have reported bumper harvest on the chars of the Padma river this year.

BNP will ensure ACC gets back its wings: Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP, if it returns to power, will ensure the independence of Anti-Corruption Commission to effectively control graft in the country, said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

"We must pull the reins on corruption, and we have the track record to do it. BNP has a proven record of controlling corruption," Tarique said while speaking virtually at the closing session of the third day of BNP's "Plan to Build the Country" programme.

During the tenure of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, the ACC was set up so that it could investigate any corruption allegation related to the government without needing permission from anyone.

"It was completely independent. This shows how confident and committed Khaleda Zia was in fighting corruption. She made that commission fully independent. Insha'Allah, we will establish that same system again," he said.

Tarique accused the "autocratic Awami League government" of later changing the law, making government permission necessary before starting any corruption probe involving government officials. "If it is needed and if it is in the interest of the country, we will change that rule again," he said.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

SOUTH LEBANON Israel strikes Hezbollah sites

AGENCIES

Israel launched a series of strikes on southern Lebanon yesterday, Lebanese state media reported, with the Israeli army saying it hit a Hezbollah training centre and other targets.

Despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed group, Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon and maintains troops in five areas of the country's south.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported "a series of (Israeli) raids targeting the Iqlim al-Tuffah region" near the towns of Azza, Rumin and Jbaa, about 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of the border with Israel. "A number of houses were damaged" in Jbaa, the NNA added.

The Israeli military said it had struck "infrastructure belonging to the Hezbollah terrorist organization in several areas in southern Lebanon".

According to the military "a training and qualification compound used by Hezbollah's Radwan Force" was hit, as were "military structures and a launch site belonging to Hezbollah".

Medical board finds no fresh deterioration

FROM PAGE 1

Tarique Rahman and Khaleda's daughter-in-law, spoke to doctors at Evercare and met her yesterday. Zubaida, who is also a medical board member, attends its meetings.

Health Adviser Noorjahan Begum visited the hospital last night to enquire about the BNP chief's condition.

On the advice of doctors, Khaleda was admitted to the hospital on November 23 after being diagnosed with infections affecting her heart and lungs. She is also suffering from pneumonia and is currently receiving treatment in the hospital's Coronary Care Unit.

Khaleda, 80, has long been battling multiple health complications, including liver cirrhosis.

Meanwhile, events praying for her speedy recovery were held in different parts of the country, including Dhaka, Tangail, Rajshahi, Brahmanbaria, Rangpur, Chattogram, and Naogaon.

Party leaders and activists continued to gather outside the hospital yesterday, despite repeated instructions from the party not to crowd the premises.

No illegal gatherings after polls schedule

FROM PAGE 1

gathering or movement that causes public suffering will be strictly controlled. Those who participate in illegal rallies will be brought under the law," the statement said.

Currently, the main objective of the interim government is to ensure that the 13th national election, to be held in the first half of February, is free, fair, neutral, acceptable, and festive, it said.

To this end, the government is focusing on all necessary preparations.

After the announcement of the schedule, all forces engaged in maintaining law and order in the country, including the armed forces, will work to ensure an election-friendly environment.

Around nine lakh members of the armed forces and other law enforcement agencies will be deployed to maintain law and order, which will be the highest to date.

A record one and a half lakh police personnel have already been given election training to conduct a proper election.

Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said, "We know that many have legitimate demands. Over the past one and a half years, protesters have presented their demands to the interim government by organising more than 2,000 movements and demonstrations."

The government has always responded to legitimate demands and has tried to reach solutions through discussions with the protesters, he said.

"But we are now in an election-oriented period. Therefore, on behalf of the government, everyone is being urged to present whatever demands they have to the post-election government. We hope that during this period, no one will create tension or disrupt the normal environment over their demands," the statement said.



Textbooks are sorted fresh off the press in Latifpur near Chattogram's City Gate, as workers labour through the rush to ensure primary and secondary students receive their books on the first day of the new year. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

City

NEWS

We were picked up, detained, and tortured
Hasnat testifies before ICT-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Hasnat Abdullah, a key coordinator of the July uprising, yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal 2 that several officials of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence had picked up three coordinators, including himself.

He said they were held in a secret detention centre and subjected to intimidation and torture after they refused to withdraw the movement last year.

Testifying as the 22nd prosecution witness in the killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed in Rangpur, Hasnat said he and fellow coordinator Sarjis Alam were picked up from a relative's house in Dhaka's Science Lab area on July 17.

"We were taken to the State Guest House Padma where three then ministers – Anisul Huq, Mohammad A Rafat and Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfie – arrived within 30 minutes," said Hasnat, chief organiser of National Citizen Party (South).

The then DGFI members pressured them to sit with the ministers, but when they refused, the ministers left. "For over an hour, the DGFI personnel tried to convince us with temptations, threats and pressure. They repeatedly asked us to just sit for the meeting, but we refused, saying we could not do so without consulting other coordinators – Nahid and Asif."

Enraged, the DGFI personnel did not take them home, he said, but instead took them to a secret "safe house"

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Seat-sharing talks change gear

FROM PAGE 1

Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin's address to the nation. EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said the broadcast may air either today or tomorrow.

After meeting the chief justice, the CEC told reporters, "The polls schedule will be announced this week." He added that he had requested the chief justice to expedite deployment of the Electoral Inquiry Committee once the schedule is declared.

"We have completed all preparations to hold the polls," Election Commissioner Abdur Rahaman Masud told The Daily Star yesterday. He noted that ensuring a level playing field will formally fall under the EC's jurisdiction only after the schedule is announced.

Unlike in previous elections, parties have finalised contenders ahead of the schedule. The BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami have already named potential candidates, many of whom have begun reaching out to voters, though formal campaigning will begin only after returning officers allocate symbols.

BNP IN SEAT-SHARING TALKS

The BNP has named potential aspirants in 272 constituencies, angering alliance partners who say they were kept uninformed. To address tensions, the BNP will begin seat sharing discussions today. A committee led by Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir will meet partners – the 12 party alliance today and tomorrow, followed by the Gonoontro Monchon and Jatiyatabadi Somonoma Jote in phases.

Allies and like-minded groups that had staged anti-government protests simultaneously with the BNP are collectively demanding that the BNP sets aside at least 222 seats for them. BNP insiders, however, say the party may keep around 15 of the 28 remaining vacant seats for partners, far fewer than hoped.

BNP leaders argue that ceding too many seats risks defeat, as allies will contest under their own symbols, potentially aiding Jamaat or rebel candidates. To reduce risks, the BNP has proposed forming a new platform under which partners would run election activities.

"The platform could be named the Democratic Reform Alliance, and

its partners may be given facilities, including positions in the upper house if it is formed in line with the party's proposal, according to their qualifications," said a Standing Committee member. The idea was discussed on Monday night at the chairperson's Gulshan office, with acting chairman Tarique Rahman presiding virtually.

JAMAAT FOR ONE SEAT-ONE CANDIDATE

The Jamaat was the first to unofficially announce aspirants for all 300 seats, later revising several names. Since September 18, Jamaat and the alliance of eight parties staged protests to press for a proportional representation system and other demands.

The parties in the alliance include Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB), Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Nezam-e-Islami Party, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan, Bangladesh Development Party, and JAGPA.

Seat sharing talks among the eight parties began yesterday, and top leaders will meet next week. Leaders said the guiding principle of the talks will be "one candidate for one seat," and each party is conducting surveys to determine the strongest contender. "With all these changes based on the survey, the eight-party alliance will reveal the final list of nominations after the election schedule is announced," Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair told The Daily Star.

Tensions, however, persist. The seven other parties have already submitted lists. IAB submitted over 100 names; Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis (Mamunul Haque) around 45; and others 10–20 each.

Jamaat sources said they are unwilling to surrender more than 60–70 seats.

IAB Secretary General Maulana Yunus Ahmed said candidates will be chosen based on popularity, qualifications, and social influence. "We will evaluate the candidates of other parties, and they will do the same with ours," he said.

JAGPA's Rashed Prodhan added, "Whatever decision is made collectively in the interest of the coalition, we will accept it."

Meanwhile, Khelafat Majlis

(Mamunul Haque) has announced aspirants in 268 constituencies, while a faction led by Maulana Abdul Basit Azad has named 256. IAB has prepared primary nominations in all 300 seats.

NCP IN NEW ALLIANCE

The National Citizen Party said 1,484 aspirants collected nomination forms.

"We will finalise the candidates soon," NCP Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara said.

After months of talks, NCP, Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party), and Bangladesh Rastro Songskar Andolan formed a new alliance – Gonoantikr Songskar Jote – on Sunday.

Alliance leader and NCP Convener Nahid Islam said any party aligned with the July uprising's spirit or interested in state reform may join. The alliance will contest under one symbol.

OTHER BLOCKS EMERGE

On Monday, Jatiya Party factions led by Anisul Islam Mahmud and Anwar Hossain Manju, along with 16 other parties, announced the National Democratic Front.

Registered parties in the bloc include the Manju-led JP faction, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Sanskratic Muktijot, Bangladesh Nationalist Movement, and Bangladesh Muslim League.

Anisul Islam Mahmud said they will participate if the law and order situation allows a free and fair election.

Separately, on November 30, nine leftist parties – including the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Gonoantikr Biplobi Party, Biplobi Communist League, Somajtantrik Andolon, Bangladesh Jasod, Oikyan-NAP, Basod (Mahbub) and Basod (Marxist) – formed the Ganatantrik Jukta Front. Basod General Secretary Bazzur Rashid Firoz said the alliance will contest for all 300 seats.

The Election Commission has already published the final voter list, completed delimitation of all 300 constituencies, approved registration of two new parties, with two more pending, updated the electoral code of conduct, and launched a mobile app for expatriate voter registration.

Meanwhile, the government has amended the Representation of the People Order and carried out major reshuffles in field administration and the police.

Interviews of journalists across 27 districts show that at least 101 of them face murder charges, 22 face attempted murder, and 112 are accused of vandalism and explosive-related offences, among other charges.

The actual numbers may be higher, as The Daily Star could not confirm the legal sections in a number of cases. So far, at least 18 journalists have been arrested at different times since the uprising.

The CIVICUS Monitor evaluates conditions in each country using data from national civil society activists, regional research partners, international human rights indices, and its own in-house analysts. These findings are then synthesised to assign ratings ranging from "open", "narrowed", "obstructed", "repressed", to "closed".

Rights to conduct an independent fact-finding mission into violations committed during the former government's crackdown on the 2024 protests. The mission's report was released in February 2025.

The government also established six reform commissions, including a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. The government has approved an ordinance to address disappearances. Courts have begun dropping cases against human rights defenders, marking early signs of

progress despite ongoing tensions and reports of violence," the report stated.

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Rights to conduct an independent fact-finding mission into violations committed during the former government's crackdown on the 2024 protests. The mission's report was released in February 2025.

Human rights report

FROM PAGE 1

and its allied organisations, leaving at least 4,577 injured and 80 dead.

In 141 clashes between the BNP and Awami League, 19 were killed and 736 injured. In 55 clashes between the BNP and Jamaat, two were killed and 503 injured. The remaining casualties occurred in conflicts among other political parties.

Of those killed, 91 were BNP members, 23 from the Awami League, three from Jamaat, one from the Students Against Discrimination, six UPDF members, one from an "extremist" group, and three victims remained unidentified.

At least 293 attacks targeted journalists, leaving two dead, at least 256 injured, 47 harassed, 74 threatened, and 14 arrested.

In March, a female journalist was gang raped in the capital while gathering news.

In addition, 105 journalists were implicated in 31 cases. Five cases were filed against journalists under the Cyber Security Act 2023, and one journalist was arrested.

Besides, at least 27 cases were filed under the Cyber Security Act 2023 and

the Cyber Protection Ordinance 2025, leading to the arrest of 24 individuals and charges against 54 others.

Attacks on minority communities included at least 24 incidents that left 15 people injured and led to the destruction of five temples, 37 idols, and 38 homes. In addition, more than 50 shrines were attacked, vandalised, or looted.

Sixty-nine attacks by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) left 24 Bangladeshi dead, 38 injured, and 60 arrested. In addition, the BSF forced at least 3,399 people back into Bangladesh, while the Indian Coast Guard detained 108 fishermen near the Bay of Bengal.

More than 50,000 people were arrested in various cases and special joint operations, the majority of them leaders of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations.

At least 89 workers were killed and more than 1,020 injured in 236 incidents of labour-related violence. During the same period, unsafe working conditions and the lack of protective equipment led to workplace accidents that claimed the lives of 154 workers.

Biggest hurdle for reforms

FROM PAGE 1

Iftekharuzzaman, also head of the Anti-Corruption Reform Commission, remarked that the interim government has relied on secrecy in framing every law. "Even as the commission chief, I had to obtain draft ordinances through other channels in order to give my opinion."

Noting his involvement with several ordinances passed under the interim government, he clarified, "I'm not saying I was allowed to be involved; I'm saying I managed to get involved."

He further mentioned that when these ordinances were drafted, the urgent proposals submitted by the Anti-Corruption Reform Commission were not fully taken into account.

Iftekharuzzaman added that the commission had proposed the formation of a "selection and review" committee for the Anti Corruption Commission. While drafting the ordinance, the word "selection" was retained, but "review" was dropped. Upon learning this, he met senior government officials, who agreed to retain "review". Later, he discovered it had been removed once again.

On the issue of media reform, Iftekharuzzaman said that no change will come unless the government can safeguard the media. "The Media Reform Commission's report has already begun to gather dust, with little of its recommendations implemented."

In his keynote paper, TIB's Deputy Coordinator for Outreach and Communication, Zafar Sadik, said the Media Reform Commission had submitted its recommendations nine months ago, but none of the "immediate action plans" have been implemented.

In the keynote, he noted that the draft ordinance on protecting

BNP will ensure

FROM PAGE 1

"Only BNP has the track record of success. Only BNP has the plans. Nice words cannot give people food. Nice words cannot create jobs. Development needs planning, and only BNP has that planning."

Tarique urged party leaders and activists to take BNP's plans to every village and every household, including women, young people, community elders, and religious leaders.

"There is no time to sit quietly. We must go to the streets and reach the people. Everything, including the

country's independence, sovereignty and democracy, now depends on the BNP," he said.

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Political will key to curbing graft

Speakers tell ACC event on International Anti-Corruption Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at programmes marking International Anti-Corruption Day yesterday stressed that strong political commitment is crucial to reducing corruption in Bangladesh.

At a discussion at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, organised by the Anti-Corruption Commission, Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said no anti-graft initiative can succeed without the genuine will of political leaders.

He said, "Political will must come first. If politicians act with integrity, society will not decay; instead, corruption will decline. Corrupt individuals, once shunned, are now celebrated."

Salehuddin also called for transparency in the financial sector, noting that "thousands of crores of taka have been looted, causing irreparable damage to the nation."

He said, "Enacting laws is important,

but the bigger challenge lies in their proper enforcement. As seen in developed countries, corruption can be significantly reduced if strict checks and balances, credit-rating mechanisms, and technology-driven monitoring systems are strengthened."

ACC Chairman Dr Mohammad Abdul Momen chaired the discussion and said,

"Over the past 15 years, a huge amount of our money has flowed into various countries, but today we have no effective communication with those places; we cannot even find channels to reach them. Our hard-earned money is lying abroad as 'dirty money', and we do not have the manpower in those countries to recover or manage those funds."

He said, "Previously, money used to come into Bangladesh from the Middle East and the United States. Now the reality is the opposite – money flows out of Bangladesh to the US and other countries,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Enacting laws is important, but the bigger challenge lies in their proper enforcement.

SALEHUDDIN AHMED
Finance Adviser

BANGLADESH-MYANMAR
Dialogue vital to easing bilateral tensions: experts

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Civil society-level dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar is essential for improving bilateral relations and finding a solution to the Rohingya crisis, said analysts from both countries at a discussion in Dhaka yesterday.

They said the long-standing Rohingya issue has stalled not only diplomatic ties but also people-to-people contact between the two neighbours. The Bangladesh-Myanmar civil society dialogue was organised by DW Academy at The Daily Star Centre.

Rohingya influxes since the 1980s, especially the mass exodus in 2017, have posed major challenges for Bangladesh. The country now hosts around 1.2 million Rohingyas, while more continue to flee Myanmar's Rakhine State due to ongoing fighting between the military and the Arakan Army.

Since the 2021 military coup, Myanmar has been in a state of civil war, with ethnic armed groups

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

HELEMUL ALAM

With three more dengue deaths reported yesterday, the total number of fatalities this year has risen to 401 – the third-highest since Bangladesh began recording dengue deaths in 2000.

And with 421 new cases, the total number of dengue cases has reached 98,705 so far this year. This is the fourth-highest case count in 25 years, with 21 days still left in December.

The highest number of deaths occurred in 2023, when 1,705 people died. That year also saw the highest number of cases: 3,18,749. Other yearly death tolls include 575 in 2024, 281 in 2022, 179 in 2019, 106 in 2021, and 7 in 2020.

In terms of total cases, the second-highest was 1,01,354 in 2019, followed by 1,01,214 in 2024, 98,705 in 2025, 62,382 in 2022, 28,429 in 2021, and 1,405 in 2020.

Experts say mosquito control efforts by the city corporations have been largely ineffective due to

outdated strategies, weak planning, and the absence of a proper policy.

They stress that without coordinated, science-based action and nationwide monitoring, Aedes control will continue to fail. They also urge authorities to stop repeating ineffective methods every year.

Specialists recommend forming an integrated vector-management department to lead mosquito-control efforts with strong community involvement.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said clear management failures contributed to this year's outbreak. In previous years, an administrative structure and budget supported mosquito-control activities. This year, that system was disrupted.

He said the situation was worse in peripheral areas with no proper organisational setup. Early rainfall also triggered earlier mosquito breeding.

"But because cases were not recorded properly from the

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



Dengue cases this year 98,705, fourth-highest

Experts blame ineffective mosquito control, management failures

Delayed hospitalisation key factor in high death toll

Experts call for improved early detection, decentralised healthcare

Outdated mosquito control strategies fail to curb dengue spread

'Committed to upholding rights and freedom'
Says Yunus marking Human Rights Day



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday reaffirmed Bangladesh's "steadfast commitment to upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms of all", as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter. "Human Rights Day 2025 is being observed under the theme 'Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials', and we renew our pledge

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Unite to restore democracy, protect rights
Tarique urges all



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday called upon everyone to come forward in the journey to establish true democracy while protecting human rights.

He made the call in a message posted on his verified Facebook page on the eve of Human Rights Day, which will be observed today.

Tarique Rahman said the theme of Human Rights Day 2025 is "Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

10 to compete for one medical seat this year
Admission test on Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 10 candidates are expected to compete for each seat at medical and dental colleges this year, with the admission test scheduled for Friday.

The MBBS and BDS admission tests for the 2025-26 session will be held simultaneously at 10:00am across 49 venues nationwide.

Candidates must enter the exam hall between 8:00am and 9:30am. Entry will close at 9:30am, the health ministry said in a press release yesterday.

Applicants must carry a transparent bag containing a colour admit card, a transparent black-ink ballpoint pen, and their HSC/equivalent admit card or registration card.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7



Low-income people gather around a makeshift roadside fire to stay warm as nighttime temperatures drop. The photo was taken near Zia Udayan in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Azmi was not held in 'Aynagar' Defence counsel tells ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brig Gen (retd) Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, son of former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Ghulam Azam, was not held at the Joint Interrogation Centre (JIC) known as "Aynagar" but in a 21-by-17-foot air conditioned room, a defence lawyer told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday.

Azizur Rahman Dulu, counsel for three of the 13 accused charged with illegally detaining and torturing 26 victims between 2015 and last year at the JIC under the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), made the claim while seeking their discharge.

Referring to a Bangladesh Army court of inquiry report on Azmi's abduction and disappearance, he said the room had two doors, five windows, a cot, a reading table, a wardrobe, an almirah, and an AC. "The windows were closed, but there was an AC. This

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Four killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least four people were killed and 14 others injured in road accidents in three districts in the last two days.

In Cox's Bazar, two persons died on the spot as a three-wheeler collided with a fish-laden pickup van coming from the opposite direction at Hnila Ali Khalil Road intersection on Teknaf-Cox's Bazar highway yesterday, said Nurul Absar, officer-in-charge of Whykong Highway Police Station.

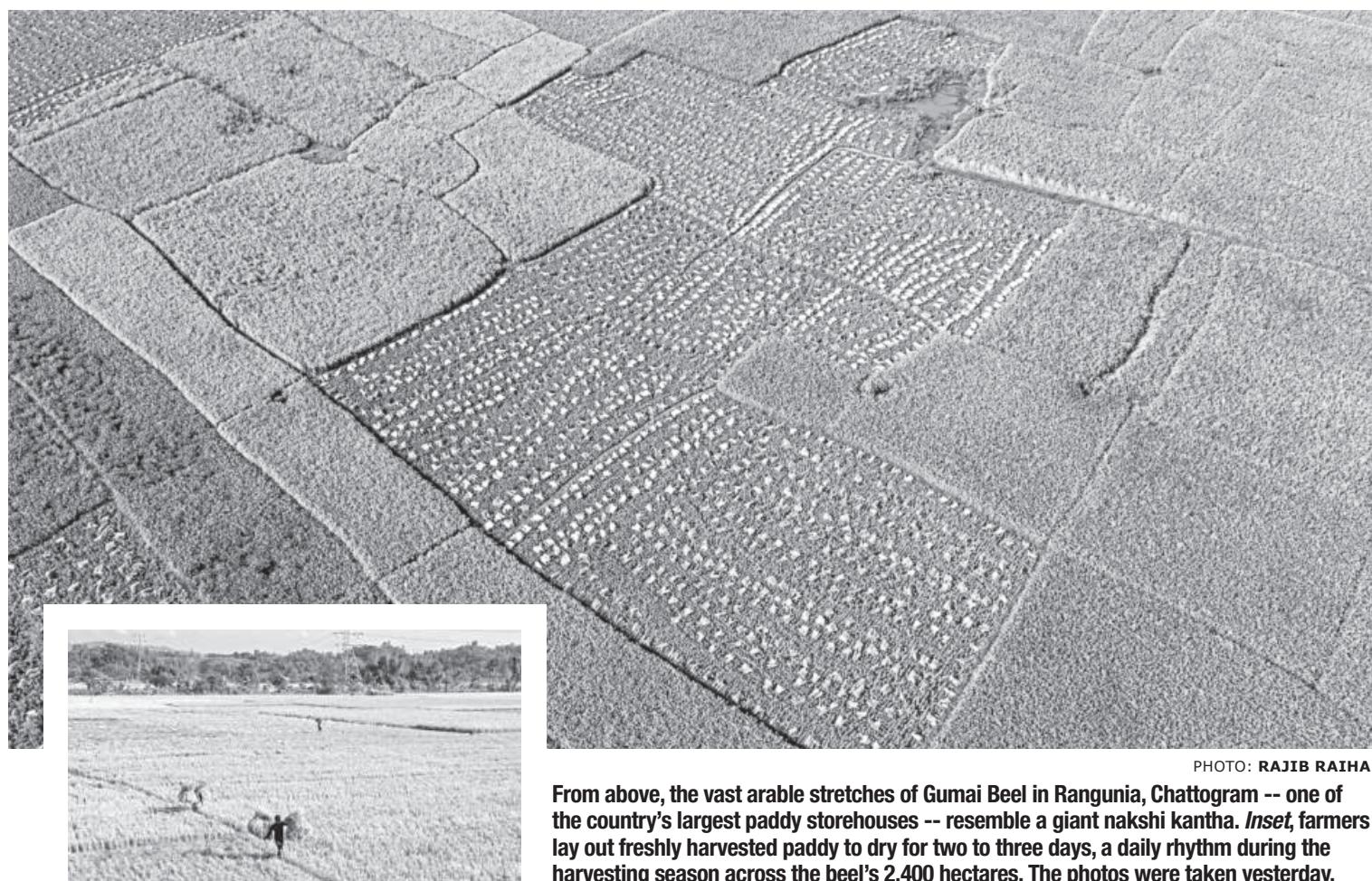
The victims were identified as autorickshaw driver Faruk from Hnila, and passenger Ismail Hossain from Nazir Para in Teknaf, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

In Cumilla, a Cox's Bazar-bound bus collided head-on with a goods-laden pickup van in Chiora area of Chaudhogram on Monday, killing one person and injuring 14 others, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

The deceased -- Abdul Jabbar -- was on the pickup, said OC Md Shahabuddin of Miyabazar Highway Police Station.

In Chattogram, a Chittagong University student and joint general secretary of the university unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Mohammad Arif, died at Chattogram Medical College Hospital after he was injured in a road accident in Hathazari on December 6, CU sources said.

The accident happened when a wood-laden chander gari (locally modified vehicle) rammed his motorcycle on the Chattogram-Khagrachhari regional highway in Charia Bazar area.



From above, the vast arable stretches of Gumai Beel in Rangunia, Chattogram -- one of the country's largest paddy storehouses -- resemble a giant nakshi kantha. Inset, farmers lay out freshly harvested paddy to dry for two to three days, a daily rhythm during the harvesting season across the beel's 2,400 hectares. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Railway eastern zone hikes pontage charges after 43yrs

Revision raises ticket prices by up to Tk 226

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Eastern Zone of Bangladesh Railway (BR) has revised pontage charges for the first time in nearly 43 years, resulting in fare increases ranging from Tk 5 to Tk 226 per ticket, depending on seat category. The new rates will take effect from December 20.

Pontage charges are fees collected for trains crossing bridges, culverts, or overpasses -- similar to highway tolls. The Eastern Zone last updated these charges in 1982.

Mahbubur Rahman, chief commercial manager of the Eastern Zone, said the fare adjustment was primarily to cover maintenance costs for bridges longer than 100 metres.

The charges apply to 11 bridges across six routes: Dhaka-Chattogram, Dhaka-Cox's Bazar,



STAR FILE PHOTO

Dhaka Sylhet, Chattogram Sylhet, Chattogram Jamalpur, and Dhaka Dewanganj.

On the Dhaka-Chattogram route, the commercial distance has increased from 346km to 381km. As a result, the Sonar Bangla Express' Snigdha seat fare will rise from Tk 855 to Tk 943. Similarly, first berth and AC seat fares will go up to Tk 1,133 and Tk 1,746, respectively.

On the Cox's Bazar and Parjata Express trains, Snigdha fares will

increase from Tk 1,322 to Tk 1,449, while AC seat fares will rise to Tk 1,740 and AC berth fares to Tk 2,656.

On the Dhaka-Sylhet route, Snigdha fares will rise to Tk 788 from Tk 719, and AC seat and berth fares will increase to Tk 943 and Tk 1,465, respectively.

Other routes will see similar fare adjustments, with increases for Snigdha, Shovon chair, AC seat, and AC berth tickets across various categories.

Tarek Imran, deputy chief operating superintendent of the Eastern Zone, stated that the revision reflects the construction of new bridges and the expansion of existing ones. The update, he said, would help increase railway revenue while expediting bridge maintenance.

This fare revision will affect divisions in Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet, and Mymensingh.

BAF to get Eurofighter Typhoon jets

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Air Force yesterday signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with Italian aerospace company Leonardo S.p.A for the acquisition of Eurofighter Typhoon combat aircraft.

Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmud Khan and Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Antonio Alessandro were present at the signing ceremony at Air Headquarters, according to BAF's official Facebook page.

Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Kamrul Ahsan and representatives from both countries were present.

Under the LoI, Leonardo S.p.A will supply the jets to BAF as part of its plan to introduce advanced multi-role combat aircraft for frontline operations.

Sirajganj clash leaves 15 Jamaat men injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Tension between Jamaat-e-Islami and the BNP over election campaigning in the Sirajganj-1 (Kazipur) constituency erupted into violence on Monday night, injuring around 15 Jamaat activists, said party sources.

The BNP, however, has denied involvement, blaming locals for the clash.

The incident occurred around 11:00pm at an Islamic gathering in Sonamukhi union. Jamaat-backed MP candidate and Sirajganj district ameer Maulana Shahinur Alam was attacked while leaving the venue.

Local witnesses said Shahinur had been invited as a guest to the waz mahfil, where BNP nominated candidate Selim Reza was also present. Supporters of the two candidates reportedly became agitated during the event.

Sensing tensions, Selim Reza calmed his followers and left the stage. The attack on the Jamaat candidate occurred later as he departed.

Shahinur told The Daily Star that "BNP activists had carried out a pre-planned attack."

Selim Reza countered, saying the Jamaat candidate "had arrived with a show of force, accompanied by Jamaat cadres from nearby upazilas and some Awami League supporters. Locals did not take it well, and the situation turned into a clash. BNP had no role in the incident."

Kazipur Police Station OC Shah Enayetur Rahman said no written complaint had been filed yet. "We will take action after investigation if a complaint is lodged."

Section 144 imposed in Ajmiriganj following clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The local administration has enforced Section 144 in Ajmiriganj upazila of Habiganj district following a clash between two rival groups that left one man dead and several injured.

The restriction was imposed yesterday afternoon by Ajmiriganj UNO and Executive Magistrate SM Rezaul Karim.

According to the order, the ban will remain in effect from 1:00pm yesterday to 1:00pm today.

Police and local sources said tension had been brewing for days between supporters of Hannan Mia of Kumudpur in Kakailchhe and those of Al Quran Saudagar of Sarkar Hati over establishing dominance in the area.

On Monday evening, the two sides clashed violently at Kakailchhe Bazar, leaving at least 20 people injured. Several shops were vandalised and looted during the incident, locals reported.

Fresh violence broke out again around 8:00am yesterday when both groups attacked each other with locally made weapons.

A man named Russell Mia, 45, was critically injured and taken to Ajmiriganj Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

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e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

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আগুন্তী টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

Title of Works

Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of IP Camera/Surveillance System at Palashbari 132/33 kV Grid Sub Station Under GMD, Power Grid, Bogra.

আগুন্তী টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

প্রয়োজনীয় কার্যক্রম

মোৰ মামনুর রশীদ সরদার

নির্বাচী প্রকোশলী, জিএমডি, বগুড়া

প্রয়োজনীয় কার্যক্রম

প্রয়োজ

Pak Taliban kill 6 soldiers near Afghan border

Says Pak official

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani Taliban militants stormed a security checkpoint in Pakistan's northwestern border area with Afghanistan, killing six soldiers and wounding four others, a government official said yesterday.

Pakistan has faced a surge in militant attacks along its border regions since the Taliban authorities retook control in Kabul in 2021.

It accuses Afghanistan of harbouring the insurgents.

Late Monday, more than a dozen armed men attacked the checkpoint, leading to a heavy exchange of fire in Kurram. "Six security personnel were martyred and four were injured, while two militants were also killed in the fighting," the government official posted in Kurram told AFP.

Nepal okays 114 parties for post-uprising polls

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's Election Commission said yesterday that 114 political parties, several new, have been approved to contest the first polls since a mass uprising ousted the government.

Commission spokesman Narayan Prasad Bhattachari told AFP the election in the Himalayan nation of 30 million people was on track for March 5, 2026.

"About 19 million eligible voters have registered their names," Bhattachari said. "We assure everyone that the election will take place in the given time," he added, saying officials were determined to ensure a "free, impartial and peaceful environment".

Around a fifth of the 114 parties are new, and include several registered by young activists who helped launch the anti-corruption protests that shook the country on September 8-9.

Those protests were triggered by a brief ban on social media, but fuelled by wider anger at economic hardship and corruption.

The World Bank estimates a "staggering" 82 percent of Nepal's workforce is in informal employment.



Young people throw stones at an Israeli army armoured vehicle during a military raid in the Al-Amari refugee camp near Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Thai-Cambodia clashes spread along border

Death toll rises to 10; over 140,000 civilians flee violence

AFP, Srei Nnam

Fighting between Thailand and Cambodia yesterday spread to new parts of their contested border as the toll rose to 10 killed and more than 140,000 civilians fled the violence.

The two countries have blamed each other for the renewed clashes over their century-old border dispute, which saw Thailand launch air strikes and use tanks against its neighbour on Monday.

Cambodia's influential former leader Hun Sen said his country had retaliated against Thailand, after Phnom Penh denied firing back for two days.

Thai forces detect Cambodian troops in a disputed coastal area

Cambodia says Thai army resumed attacks in the morning

This week's clashes are the most deadly since the neighbouring nations engaged in five days of intense combat in July that killed dozens of people and displaced around 300,000 before a truce took effect.

Tens of thousands of people have evacuated from border regions since the fresh fighting began on Sunday, officials said.

Cambodian Poan Hay, 55,



said she left her home in Oddar Meanchey province on Monday as soon as she heard gunfire -- the fourth time she evacuated this year due to on-and-off fighting on the frontier.

Seven Cambodian civilians have been killed in total and about 20 wounded this week, Cambodia's interior ministry said in a statement. More than 21,000 people have been displaced from three border provinces, the ministry added.

The defence ministry said the Thai army had resumed attacks around 5:00 am yesterday in border regions, including in the area of centuries-old temples, such as the Unesco world heritage site, the Preah Vihear temple.

The Thai army said three soldiers have been killed since Monday.

Tensions have simmered since Thailand last month suspended de-escalation measures that were agreed at a summit overseen by Trump on July, after a Thai soldier was maimed by a landmine that Bangkok said Cambodia had recently laid.

Thai navy spokesperson Parat Rattanachaiphan said in a press conference that Thai forces recently detected Cambodian troops, settlements and several weapon bases in a disputed coastal area of Trat province.

Parat accused Cambodia of escalating tensions by deploying unmanned drones to provoke Thai forces.

The laws came into effect after midnight local time across Australia.

Australia bans under-16s from social media

AFP, Sydney

Australia banned young teenagers from social media yesterday, launching a world-first crackdown designed to unglue children from addictive scrolling on the likes of Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

A raft of the world's most popular apps and websites face US\$33 million fines if they fail to purge Australia-based users younger than 16.

Australia becomes one of the first nations to so forcefully push back against tech titans wielding immense political power.

The government says unprecedented measures are needed to protect children from "predatory algorithms" filling phone screens with bullying, sex and violence. "Too often, social media isn't social at all," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said ahead of the ban.

"Instead, it's used as a weapon for bullies, a platform for peer pressure, a driver of anxiety, a vehicle for scammers and, worst of all, a tool for online predators."

The laws came into effect after midnight local time across Australia.

Trump hints at walking away from Ukraine

Calls Europe 'weak', 'decaying'

AGENCIES

Donald Trump has suggested he could withdraw support for Ukraine as he escalated his administration's criticism of Europe, describing the continent as "weak" and "decaying" and claiming it was "destroying itself" through immigration.

In an often rambling interview with Politico, released in transcript form yesterday, the US president struggled to name any Ukrainian cities other than Kyiv, mischaracterised aspects of the war's trajectory, and repeated far-right narratives about European immigration that echoed the "great replacement" conspiracy theory.

Trump called for Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to accept his proposal to cede territory to Russia, arguing that Moscow retained the "upper hand" and that Zelensky's government must "play ball".

In his often halting remarks, Trump swerved from subject to subject while rehearsing familiar grudges and conspiracies. He also declined repeatedly to rule out sending American troops into Venezuela as part of his effort to bring down President Nicolás Maduro, reports The Guardian online.

"I don't want to rule in or out. I don't talk about it," Trump said, adding he did not want to talk about military strategy.

No Gaza truce second phase Says Hamas as Israel 'continues violations'

AFP, Gaza City

Hamas said yesterday that the Gaza ceasefire plan cannot proceed to its second phase as long as Israeli "violations" persist and called on mediators to pressure Israel to respect the agreement.

The US-sponsored ceasefire, in effect since October 10, halted the war that began after Hamas's deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. But it remains fragile as Israel and Hamas accuse each other almost daily of breaches.

Meanwhile, an Israeli official said that authorities would allow the Allenby crossing on the Israeli-controlled border between Jordan and the occupied West Bank to reopen today to aid trucks destined for Gaza for the first time since late September.

Hamas political bureau member Hossam Badran accused Israel of failing to respect the Gaza ceasefire deal, noting that under its terms, Israel should have reopened the Rafah crossing with Egypt and increased the volume of aid entering the territory.

He urged the mediators, who include Egypt, Qatar and the United States, to pressure Israel "to complete the implementation of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement".

Under the terms of the deal, Hamas committed to releasing the remaining 48 living and dead captives held in the territory. All of the hostages have so far been released except for one body.

In exchange, Israel has released nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in its custody and returned the bodies of hundreds of dead Palestinians.

The first phase of the truce also stipulates that significantly more aid enter Gaza.

Government of the people's Republic of Bangladesh
 Bangladesh Police
 Rapid Action Battalion Forces Headquarters
 Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229
www.rab.gov.bd

Invitation For e-Tender

For financial year 2025-2026, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of :

SL	Tender ID No & Reference No	Description of goods	Last selling Date & Time	Closing/ Opening Date & Time
1.	1190642, RABHQ/CPS/2025-2026/4112316/1715 Date:04-12-2025	Backpack IMSI Catcher	31-Dec-2025 09.00	31-Dec-2025 12:00

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 (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Tenderer having clarity requirements are requested to contact at 01777-720118 ([Senior Assistant Director, Central Procurement Section](#)).


KAMRUL HASSAN
 Commander BN
 Director (Admin & Finance)
 RAB Forces Headquarters, Dhaka.

GD-2701

edcl

ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area

Dhaka-1208

Local Press Tender Notice

Dated 09/12/2025

Tender ref.: EDCL (Gopalgonj)/PUR/PT/2025/445

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from Genuine Importers/Suppliers/ Authorised dealers for Supply of Spider Safety Equipment for outside and inside of Building Glass Cleaning and Painting works at EDCL,3rd Plant Gopalgonj on urgent basis:

Name of the Item	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & opening
Petzel Rope, Stop lock Petzl, Shunt Lock Petzl, Petzl full body Harness etc for Spider of quoted Safety Equipment to clean the glasses outside and inside of Building at EDCL,3rd Plant Gopalgonj. Delivery site: EDCL, 3rd Plant Gopalgonj (Details as per Tender Schedule)	Tk. 2.5% of quoted amount	Tk. 750.00/set (Non-refundable)	Closing : 24/12/2025 At 11.00AM Opening : 24/12/2025 at 11.15 AM

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL), Dhaka on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender. The Tender will be accompanied by a amount of Earnest Money mentioned above in the form of Bank Draft/ Pay order/ Bank Guarantee from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of " Essential Drugs Company Ltd" without which the Tender will be considered as non-responsive.

EDCL authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

(6 x 4 col.)

Deputy General Manager (CC)
 Procurement Deptt.
 For : Managing Director.

ACC must embrace independent oversight

Repeated graft allegations against ACC officials raise concerns

The shocking revelation that corruption within our national graft watchdog, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), has reached a critical point is profoundly alarming. As reported in this newspaper, six top officials were dismissed this year alone, and two former chiefs of the commission are currently under investigation. The report further noted that over the past 17 years, 245 ACC officials have faced disciplinary actions for bribery, unethical gains, and direct involvement in corruption. Their penalties, ranging from salary cuts to dismissals, have been limited to internal action, with no criminal prosecution in sight.

These developments demonstrate that the institution's internal disciplinary mechanisms have failed and can no longer be allowed to operate in their current form. Yet the current chairman, Mohammad Abdul Momen, insists that the ACC takes immediate action whenever allegations arise, an assertion that belies deep-rooted inertia or unwillingness to adopt meaningful reforms. The ACC's continued reliance on internal monitoring and disciplinary processes is destined to be ineffective as internal investigations lack the independence of external oversight bodies, leaving them vulnerable to bias and inadequate scrutiny. The commission must therefore adopt the reforms recommended by the ACC Reform Commission.

It is worth recalling that the reform commission proposed establishing an oversight mechanism through a high-powered task force composed of representatives from intelligence and investigative agencies. This task force would be responsible for identifying corrupt officials and pursuing both disciplinary and criminal proceedings against them. The commission also recommended dissolving the ACC's internal anti-corruption committee and replacing it with an independent disciplinary division consisting of ACC personnel and individuals appointed on deputation from defence, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies.

This division would enforce the code of conduct, run covert investigations and counter-intelligence operations, review asset declarations, and impose punitive measures. Although asset declarations are mandatory under the ACC (Employees) Service Rules, 2008, the integrity of the verification process remains highly questionable to this day.

It bears recalling that the ACC reform proposals have received overwhelming support from political parties across the spectrum, signalling a strong desire for institutional transformation in the post-autocratic transition to democracy. The July National Charter, too, commits to reforming the ACC by ensuring its independence and effectiveness. Nothing, therefore, should be allowed to stand in the way. We echo the frustration voiced by anti-corruption advocates, including the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), who rightly argued that departmental actions such as dismissal are far from sufficient. Every corrupt official must face prosecution, and the proceeds of their crimes—their illicit wealth—must be confiscated.

Don't allow abuse in agro-industries

Enforce labour law for women's safety and dignity

The findings presented at this year's Annual BIDS Conference on Development reveal a long-running but largely unaddressed problem in Bangladesh's agro-based industries: the routine mistreatment of women workers. The study—carried out in Mymensingh, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Dhaka, Cumilla and Chittagong districts, covering 510 female respondents—shows that 61.37 percent of them had faced verbal and emotional abuse, which is nearly three in five women. It also shows that one in nine reports sexual or physical harassment. In most cases, supervisors are responsible. The statistics point to a clear abuse of authority inside factories that rely heavily on women's labour, yet provide little protection or oversight. The findings also indicate an existing work culture where intimidation and coercion have been allowed to take root.

The study also lays out the difficult conditions under which women work. They spend an average of 51.6 hours a week on the job, and nine in 10 say overtime is compulsory. Despite this, only 6.3 percent receive the double overtime pay required by law. Facilities that should be standard remain rare, as just 21 percent of enterprises have childcare rooms, and only 31 percent grant fully paid maternity leave. When these work conditions are combined with limited say in household decisions, poor representation at work, and a lack of awareness of their rights, the picture becomes even dire. Women are operating in environments where neglect, overwork, and mistreatment blend into everyday life.

Other studies presented at the same session show how uneven the wider labour market is. Workers in major cities earn far more—2.6 times more on average—than those in rural areas. Rural wages have grown slowly over the past decade, leaving many outside metropolitan areas with few opportunities. For women in agro-industries, often located in smaller towns or peri-urban regions, this means their ability to leave abusive workplaces is even more limited. When job options are narrow and wages low, employers can get away with practices that would not stand in more regulated or better paid sectors.

These findings clearly show that the problem is not a shortage of rules, but a failure to enforce them. Authorities must strengthen inspections, penalise enterprises that ignore labour law and standards. Also, the availability of basic, gender-responsive facilities must be ensured at every workplace. Reporting systems must be safe, simple and shield workers from retaliation, particularly when supervisors are the offenders. Protecting the women who keep the wheels of our economy running will not happen through small adjustments. It requires firm action, proper monitoring, and a commitment to ensuring that safety and dignity are not treated as optional extras in the workplace.

Disqualification by accusation? Some thoughts about the new ICT Act clause

WINKERS AWEIGH!

Tanim Ahmed
is digital editor at The Daily Star.

TANIM AHMED

The latest amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, is widely perceived to disqualify individuals from running in any election upon the submission of a formal charge. The amendment, passed on October 6, disqualifies individuals from holding public office or from being appointed to any service of the republic. Since the provision excludes the requirement of a conviction, it naturally prompted discussion about whether this contradicts the fundamental principle of "innocent until proven guilty." After all, all it would take for someone to lose their job or electoral candidacy is a formal charge submitted to the tribunal by the chief prosecutor. The court does not even have to take cognisance of the charges, let alone indict, prosecute, or convict them.

But this article argues that the situation may not be so straightforward. It can be recalled that the first time a question about the International Crimes (Tribunals) (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 arose, it concerned the status of 15 serving army officers under trial at the tribunal. When asked about the officers' status on October 26, one prosecutor said, "It is now up to Army Headquarters to decide when to apply the law. Until it is applied, they can be considered serving officers."

The following day, the chief prosecutor's office issued a clarification. It stated that the prosecutor's remark had been "misquoted and distorted," creating the wrong impression that the law's application depended on the army authorities. It clarified that under Section 20C of the amended ICT Act, 1973, once a formal charge is submitted, the accused is "automatically disqualified from holding any public office or service of the republic, unless discharged or acquitted by the tribunal."

The statement also noted that Section 26 of the act gives it precedence over any other law, as reinforced by Article 47(3) of the constitution.

Turning to the amendment in question: the change comes in the form of an added sub-section (20C) under the heading "Disqualification of the accused upon formal charge." It states that upon submission

of a formal charge, the person concerned will be disqualified: "(a) from being elected, or being a member of Parliament; or (b) from being elected or appointed, or being a member, commissioner, chairman, mayor or administrator, as the case may be, of any local government bodies; or (c) from being appointed to any service of the Republic; or (d) from holding any other public office." The disqualification will not apply to anyone discharged or acquitted.

Before going further, it is worth clarifying what "formal charge" means. It is essentially a petition from the chief prosecutor's office listing criminal accusations. The prosecutor submits this—typically to the registrar's office—after receiving the investigation report. The court then hears the petition, and may take cognisance of the accusations

Whether the latest amendment to the ICT Act, 1973, is legally tenable or whether it goes beyond its remit as set out by the law itself is, of course, a matter for legal debate, a debate perhaps best settled in court. But it certainly warrants closer scrutiny. What is clear is that the disqualification for MP candidates based on formal charges, as provided by the amendment, is in contravention of the constitution.

or, if it finds no merit, dismiss some of the charges. The prosecution then has to prove those charges, which the court finds credible. Thus, the submission of formal charges does not in any way entail judicial oversight or involvement; it is merely the initiation of



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

proceedings that may eventually lead to trial.

That said, none of the four points under the new sub-section disqualifies an existing public servant from continuing in service. The "c" of Sub-section 20C, which is relevant for the army officers, bars individuals only from "being appointed."

The army subsequently asked the government for directives on the matter. When asked about this at the army headquarters on November 5, Brigadier General Md Mustafizur Rahman said that the government had yet to clarify the issue. As such, the confusion still remains.

Thus far, most public discussion has revolved around the wording of the amendment rather than the remit or scope of the law itself. The ICT Act, 1973 states at the very outset that it is "An Act to provide for the detention, prosecution, and punishment of persons for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under international law." It does not mention "disqualification." Some might argue that disqualification falls within the remit of other laws—perhaps the Representation of the People Order, or even the constitution, which clearly sets out the eligibility of members of parliament in Article 66. Hence, it could be argued that the latest amendment oversteps the boundaries of what the international

crimes law is meant to regulate.

The constitution does state that anyone "convicted" by the International Crimes Tribunal will be disqualified from running for parliament. But it says nothing about disqualification on the basis of formal charges.

Now, let us turn to Article 47(3) of the constitution cited by the chief prosecutor's statement. It reads: "Notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution, no law nor any provision thereof providing for detention, prosecution or punishment of any person ... for genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes and other crimes under international law shall be deemed void or unlawful ... on the ground that such law or provision ... is inconsistent with, or repugnant to, any of the provisions of this Constitution."

In plain language, anyone's "detention, prosecution or punishment" for crimes against humanity will stand even if it contradicts the constitution. Notably, there is nothing about "disqualification." Nor can disqualification be reasonably interpreted as "punishment" because punishment only comes after conviction at the end of a trial. It doesn't fall under detention or prosecution either.

It should therefore be clear that since it was originally the intent of the law to provide

for "detention, prosecution and punishment" for crimes against humanity (among other offences), the constitution also recognises that. But the constitution does not recognise "disqualification" arising out of the ICT Act.

Whether the latest amendment is legally tenable or whether it goes beyond its remit as set out by the law itself is, of course, a matter for legal debate, a debate perhaps best settled in court. But it certainly warrants closer scrutiny. What is clear is that the disqualification for MP candidates based on formal charges, as provided by the amendment, is in contravention of the constitution. Since the constitution's exception clause under Article 47(3) does not cover such disqualification, the constitution should prevail. Contrary to what the amendment states, formal charges would not automatically disqualify individuals from running for parliament, nor army officers from continuing to hold office.

As things stand, there is nothing in the constitution that permits the removal of electoral eligibility—or eligibility for any office—on the mere filing of charges. If such a departure from established constitutional safeguards is to be made, it should be done through a clear constitutional amendment, not through legislative overreach. Until then, the ICT Act's disqualification clause remains suspect at best, and untenable at worst.

The education vacuum is fuelling crimes in Rohingya camps

Yeasor Arfat
is a Rohingya youth activist, poet, and founder of the Rohingya Youth Empowerment Network (RYEN), a nonprofit youth-led organisation and community-based school. He can be reached at princearfatlucky@gmail.com.

YEASOR ARFAT

Today, more than one million refugees live in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar—the largest refugee settlement in the world. Over 700,000 people from the community fled to Bangladesh following a violent military crackdown in August 2017, joining other refugees from previous raids. I was among the thousands.

The families in the camps struggle to survive with limited resources, and without access to education, the youth are among the most vulnerable. Lack of learning opportunities fuels hopelessness and pushes many young people towards risky behaviours, including joining gangs, drug use and gambling. Solving the education crisis would have deep ripple effects on camp safety, health, and prosperity.

The education system in the Rohingya refugee camps has suffered a major setback from the USAID funding cut. Many learning centres were forced to shut, leaving nearly 230,000 Rohingya children without access to education, according to Unicef. This closure has deeply affected both students and teachers, creating social and moral challenges within the camps.

Currently, classes from only grades 2-9 are operating at partial capacity, whereas before the crisis, all grades from 1 to 11 were operational. The disruption has led many students to drop out and join the workforce. Without classes to attend, youths spend more time outside of classrooms, where they are vulnerable to exploitation. As a result, cases of kidnapping, gambling, and child marriage have increased.

Budget cuts also mean loss of qualified teachers. As it is, camp teachers earn very low salaries—not more than Tk 12,000 per month. Those who can earn Tk 20-30,000



Lack of learning opportunities fuels hopelessness and pushes many young people towards risky behaviours such as joining gangs, drug use, gambling and others.

are forced to find other work, leaving schools no choice but to hire unqualified teachers.

Even after the UN conference on Rohingya issues, we saw no sustainable solutions to the education crisis. The discussions mainly focused on food and humanitarian aid rather than long-term plans. Meanwhile, the situation in Myanmar worsened, with the Arakan Army (AA) controlling most of Rakhine State. Justice for the Rohingya remains stalled in the ICC, ICJ, and Argentine Court, leaving our community without hope or progress since the 2017 genocide.

I, myself, am a victim of the education crisis in the camps. The NGO-based education

system is neither formal nor well-organised; most teachers are unable to properly guide or inspire students. Many learning centres feel more like play areas rather than real classrooms, with little follow-up or care for students' academic progress. Because of this, I decided to study in a community-based school, which is run and funded by camp residents and where qualified teachers provided me with a more structured and

complete my schooling, and establish my own community organisation—the Rohingya Youth Empowerment Network (RYEN). I founded it to make a difference for my community through quality initiatives. Today, through dedication and teamwork, our organisation runs various programmes focused on education, youth empowerment, and community services.

In the seven years since the exodus,

Even after the UN conference on Rohingya issues, we saw no sustainable solutions to the education crisis. The discussions mainly focused on food and humanitarian aid rather than long-term plans. Meanwhile, the situation in Myanmar worsened, with the Arakan Army (AA) controlling most of Rakhine State. Justice for the Rohingya remains stalled in the ICC, ICJ, and Argentine Court, leaving our community without hope or progress since the 2017 genocide.

(UNHCR) found that 78 percent of Rohingya youth "see no future," and this frustration often leads to depression, anxiety, and loss of ambition. In 2024, Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned that the community is on the verge of becoming a "lost generation" without access to secondary or higher education.

To reverse this crisis, education in the camps must be prioritised and better funded. Expanding access to formal education, vocational training, and digital learning can help the Rohingya youth build skills and hope. National and international stakeholders can provide livelihood programmes for both teachers and learners to ensure stability and sustainability. Community-led awareness campaigns against drugs and exploitation can further protect young people from unethical paths.

The Rohingya community continues to call for sustainable, dignified repatriation with full citizenship rights in Myanmar. Until that becomes possible, improving education and youth empowerment in the camps is the most powerful tool to prevent a generation from being lost to despair and unethical activities.

meaningful education.

After completing my 10th grade, I faced another barrier: there were no means for higher education. According to government policy, we are refugees and therefore not allowed to pursue formal higher studies. Even those who complete their 10th grade find no real job or livelihood opportunities, as "volunteer" is almost the only job available in the camps. Seeing no other path forward, many youths lose hope, drop out of school, and eventually are drawn towards unethical activities.

I was fortunate to have the support of my family, which helped me stay motivated,

thousands of young refugees like myself have grown up without access to proper schooling and higher education. When the learning centres remained closed for months, children turned them into playgrounds, and criminal groups used them as gambling compounds.

Girls face a different set of challenges due to societal norms and safety concerns. Many parents stop their daughters from attending classes after puberty, fearing harassment or social criticism. As a result, female literacy rates remain significantly lower than those of boys.

The 2022 youth report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Our misfortune is that we couldn't create

FROM PAGE 14

The event was organised by the women and children's affairs ministry to mark Begum Rokeya Day 2025, observed on the 145th birth anniversary and 93rd death anniversary of Begum Rokeya Sakhatw Hossain, the pioneering advocate of women's rights and education.

Referring to the role of women and girls in the July uprising that toppled the fascist regime, as well as the contributions of this year's awardees, Yunus said, "We should leave space for the girls to lead the nation."

He lamented that "even after 100 years, we have not been able to create another Rokeya", saying the country

had failed to fulfil her vision. "We have talked but have not been able to move forward. We need to find out why we couldn't."

Calling Rokeya's ideas "revolutionary", he urged people to follow them in everyday life. "And if we do, it will be meaningful," he said.

Yunus also announced that the Bangla name of the ministry has been changed from "Mohila O Shishu Mantranay" to "Nari O Shishu Mantranay".

Four women were awarded for their contributions in their respective fields.

Rubhana Rakib, a physician, received Begum Rokeya Padak in the category of women's education

(research) while Kalpana Akter, a labour leader, got it in the category of women's rights (labour).

Nabila Idris, a rights activist, won the prestigious award in the category of human rights while Ritu Porna Chakma, a member of Bangladesh Women's National Football Team, got it in the category of women's awaking (sports).

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Sharmin Murshid chaired the event.

A cultural programme, including the screening of a documentary titled Ami-e Rokeya, was held to highlight Begum Rokeya's contributions to promoting women's education and combating child marriage.

Tobacco use costs society Tk 87,544cr

FROM PAGE 14

major tactics by tobacco companies to lure in youths.

As many as 72 percent of the POSs displayed tobacco products openly while 66 percent placed tobacco products beside candy, chocolates and toys.

The study recommended a comprehensive ban on POS advertising, a ban on flavoured cigarettes and prohibiting sales

of single sticks to reduce the affordability and appeal of tobacco products among youths.

The findings represent an important warning about both the scale of the problem and the gaps in collective response, said Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of PPRC.

The tobacco challenge is deeply rooted and that advocacy needs to be more strategic, he said, highlighting that protecting the young generation

must be viewed as a national responsibility.

He further stressed that stronger law reforms and a more effective tobacco tax structure are essential to reducing tobacco consumption.

Sharmeen Yasmeen, chairperson of Public Health Foundation Bangladesh, and Mostafizur Rahman, lead policy adviser at Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, spoke among others.

We were picked up, detained, and tortured

FROM PAGE 2

located between Matsya Bhaban and the International Mother Language Institute. There, they were detained and interrogated by then officials of DGFI and other agencies.

"There was a television behind us. The interrogator was watching it while questioning he. He was calling the TV channels – notably DBC, Shomoy TV and Ekattor TV – instructing them to

change new and correct scrolls. The channels then aired news portraying a 'normal situation'."

Though the safe house looked abandoned from outside, it had modern facilities inside, Hasnat said.

They were interrogated till 2:30am, allowed to sleep briefly, and then woken during Fajr prayers when a new team resumed questioning. "During interrogation, a DGFI officer told me

that on October 28, 2023, he had thwarted BNP's movement of millions within 10 minutes, and that it would not take him any time to suppress our movement the same way.

"We were isolated, tortured and misrepresented before the nation."

He added, "ADC Junaid tortured me inhumanely while I was at DB office. We began a hunger strike and were eventually released on August 1."

Will the dystopia for women ever end?

FROM PAGE 1

TDS: There seems to be no clear plan for the remaining recommendations. Was political priority lacking?

Shireen: This is an unfortunate reality. Many have wondered if our report was simply "sent to cold storage". The July uprising was followed by a period of euphoria and sky-high expectations of changes that would lead us to a new Bangladesh, which would be free of discrimination. The huge participation of women in the uprising made us, those in the women's movement, hopeful that at last a historic opportunity had arisen in which our long-standing demands had a real chance of being addressed.

The formation of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission was both a reflection and recognition of the importance assigned by the interim government to introduce reforms towards the elimination of discrimination against women and towards gender equality. The commission members worked hard to formulate recommendations and proposals for institutional reforms as well as changes in existing policies and programmes covering 15 different sectors and thematic areas.

These recommendations were grouped into three categories: short-term actions the Interim Government could adopt (doables), medium-term reforms for the next elected government to consider (desirables), and long-term transformative changes addressing decades of discrimination and resulting disadvantages, violations and deprivation reflecting what women want (dreams). We wanted to present our proposals in the public domain to initiate a public discourse and debate on the "woman question".

We did not expect that all 423 recommendations would be accepted, nor that those accepted would be implemented overnight. We expected debate, discussion, disagreement and critique, which would result in greater awareness about what women want and the challenges women face in their struggle for emancipation and autonomy. What we did not anticipate, however, was the verbal abuse that was directed at us by certain quarters. The silence of the advisory council in the face of the attacks we were subjected to was disappointing.

While the ratification of ILO Conventions C155, 187 and 190 was a win for both the Women's Affairs Commission and the Labour Commission, our ambitions were taller and our prospective horizon was broader. We hoped to bring about a sustained change in the architecture of state-sponsored women's advancement.

The women and children affairs ministry, the nodal ministry to address the proposals as a whole as well as to act on those of direct relevance and under its rules of business, formed a committee of ministry officials who identified 71 proposals as key priorities that fell within their mandate.

TDS: Recommendations like a uniform family law, and recognising sex workers as "workers", faced conservative objections. What was the

reasoning, and was your report "filed away" under pressure?

Shireen: Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has campaigned for a uniform family law for over 40 years, during which governments have come and gone, yet it never received a serious hearing. We proposed creating a civil option that would enable those who wish to have their personal lives governed by gender equality provisions in law to do so, while others could subscribe to existing personal laws which are religion-based and provide for different rights for women of different religious identities. This, too, met with fierce opposition.

We recommended the inclusion of sex workers under the protection of labour laws. This was recommended by sex workers themselves during one of the many consultations we carried out with women of different professions, occupations, socio-economic backgrounds, etc. Floating sex workers face police harassment, the grabbing of their hard-earned income and a lack of legal rights. Their recognition under labour laws would provide protection, complaint mechanisms and basic dignity owed to them not only as workers but also as citizens.

Whether backlash led to the report being sidelined, I don't know; we were never informed.

The advisory council is composed of people with different ideological leanings, and not all are committed to women's rights and dignity. It is not surprising, therefore, that, for instance, the Women's Affairs Reform Commission was excluded from the National Consensus Commission's deliberations.

We weren't allowed to present our proposals and our views. In fact, the five reform commissions formed later as a second batch were excluded from the consensus commission's process. The heads of these five commissions wrote jointly to the chief adviser seeking an opportunity to speak with the Consensus Commission, but received no response.

I believe Prof Muhammad Yunus, who has consistently supported women's progress and livelihood improvements through his work especially in microcredit, is committed to furthering positive change for women. However, not everyone around him shares that vision, nor do they have the courage to stand up against conservative backlash. This limits his ability to pursue the implementation of the reforms recommended by the Women's Affairs Reform Commission.

Many recommendations from other commissions remain unimplemented as well, suggesting a broader structural issue and a general abandonment of the reform agenda, rather than the women's commission being uniquely sidelined.

TDS: You have recommended a permanent, independent women's commission. Why is it necessary for women in Bangladesh?

Shireen: We have long advocated for a permanent, independent women's commission with quasi-judicial powers to address issues that courts,

administration or policymakers often cannot or do not.

The problems and challenges women face are multidimensional, requiring a multisectoral response. The mandate for reform lies with multiple duty bearers, not just the women and children affairs ministry. A holistic response requires actions to be taken by the government machinery as a whole, ranging from the ministries of law, justice and parliamentary affairs; social welfare; health and family welfare; education; information and broadcasting, etc.

Women's issues cut across all sectors of the government, parliament and judiciary. They intersect with economy, politics, media, family and society, creating a complex cycle of discrimination, deprivation and disadvantage.

A permanent and independent commission would ensure regular coordination, monitoring of progress and holding the government accountable -- beyond symbolic gestures like International Women's Day announcements. Data collection alone is insufficient. Continuous, evidence-based action is essential, making the role and responsibility of such a commission crucial.

TDS: You proposed raising parliamentary seats to 600, with 300

women candidates to compete with each other in the same constituency, requiring no new boundary delimitation.

Reactions to this proposal were varied: some dismissed it as unrealistic and utopian, others feared women might become a majority in parliament, which I argued was no issue, given the long history of male majority. Some cited limited seat capacity in the parliament.

Having observed on television news the proceedings of the UK parliament, we know that dense seating works. Underlying this proposal was to make a break from the bread crumbs approach that has hitherto dominated the discussion on women's representation in parliament. This is 2025. We have crossed nearly a quarter of the 21st century; if we cannot still talk about parity, then what are the chances that the dystopia for women will ever end?

TDS: With the national election nearing, do you think parties genuinely prioritise women's empowerment? What do you expect regarding nominations and manifestos?

Shireen: I recently had the opportunity to interact and listen to women members of some political parties. Irrespective of their different party affiliations, they were in unison

Lone genocide museum closed

FROM PAGE 14

genocide, and letters written by martyrs. The collection also includes over 10,000 photographs and around 2,000 video clips, and numerous rare documents.

Due to prolonged closure and lack of maintenance, the condition of most of the valuable artefacts are now deteriorating day by day, said museum officials.

"Initially, we planned to keep the museum closed for a few days due to fear of political unrest. But later, we faced severe financial crisis. That is why, we could not open it," said a trustee board member, seeking anonymity.

The museum's operational expenses are being borne from interest on bank deposits of trustees and government funds.

Sheikh Baharul Alam, a trustee of

the archive and museum, said, "Due to political reasons, the funds and initiatives to reopen the museum have been suspended. We have spoken to many people to restart it. We did not receive the expected response."

He added that the trustee board manages the museum. "Electricity bills, staff salaries, and other operational costs amount to Tk 60 to 65 lakh annually. All kinds of government and non-government funds have been stopped. There is no alternative."

There were around a dozen employees in the museum. All of them have been terminated due to fund shortage, he said.

Moniruzzaman Moni, commander of the Khulna city unit of the Mukti Joddha Sangsads, said the museum should be opened urgently to preserve the history of the Liberation

War and genocide.

ASM Zamshed Khondaker, deputy commissioner of Khulna, could not be reached over phone, despite repeated attempts.

Contacted, Sadekul Islam, secretary of Bangladesh National Museum, said, "We [the museum authority] handed over the Khulna Liberation War museum to its trustee board around two years ago. We don't know about its update."

The construction of the museum's new building was completed in 2024 at a cost of around Tk 32 crore in the city's South Central Road area with the aim to preserve rare evidence of the Liberation War and genocide of 1971.

A trustee board is authorised to operate the museum under the Bangladesh National Museum.

The six-storey building was opened for visitors in May last year.

Tangail Saree weaving industry wins

FROM PAGE 14

ongoing session.

Talha, also president of the UNESCO General Conference, said the Tangail Saree is the daily wear of many women in Bangladesh, which served as the inspiration behind seeking international recognition for this weaving industry.

He dedicated this achievement to all weavers and women of Bangladesh, saying the recognition adds a new dimension to Bangladesh's efforts to protect intangible cultural heritage.

Talha said Bangladesh has many intangible cultural elements worthy of UNESCO recognition and added that stronger documentation and

more trained personnel would help secure future recognitions.

Earlier, the 20th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee was inaugurated by India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, on December 07. UNESCO's newly appointed Director General, Khaled El Enani, joined the event.

Cops struggling to trace suspect

FROM PAGE 14

filed a case making Ayesha, who had taken up the job just four days earlier, as the sole accused.

She allegedly made away with a mobile phone, a laptop, gold ornaments and cash after the killings. The gold ornaments include a chain and earrings of slain Laila, whom the suspected killer stabbed at least 30 times.

A relative of the victims said they have yet to fully ascertain which valuables were taken from the house as

they were busy with the funeral rites.

The keys to the doors and other lockers were kept together on a key fob, which went missing a day before the murders. The family suspects that the house help stole the fob to get her hands on the valuables, he added.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Sheikh Md Sajid Ali yesterday urged city residents to verify the identity of domestic workers before hiring them.

He recommended keeping a copy

of the worker's national identity card, a recently taken passport-size photograph and the names and addresses of at least two references to confirm their identity.

Such crimes can often be prevented if residents exercise caution, he said in a press release.

The DMP commissioner also reiterated the importance of properly filling out tenant registration forms and cooperating with police in gathering citizen information.

women candidates to compete with each other in the same constituency, requiring no new boundary delimitation.

Manifestos are yet to be released. Early signs suggest slightly more attention to women's issues, but without clear plans or timelines, real outcomes are uncertain.

TDS: Recent surveys show 76 percent of women face intimate partner violence, yet awareness and reporting of specialised services remain alarmingly low. You designed a multisectoral programme on violence against women (VAW) two and a half decades ago. Why are these services still largely unknown?

Shireen: I was surprised and taken aback to learn recently from a survey finding that half of the women in Bangladesh don't know where to report abuse. Despite decades of implementation of the multisectoral programme (MSP-VAW), awareness campaigns and NGO initiatives, knowledge remains alarmingly low: only 2.2 percent know about one-stop crisis centres (OCCs), 12 percent about the 109 helpline.

A World Bank survey of OCCs conducted by Naripokkho revealed many constraints and quality concerns. However, these findings were not taken into account in the expansion of OCC facilities to more districts and upazilas. The MSP-VAW was based on an MOU between seven ministries as active participants, with the women and children affairs ministry as the lead. It appears that other than the OCCs, and the DNA Profiling Laboratory, many project components were never implemented.

Monitoring and supervision have been inadequate, and the women and children affairs ministry, for whatever reason, did not pursue the introduction and implementation of several other components such as specialised police training in investigation skills and the use of rape investigation kits, making police stations women friendly, introducing a "respect women" campaign across secondary schools in both private and public sectors, especially for boys by rolling out a specially developed module, as well as public campaigns to promote awareness of the problem along with the facilities offered by MSP-VAW through the use of mass media.

Thus, the opportunity for achieving a greater and more holistic impact was lost. An increase in conviction rates with the use of more robust evidence did not happen. A nationwide media campaign to publicise one-stop crisis centres did not take off, leaving awareness low.

TDS: Bangladesh has finalised its Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report with two important reservations. How do these weaken women's human rights, 41 years after signing?

Shireen: Bangladesh signed CEDAW in 1984 with reservations on four articles. Due to the women's movement advocacy, reservations on articles 13(l)(a) (equal rights in family welfare) and 16(l)(c) (equal rights in

guardianship) were withdrawn in 1997. Of the two remaining reservations, one is on article

Unite to restore

FROM PAGE 3
With this year's theme in focus, he expressed deep solidarity with the oppressed people around the world who have lost their fundamental rights.

"At the same time, I affirm that -- whether in Bangladesh or anywhere else on earth -- no one should ever again be deprived of basic human rights. For that, the protection of human rights must be an essential part of our everyday practice," he said.

He further said the country has endured a dark chapter of fascist misrule for more than a decade and a half, during which human rights were buried.

Democracy was obliterated, and the state apparatus was gripped firmly in the hands of an authoritarian clique, he said.

"Today, we stand on a new journey -- a journey to restore democracy and safeguard human rights. Our future state must be one where human rights remain protected. Poverty is now viewed globally as one of the most serious human rights challenges. Eradicating poverty is an attainable goal in establishing human rights," he added.

"At this moment, people of the country are united in their commitment to protecting human rights. Everyone must come forward in this journey of establishing true democracy while protecting human rights. This should be our firm commitment on the universal Human Rights Day," he said.

Illegal hill cutting puts thousands at risk in Nabiganj

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Illegal hill cutting continues on a massive scale in two remote areas of Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj, putting thousands at risk of landslides, despite repeated drives, fines and arrests by the administration.

During a recent visit, The Daily Star found severe hill degradation across Ghaznajpur and Paniumda unions, with the Barachar hill cluster the worst affected.

Locals say politically backed groups resume operations almost immediately after each raid, showing little regard for administrative warnings.

Dinarpur, home to about two lakh people and marked by a 10km stretch of hillocks, faces escalating environmental danger.

Shomi Chowdhury, general secretary of the Nabiganj Press Club, said nearly 1.5 lakh people are directly vulnerable to landslides, while rural homes, electricity poles and public infrastructure are already destabilised as soil is removed from their bases.

Residents say the identities of those behind the extraction are widely known, but few are willing to speak publicly out of fear. The gangs allegedly operate under the protection of politically influential individuals, mirroring syndicates that were active during the previous ruling party's tenure.

At one site, the soil of a hill in



PHOTO: STAR

Dinarpur is being excavated day and night with bulldozers and sold at a high price to a US expatriate, Daraz Mia. He admitted buying the soil but claimed he did not know its origin.

Officials from the Rural Electrification Board's Nabiganj and Bahubal offices inspected the area but said the accused ignored their warnings. A report has been sent to higher authorities after an electricity pole tilted due to soil cutting.

Despite visible destruction across the hills, the upazila administration says it does not know who is responsible, a stance that has sparked frustration among residents.

Paniumda Union Parishad

Chairman Ijazur Rahman confirmed that people from his union were involved in hill cutting and said he had informed the authorities.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon in Habiganj, said disappearing forest cover has disrupted water retention, biodiversity and groundwater recharge.

If the authorities do not shut these syndicates down immediately, this area could face long-term environmental collapse, he said.

Contacted, Nabiganj UNO Ruhul Amin said raids are conducted whenever complaints are received and that action will be taken after investigating the latest incidents.

Dialogue vital to easing bilateral tensions

FROM PAGE 3
and the civilian National Unity Government (NUG) resisting military rule.

Soe Myint, editor-in-chief of Myanmar-focused news portal Mizzima, said resistance forces now control more than half of Myanmar, while the military controls the rest.

Ethnic groups and the Bamar majority are more united than ever in their push for a federal system that includes equal rights for all communities,

including the Rohingya. He said public attitudes have changed significantly after the coup, with people now strongly supporting a democratic and federal Myanmar.

"Whatever religious or ethnic differences they had should be minimised, and they all need to work for the greater objective of national unity and cohesion," Soe Myint said.

The NUG has already recognised the Rohingya's rights and ethnicity, he added.

Soe Myint thanked Bangladesh for sheltering the Rohingya and called for continued support for civilians in Myanmar, where the military has restricted essential supplies.

Participants stressed that despite geographical proximity, the people of Bangladesh and Myanmar have very limited contact, making civil society and media-level engagement even more important.

Prof Obaidul Haque of International Relations at Dhaka University said

community-level dialogue between Rakhines and Rohingyas is crucial for minimising their differences.

A safe and favourable environment in Rakhine State remains the key condition for Rohingya repatriation, he said.

"We can look at the best examples elsewhere in the world on how to best utilise the civil society strengths," he said.

Journalist ASM Sujauddin from Cox's Bazar also spoke.

10 to compete

FROM PAGE 3

to protect the dignity and rights of every individual without discrimination," he said in his message on the eve of Human Rights Day 2025.

Yunus recalled that the day is being marked "about a year and a half after the historic youth-led July Uprising," during which "people from all walks of life rose against oppression and tyranny, defeating a fascist regime in pursuit of dignity and human rights."

He added that a "New Bangladesh" has emerged from this period of struggle.

He added that the

country is now preparing

for a "democratic, free, and fair general election in early February 2026" as part of efforts to build "a just and equal society" and strengthen democratic governance.

"Bangladesh has upheld

its commitment to justice through the recent verdict of the International Crimes Tribunal Bangladesh,

which convicted members of the deposed regime of crimes against humanity connected to the July Uprising," he said.

H i g h t i n g Bangladesh's international obligations, Yunus said the country "stands proud as a nation that has acceded to all nine core international human rights treaties," including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and all core ILO conventions.

He also reaffirmed Bangladesh's active role at the Human Rights Council and its engagement in addressing global challenges such as conflicts, humanitarian crises, climate change, and forced displacement.

They said their third

client, Maj Gen Sheikh

Md Sarwar Hossain,

also a former CTIB director under

whom the JIC falls, and two

other accused could not be

held responsible because

the JIC was under the DGFI

director general.

The prosecution

countered that a 2006

government order placed

the JIC under the CTIB

director, and argued that

under international law

any officer serving during

a victim's detention bears

responsibility.

State-appointed lawyer

marks will be deducted for each wrong answer.

A total of 1,22,632 candidates have applied for 13,051 MBBS and BDS seats. Of them, 49,028 are male, and 73,604 are female.

Government medical and dental colleges have 5,645 seats -- 5,100 for MBBS and 545 for BDS. Private institutions offer 7,406 seats, including 6,001 for MBBS and 1,405 for BDS.

Azmi was not held

FROM PAGE 3

was not Aynagar," he argued.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam opposed the argument, saying points from the inquiry report were irrelevant at this stage and could only be raised during trial once the report is submitted.

Azizur and co-counsel Mahin R Rahman also argued that the charges of illegal arrest and abduction against their two clients -- former DGFI CTIB directors Brig Gen Md Mahbub Rahman Siddique and Brig Gen Ahmed Tanvir Majahar Siddique -- were baseless, as both joined the DGFI after Azmi and another victim, Michael Chakma, had already been abducted.

They said their third client, Maj Gen Sheikh Md Sarwar Hossain, also a former CTIB director under whom the JIC falls, and two other accused could not be held responsible because the JIC was under the DGFI director general.

The prosecution countered that a 2006 government order placed the JIC under the CTIB director, and argued that under international law any officer serving during a victim's detention bears responsibility.

State defence lawyer

and decentralised care are crucial.

If affordable dengue testing were available closer to people -- similar to COVID -- cases could be identified sooner, he said.

He also noted that Dhaka has almost no functional primary or secondary healthcare facilities, relying mainly on tertiary hospitals, while rural facilities remain poorly equipped.

Strengthening healthcare capacity nationwide, he stressed, is essential.

Dengue deaths reach 401

FROM PAGE 3

and later returns to the country in one way or another. These transactions often involve various forms of 'incentives.' Such a complex structure cannot be changed in a day, a month, or even a year."

"For the past 15 years, those who have committed crimes were allowed to cross the border in exchange for crores of taka by members of our political elite. You must think carefully about whether you will elect such people. The time has come to decide whether we should continue electing them," the ACC chief added.

Speaking as a special guest, Director General of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Dr AK Enamul Haque, said, "There are 14 to 15 types of corruption in Bangladesh. We focus only on bribery, but bribery is just one form among many."

ACC Commissioner (Investigation) Brigadier General (Retd) Hafiz Ahsan Farid said, "To prevent corruption, details of all government projects must be published online. And if any information is updated, it must also be communicated to the public. Once money is stolen, it becomes difficult to recover. Corruption methods in Bangladesh are different; foreign models will not work here. We need to create our own model."

Earlier in the day, at a human chain in front of the ACC headquarters, Momen also urged voters not to elect corrupt individuals in the upcoming national polls.

once handled by 129 councillors across two Dhaka city corporations now fall on administrators alone and called for restoring the local-government structure as soon as possible.

WHY SO MANY DEATHS

Experts say delayed hospitalisation is a major reason for the high death toll, as many severely ill patients arrive from distant districts.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy

Public-health expert Mohammad Mushtaq Hussain said early detection

Medical College Hospital, said many patients reach major hospitals in very poor condition after long journeys.

He explained that delays in reaching proper care significantly worsen outcomes.

He said doctors outside Dhaka often lack proper dengue management training, and smaller hospitals face resource shortages.

Public-health expert Mohammad Mushtaq Hussain said early detection

and decentralised care are crucial.

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অকেজো ঘোষিত গাড়ির পুনর্বিঞ্চি

ইলেক্ট্রনিক স্বাক্ষর সার্টিফিকেট প্রদানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের নিয়ন্ত্রক-এর কার্যালয়

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তারিখ: ২৪ অক্টোবর ১৪৩২

০৯ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫

স্মারক নং-৫৬,০৩,০০০,০০০,০০১,২৬,০০১,২৫-৪৬২

তারিখ: ২৪ অক্টোবর ১৪৩২

অকেজো ঘোষিত গাড়ির পুনর্বিঞ্চি

ইলেক্ট্রনিক স্বাক্ষর সার্টিফিকেট প্রদানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের নিয়ন্ত্রক-এর কার্যালয়ে যে অবস্থায় আছে" এবং উহার রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ, টাক্স টোকেন ও ফিটনেস সনদ "যে অবস্থায় যে পর্যন্ত নিয়ন্ত্রণ আছে" ভিত্তিতে নিলামে বিক্রির জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিক/প্রতিষ্ঠান ও আগ্রহী ক্রেতাদের নিকট থেকে সীলনোহরকৃত খামে আবেদন আহান করা যাবে।

শিডিউলের মূল নগদ ৫০০/- (পিচ্ছত) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) জমা দিয়ে নিয়ন্ত্রিত স্থান হতে অকেজো ঘোষিত শিডিউল ক্রয় করা যাবে:

অকেজো ঘোষিত গাড়ির সংখ্যা		স্থান	
০১ (এক)	আইসিটি টাওয়ার, আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭ এর নিচতলার গ্যারেজে রাখিত	০১ (এক)	আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭ এর নিচতলার গ্যারেজে রাখিত

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Combatting Violence Against Women: Translating Evidence to Actions

A roundtable titled "Violence Against Women Survey 2024: Translating Evidence Into Actions" was held on 24 November 2025, at The Daily Star Centre, Dhaka. Jointly organised by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and The Daily Star.



Catherine Breen
Kamkong
Country
Representative
UNFPA Bangladesh

Violence against women continues to become increasingly normalised, while existing prevention measures remain insufficient to address the growing crisis. This survey, which UNFPA is proud to support, provides a robust evidence base that places Bangladesh on the map for generating this in-depth data. But the statistics are alarming: three in four women experience violence in their lifetime, and one in two currently faces intimate partner violence. Technology-facilitated abuse is rapidly emerging. This data creates an absolute urgency we must all share. To translate it into action, we need everyone here and beyond better coordination, pooled resources, and collective will. I am reminded of a midwife in Papua New Guinea who faced severe violence simply for returning home late from training; we must ensure the brave women who shared their stories for this survey see real difference from their courage.



Minakhi Biswas
Project Director –
Bangladesh Bureau of
Statistics (BBS)
(Keynote presenter)

Women Survey, led by BBS with UNFPA support, offers expanded, deeper insights. It measures Intimate Partner Violence—physical, sexual, psychological, economic—and Non-



factor. Our recommendations include a dedicated GBV workforce, better mental health support, and institutionalising this survey every 5-10 years.



Dr. Samina Luthfa
Professor –
Department of
Sociology
University of Dhaka

This survey powerfully reinforces what we've long asserted with data. I caution against one finding: stating working women face more violence risks creating access barriers. We must unpack intervening variables. Education appears protective, but under what conditions? At the macro level, we must scrutinise state mechanisms—DNA labs and One-Stop Crisis Centres truly accessible? A major gap exists between legal/judicial and law enforcement processes; they lack a shared perspective on VAW. In higher education, harassment cells are underfunded and overwhelmed. Furthermore, media's glorified portrayal of violence normalises it. Finally, severe cyberbullying targets vocal women and young activists, potentially driving them from public life back into hazardous domestic spaces, fuelling more violence.



Farah Kabir
Country Director
ActionAid Bangladesh

The report's findings are sadly unsurprising; the pain lies in our persistent failure to solve this. Violence has become normalised, and self-sacrifice expected of women. A core issue is institutional mistrust if people don't trust systems, they won't use them. We must change the mindset that a woman's purpose is defined by marriage. Economic empowerment alone isn't a shield; it can even trigger new violence. Notably, violence in affluent homes is often hidden to maintain 'respectability'. Our approach must be multifaceted: increase investment in education and health, address digital violence, and crucially, focus on men's mental health and relationship management. We must foster self-worth in women and educate our sons. We need a connected, comprehensive plan, not ad-hoc projects.



Nasheeba Selim
Senior Social
Development Officer
(Gender)
ADB Bangladesh
Resident Mission

The survey's true value lies not in telling a new story, but in the deeper narrative within the data, which can guide actionable pathways. From a development partner perspective, this is not a one organization task. Our role, as institutions like ADB, is to leverage our comparative advantage by partnering with on-ground actors. We can mainstream awareness into our investments in urban or health projects and support infrastructure like One-Stop Crisis Centres. Moving forward, we should fund focused studies on emerging dimensions like technology-facilitated violence. The goal is to help build a coherent, government-led prevention framework and strengthen the survivor-centred response system, while also improving data collection methodologies.



Asif Kashem
Senior Program
Manager
Australian High
Commission

Listening today, a key principle for us as a partner is alignment and complementarity with others. For the Australian Government, gender equality is a core objective integrated across all our investments. Evidence like this survey is critical to identify focus areas. Our approach is evolving from service delivery towards influencing policy change. We must promote positive masculinity, carefully examining the messages media sends to young people. Engaging new groups, like religious leaders, is essential. A pressing priority is technology-facilitated GBV, requiring strong regulation and a 'digital duty of care' holding platforms accountable. We are committed to unified action and common messaging on these fronts.



Stephanie St-Laurent
Brassard
Second Secretary
(Development –
Gender Equality)
Canada High
Commission

From Canada's perspective, gender equality remains a core priority. This data reminds us that violence is not a distant statistic; it touches countless lives, often in silence. Breaking that silence is paramount. While we continue strong advocacy, we must also create economic opportunities for women and girls, as empowerment is multifaceted. Our Women Voice and Leadership initiative provides flexible funding to build the capacity of women's rights organisations, supporting 16 groups here in Bangladesh. Sometimes, even small, targeted grants can achieve transformative leadership results at the community level. We also know that investments in preventing issues like child marriage are not only right but economically smart. Collaboration is key in this landscape, and we remain committed to collective action, because this violence, while widespread, is not inevitable.



Tahera Jabeen
Social Development
Advisor
British High
Commission

The UK's global commitment to ending violence against women and girls rests on evidence-based programming, system integration, and innovation for scale, aligned with high-level ministerial priorities. This year we co-lead All In, a High-Level Panel launched during the 16 Days of Activism, and the Ministerial Taskforce on Ending Violence in and around Schools, launched at the Education World Forum and now endorsed by 11 countries. Through our flagship What Works to Prevent Violence programme, evidence-based interventions have achieved up to 50% reductions in violence. We also lead the Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, joined by over 15 countries. In Bangladesh, we support school-based guidelines to address gender-based violence and work with partners on technology-facilitated abuse, particularly against women in politics. Looking forward, development partners must prioritise capacity

building for women's organisations, pooled resources for scale, investment in digital safety, and systematic use of data for planning and adaptive programming, embedding these into national policies and budgets to drive sustainable change.



Jules Seitz
Programme Manager
EU Delegation

This survey importantly underscores that violence against women is a profound crisis, a governance failure, and a major economic barrier: a stark reality both here and in Europe. The EU remains a long-standing, committed partner on gender; our funding is not decreasing but increasing, with an ambitious target to mainstream gender across 85% of our programming. In Bangladesh, we support a comprehensive approach through UN Women, BRAC, and others, focusing on prevention, protection, justice, and economic empowerment. We work via a 'Team Europe' approach for coordinated action. The solutions are known: strong legal frameworks, survivor protection systems, political will, and the leadership of women's organisations. We must now collectively increase our resources and efforts to implement what works.



Corinne Thevoz
Deputy Head of
Cooperation
Embassy of
Switzerland

Firstly, we value this survey as gender-disaggregated data remains a critical need for informed policy in Bangladesh. We encourage the BBS to produce such data regularly and support strengthening their capacity in this regard. Empowering women requires ensuring their access to quality education, decent work, and essential services for safety and autonomy. Concurrently, we must engage male community leaders to challenge harmful social norms justifying violence. We have supported projects enabling rural women's participation in local governance and leadership. Underlying issues must be addressed: breaking taboos so women and girls can speak up, scaling up survivor services, and crucially, enforcing existing protective laws while reducing the cost of seeking justice. As in Switzerland, which also runs prevention campaigns, this is a universal challenge requiring persistent, multi-faceted action.



Shireen Pervin Huq
Chair of Women's
Affairs Reform
Commission &
Founder
Naripokkho

We must recognise that violence is merely the endpoint of a deep curve of discrimination; unless we eradicate that root cause, we will not succeed. Our Women's Issues Reform Commission made 41 concrete recommendations on violence; the roadmap exists. A key failure has been our fragmented approach; the multisectoral programme we advocated for in 2000 became piecemeal, losing vital components like the 'Respect Women' campaign. We must seriously address persisting adolescent marriage and deconstruct the societal concept of male 'ownership' over women. Our perpetrator study, interviewing

convicted men in prison, yielded crucial insights into toxic masculinity, yet the policy space remains reluctant to engage. We need courage, systemic commitment, and a willingness to challenge the traditions that perpetuate this violence.



Dr. Maleka Banu
General Secretary
Bangladesh Mahila
Parishad

This data confirms a severe human rights crisis, yet it is still not acknowledged as such. Our own monitoring shows an alarming, rising number of cases. While we welcome BBS's evidence, data alone is insufficient. We need profound analysis into why decades of intervention have failed. A dangerous shift is occurring: intimate partner violence is now spilling into the public sphere, manifesting as mob violence and moral policing, effectively doubling women's vulnerability. We must read society's mindset and that of perpetrators to drive change through education, media, and legal reforms. Crucially, we must protect hard-won rights from regression and build a broad social movement inclusive of men and youth to uphold gender equality and the commitment to end violence.



Dr. Shoeb Reaz Alam
Deputy Inspector
General, Special
Security and
Protection Battalion
Bangladesh Police

From a police perspective, these percentages tell only part of the story. The existing laws, hard-won by activists, have undoubtedly reduced the frequency and severity of abuse for many women. The core, intractable challenge is intimate partner violence. Filing a case often means a woman has chosen divorce, as continuing cohabitation after legal action is profoundly difficult. Many seek informal mediation, but its deterrent effect is usually temporary against deep-seated behaviour. The lower incidence of non-partner violence is legally simpler to address. Strengthening the Domestic Violence Act is therefore crucial to cover the routine domestic abuse currently outside legal recourse. Our role requires navigating the fraught intersection where law meets entrenched social and familial bonds, demanding patience and nuance beyond mere enforcement.



Tanjim Ferdous
(Moderator)
In Charge - NGOs &
Foreign Missions
The Daily Star

This survey provides a critical, decade-long view, illuminating patterns and introducing vital new dimensions like survivors' costs and technology-facilitated violence. It deliberately includes marginalised voices of women with disabilities, slum dwellers, disaster-affected communities, alongside men, boys, and service providers. This inclusive approach underscores that real change requires everyone's involvement. Our task now is to translate this robust evidence into concerted, actionable strategies. This moment calls for a unified commitment to move from analysis to tangible actions that will alter the lived realities of women across Bangladesh. The data is here; the imperative to act is clear.

» Adopt a High-Level, Multi-Sectoral National Plan

Move beyond fragmented, ad-hoc projects by establishing a coordinated framework led from the highest governmental office, integrating action across all relevant ministries for a unified response.

» Launch Targeted Programmes on Positive Masculinity

Develop educational and community initiatives that engage men and boys to deconstruct toxic masculinity, promote respectful relationships, and address men's mental health.

» Enact a 'Digital Duty of Care' Law

Create robust regulations and an independent regulator to hold technology platforms legally accountable for preventing and removing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

» Link Economic Empowerment to Norms Change

Design economic programmes with parallel components that shift community power dynamics and protect women's autonomy to prevent earnings from triggering retaliatory violence.

» Strengthen the Domestic Violence Act

Reform and proactively implement the law to provide accessible legal recourse for the spectrum of routine domestic abuse, offering women justice beyond the extreme choice of divorce.

» Institutionalise Gender-Disaggregated Data Systems

Build the permanent capacity of the BBS to regularly produce and utilise high-quality data for policy planning, monitoring, and adaptive programming to ensure accountability.

» Integrate Gender & Consent into National Curricula

Embed comprehensive gender education, including concepts of respect and bodily autonomy, into school systems to foster a generational shift in attitudes and prevent violence.

Partner Violence. We surveyed 28,800 households nationally. While lifetime IPV has decreased from 83% (2015) to 76% (2024), the reality remains severe: 49% experienced it in the past year. Psychological control is most prevalent at 67.6%. Adolescents are most vulnerable. Disturbingly, 7% faced violence during pregnancy. A new focus is technology-facilitated GBV, reported by 8% of women. Critically, 64% of survivors tell no one, and only 7% seek legal help. Barriers include stigma, fear, and institutional distrust. Education is a key protective

Bangladesh can unlock new growth with ethical, data-ready AI: Salesforce MD

NEXT STEP DESK

For nearly three decades, Arun Kumar Parameswaran has worked across multiple regions, building a career that mirrors the rapid global shifts in technology and digital transformation. Now, as the Executive Vice-President and Managing Director for Salesforce in South Asia, he is turning that experience toward one of the region's fastest growing digital markets: Bangladesh.

In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, Arun discusses the opportunities and anxieties surrounding AI adoption, the regulatory gaps that shape its rollout, and why he believes Bangladesh's young, tech-driven population is positioned to shape the next phase of the country's digital economy.

The Daily Star (TDS): You have spent nearly three decades working across India, the United States, Australia, and Singapore. How has this global perspective shaped your approach to driving Salesforce's growth in South Asia, particularly in markets like Bangladesh?

Arun Kumar Parameswaran (AKP): Having worked across diverse markets, one consistent learning is that technology's impact is universal, but its success depends on how deeply it's localised. My global experience reinforces the importance of understanding local context, customer priorities, and talent ecosystems. In South Asia, and particularly in Bangladesh, we see a young, ambitious, and digitally savvy population eager to embrace innovation. Our focus is to empower these businesses and individuals with trusted AI, data, and automation, so they can leapfrog traditional stages of growth and compete globally.

TDS: What unique opportunities and challenges do you see for AI adoption in this market?

AKP: Bangladesh is making steady progress on its digital transformation journey. With expanding connectivity and a dynamic SME ecosystem, the country is well-positioned to harness the potential of AI to drive efficiency and innovation. From advancing financial inclusion to enabling smarter manufacturing and improving public service delivery, the opportunities are immense. As digital adoption accelerates across the country, AI, particularly generative AI, can empower



Arun Kumar Parameswaran, EVP & MD, Salesforce - South Asia

businesses of all sizes to compete globally, enhance productivity, and improve services across sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and finance. With AI agents, routine tasks can be automated, freeing employees to focus on higher-value, creative, and customer-centric work.

For example, textile factories can use AI to detect fabric inconsistencies, banks can streamline onboarding, and service teams can deliver personalised, real-time support. By leveraging these capabilities, Bangladeshi businesses can unlock new efficiencies, revenue opportunities, and innovative ways of working, accelerating the nation's digital transformation. The challenge, however, lies in building trust, data readiness, and digital skills at scale. Every AI transformation begins with a data transformation - and with Salesforce data cloud, businesses can unify fragmented data to create a strong foundation for AI. As Bangladesh continues its digital journey, trusted, ethical, and human-centred AI will be key to unlocking its full potential.

TDS: In regions where regulatory frameworks for AI are still emerging, how do you ensure businesses can confidently adopt your technologies without compromising ethics or accountability?

AKP: We have spent over a decade

investing in ethical AI, both in our business and with our customers. Building on our trusted AI principles, we have published guidelines for Generative AI, an AI acceptable use policy, and guiding principles for the responsible development of generative AI. We believe that AI regulation serves as a baseline. We work to not just "check the boxes" but also meet and exceed customer and stakeholder expectations on data privacy, protection, security, etc., helping businesses adopt AI technologies confidently.

As an example, we have been building the Einstein Trust Layer with responsible and safe AI expectations in mind. This layer keeps customers in control of their data and protects the privacy of individuals using our services through techniques like secure data retrieval, data masking, and zero retention. Our Atlas Reasoning Engine adds enhanced accuracy and nuance to the outputs, meaning that users can be confident in every step of the agent experience. That isn't only a reflection of what we believe is a responsible thing to do, but it is also a reflection of where we expect public policy will be going and what those baseline expectations are.

TDS: Bangladesh recently initiated steps towards a national roadmap on digital transformation with support from the UNDP. How can Salesforce

contribute to such public-private collaborations in shaping an inclusive AI policy environment?

AKP: We contribute by sharing our expertise in ethical AI, providing technology solutions built with trust at their core, and participating in multi-stakeholder initiatives that guide policy and best practices. These efforts help create an environment where AI delivers benefits for all people and communities. We continue to proactively engage with governments and all stakeholder groups to advance responsible, risk-based, and globally applicable AI norms.

TDS: Sustainability is often cited in your responsible AI guidelines. With rising concerns about the environmental footprint of large AI models, what concrete measures is Salesforce taking to minimise that impact, and how do you see this resonating in South Asia?

AKP: Agentforce, our enterprise-grade system for generative AI, is built with sustainability at its core, leveraging specialised, efficient models designed for specific use cases, like automating customer support or generating sales recommendations. We train our models in low-carbon regions, and deploy them with energy-efficient hardware, helping mitigate AI's impact on the planet. Across our operations, ecosystem, and investments, we are working to make AI more sustainable and ensure equitable access to AI. These efforts resonate strongly in South Asia, where balancing innovation with sustainability is essential for long-term progress.

TDS: How is Salesforce contributing to talent development in South Asia, particularly for Bangladeshi graduates?

AKP: AI will transform every job, creating new roles even as it redefines existing ones. At Salesforce, we are deeply committed to helping the workforce adapt through continuous learning and reskilling. Our free online learning platform, Trailhead, helps equip individuals with the skills essential for thriving careers in the digital economy. Across South Asia, learners are leveraging Trailhead to build in-demand digital and AI skills. We are also working with local partners and institutions across South Asia to extend AI skilling programs, helping ensure that the next generation of talent, including recent graduates, can thrive in the AI era.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

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Inspirator, Digital Leadership and Campaign

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Officer, Fundraising and Partnerships

Deadline: December 13

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Minimum experience: 4-5 years

Concern Worldwide

Programme Coordinator, MEAL

Deadline: December 25

Eligibility:

• Postgraduate degree in Statistics, Social Sciences, Development Studies, or a related field.

Minimum experience: 4-5 years

American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB)

Lecturer, various departments

Deadline: December 27

Eligibility:

• MBA/Master's with a Bachelor's/Honors degree in a relevant discipline with no third class in all examinations with a minimum 3.80 CGPA.

Minimum experience: N/A



Meta signs AI deals with several news publishers

NEXT STEP DESK

Meta has announced commercial agreements with several news publishers to use their content for its AI services. The deals include outlets such as CNN, Fox News, The Washington Examiner, USA Today, and France's Le Monde. The agreements will allow Meta's AI chatbot to provide users with "real-time" news updates by linking directly to articles and websites from these publishers. The company stated this will help users discover more timely and relevant content when they ask news-related questions.

The move is part of Meta's effort to attract more users to its AI products amid intense competition in the market. Financial terms of the new publisher agreements were not disclosed. Meta stated it plans to add more partnerships and explore new features in the future.

"Success is most often achieved by those who don't know that failure is inevitable."

COCO CHANEL



Google will surpass OpenAI in AI race: 'Godfather of AI'

NEXT STEP DESK

Geoffrey Hinton, a leading AI researcher often referred to as the 'godfather of AI', has recently stated that Google is likely to surpass rival OpenAI in the AI race. In a recent interview with Business Insider, Hinton expressed surprise that it had taken Google, where he previously worked, this long to catch up. He cited Google's recent release of the Gemini 3 model and the Nano Banana Pro image generator as factors that have shifted momentum.

Hinton noted in the interview that Google has significant advantages, including a large team of researchers, vast data resources, and its own custom AI chips, which he called a "big advantage." Hinton left Google in 2023 to speak freely about AI risks and was jointly awarded a Nobel Prize in physics in 2024. Additionally, Google recently announced a donation of \$10 million CAD to help establish a chair in AI at the University of Toronto in Hinton's honour, which the university said will match.

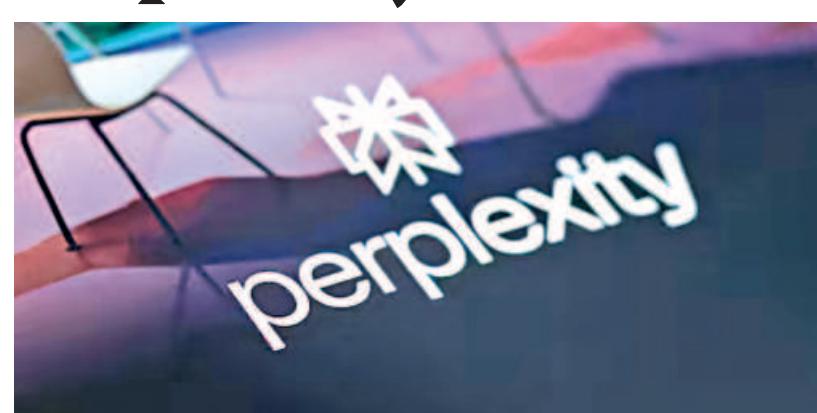


New York Times sues Perplexity

NEXT STEP DESK

The New York Times has filed a lawsuit against the AI software company Perplexity AI, accusing it of using millions of the newspaper's articles without permission to power its AI products. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in New York, alleges that Perplexity's business model relies on scraping and copying copyrighted material, including content behind paywalls. The Times also claims that Perplexity's AI tools have generated fabricated information and falsely attributed these inaccuracies to the newspaper by displaying them alongside its trademarks.

Perplexity's head of communication, Jesse Dwyer, dismissed the lawsuit, characterising



it as an unsuccessful tactic historically used by publishers against new technologies. The startup has previously stated it does not scrape data to build its core models but instead indexes web pages and

provides citations. Perplexity, which is valued at about \$20 billion, is also facing similar lawsuits from other publishers, including the Chicago Tribune, Dow Jones, the New York Post, and Encyclopedia Britannica.

IMAGE: REUTERS

T SPORTS

New Zealand vs West Indies

2nd Test, Day 1

Live from 4:00 pm

ILT20

Gulf Giants vs Sharjah

Warrior

Live from 8:30 pm

SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5

Champions League

Live from 11:45 pm:

Qarabag vs Ajax

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday):

Real Madrid vs Man City

Athletic Bilbao vs PSG

Club Brugge vs Arsenal

'A signal to quit': Shamsur's moment of clarity

After a first-class career spanning nearly two decades, domestic stalwart **Shamsur Rahman Shuvo** has retired from red-ball cricket following the recently concluded 27th National Cricket League (NCL). Interestingly, he had not planned to step away this season, but a particular dismissal during the tournament offered unexpected clarity. Finishing with 9,602 first-class runs, Shamsur reflected on his journey, satisfaction, disappointments, his views on Bangladesh's domestic system, and his future plans in an interview with **The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan**. The excerpts are as follows:

DS: Being so close to the 10,000-run milestone, what made you retire before reaching it?

Shamsur Rahman Shuvo (SRS): A cricketer doesn't retire so close to a milestone without any reason. I did not have a good time with the bat this year, and also did not get the support -- and by that I mean mental freshness. That's why I decided it is the best time to remove myself, providing juniors an opportunity to play in my place which would make me feel good.

DS: Having played for Dhaka Division for so long, do you regret retiring as a Barishal player instead of with your own division?

SRS: I played for Dhaka for 17 years -- meaning Dhaka Metro and Dhaka Division. When such an established team is not available (for me), and as a player, when I get an opportunity in another division, it certainly feels bad that I couldn't retire from my own division.

DS: Did you decide beforehand to retire after this season?

SRS: No, I didn't decide beforehand. I made the decision this year, on the ground.

DS: What triggered the decision?

SRS: First, it occurred to me that I have left behind my good time. The second was when I was bowled by a Rishad [Hossain] delivery in Bogura. I found the manner of the dismissal very surprising. I defended on the back foot and was bowled after the ball dropped straight onto the ground -- I stood my ground for a while, thinking that it is perhaps a signal that this was the best time for me to quit.

DS: What changes have you seen in domestic cricket in the last 20 years?

SRS: I won't say there has been much change. We create a lot of hype before every season, but nothing new happens. Increase in match fees, DA, staying at good hotels and traveling by flight are the improvements -- but not so much when it comes to the ground or other on-field things, which should have been the case for a country playing Test cricket for 25 years.

DS: What is the reason behind that stagnation?

SRS: We should change our mindset. Where do we actually want to see our country's cricket, and where do we want to take it? When you don't think that way, nothing will improve.

DS: What is the most satisfying part of your career? Any regrets?

SRS: My greatest achievement was to play Test cricket, and to play in all three formats for Bangladesh. And, I have no regrets.

DS: What are your future plans?

SRS: I won't play for long. Maximum, if I play this year and then retire from competitive cricket. My plan is to stay connected with cricket as I have played since childhood. I would like to serve Bangladesh if the BCB gives me an opportunity in some capacity.



Akbar hails Rangpur spirit in 'competitive' NCL

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

As dusk settled over Rajshahi Division Cricket Ground yesterday, the match between Sylhet and Barishal ended in an expected draw, handing Rangpur the title with 31 points, having secured a seven-wicket win over Khulna a day earlier.

It marked Rangpur's first NCL longer-format title since the 2022-23 season and completed a domestic double after their success in the NCL T20 in October.

Winning any trophy is always special, but this time it was even sweeter for captain Akbar Ali due to the competitiveness of the tournament, which had often been questioned, and the quality of the wickets, which added further satisfaction.

This season, the tournament entered the final round with six teams still in contention. That intense competition set the perfect stage for celebration for Akbar and his teammates in Bogura, where every session felt meaningful and every wicket carried added value.

"[The competitiveness] It's a big thing. All of us were watching the match on our phones, and everyone was supporting Barishal today. We even played football today, and the plan was to leave here celebrating the title," said Akbar, who returned from the Rising Asia Cup to lead Rangpur to the four-day tournament triumph.

The celebrations highlighted the strong camaraderie within the Rangpur unit. Akbar emphasised the team's competitive edge -- their selflessness.

"When teams are formed, no one probably keeps us on the favourites' list, but the way everyone fights for this team is our biggest strength. Everyone plays selfless cricket here," he told The Daily Star.

This season's NCL also introduced several new elements, with Kookaburra balls used in the first two rounds to prepare national team players ahead of the Ireland Tests, and Dukes balls coming into play from the third round. There were more high-quality wickets on offer, and Akbar, the ICC Under-19 World Cup-winning skipper, was especially pleased with how

statistics, with Khulna's Soumya Sarkar fighting tooth and nail to become the top scorer, despite struggling with the transition from ODIs to first-class cricket at the start of the tournament, proving that resilience and quality thrive under pressure.

Rangpur's Iqbal Hosen and Sylhet's Amite Hasan also delivered notable performances. From a

NCL 2025-26: Season highlights

Champions: Rangpur Division (third title)

Runners-up: Sylhet Division

Player of the tournament: Mukul Islam Mugdho (Rangpur Division). Wickets - 29 at an average of 13.03 and a strike-rate of 23.93.

Top run-scorer: Soumya Sarkar (Khulna Division) -- 633 runs in 14 innings at an average of 45.21, including one century and four half-centuries.

Highest individual score: Amite Hasan (Sylhet Division) -- 213 against Rajshahi Division. This was the only double-century of the league.

Most hundreds: Marshall Ayub (Dhaka Division) -- 3 centuries

Top wicket-taker: Tanvir Islam (Barishal Division) -- 34 wickets at an average of 22.61, including two five-wicket hauls.

Hattrick: Afif Hossain (Khulna Division) vs Barishal Division

Career landmarks

*Marshall Ayub became only the fourth Bangladeshi batter to reach 10,000 first-class runs, joining Tushar Imran, Naeem Islam and Mominul Haque.

*Shuvagata Hom became just the second Bangladeshi player, after Shakib Al Hasan, to complete the double of 6,000 runs and 300 wickets in first-class cricket.

the Bogura pitches rewarded the disciplined bowlers willing to attack.

"When there is grass on these wickets, like in Bogura, it's challenging for the batters. That was great for us since we needed wins -- there was no other option. A result-oriented wicket was very good for us," he said.

The tournament's competitiveness also shone in the

selectors' perspective, the NCL showcased real competitiveness.

"This time, I felt the competitiveness of the tournament really increased. The players appeared serious, and the wickets were excellent at Sylhet, Bogura, and Rajshahi. The transition from Kookaburra to Dukes was also good, as it raised the challenge," selector Hasibul Hossain Shanto said.



Real vs City: Pressure, problems, and high stakes

Real Madrid vs Manchester City has become a Champions League staple -- a fixture known for producing moments of brilliance and for storylines that dominate discussion long before kickoff. This meeting is no different. Real Madrid enter the contest missing key players through injury and suspension, uncertain over the availability of their most prolific forward, and facing growing pressure on coach Xabi Alonso -- circumstances Pep Guardiola's Manchester City will look to exploit.

» This will be the 15th meeting between the two sides in the Champions League. Since their first encounter in 2012-13, it has become the most-played fixture in the competition.

» Pep Guardiola faces Real coach Xabi Alonso -- whom he coached at Bayern Munich -- for the first time as a manager.

» Real have won just two of their last seven games in all competitions, with Spanish media suggesting Alonso could be sacked if they lose to Guardiola's side.

» Adding to Alonso's challenges, Real could be without up to eight key players, including Champions League and LaLiga top scorer Kylian Mbappe, who missed Tuesday's training with an injury.

» City arrive on a three-match winning run, while Real suffered a 2-0 defeat to Celta Vigo at the weekend, leaving them four points adrift of LaLiga leaders Barcelona.

» City will look to Erling Haaland,

who has scored 20 goals in all competitions this season. Only Mbappe (25) and Harry Kane (28) have scored more in 2025-26 among players in Europe's top five leagues.

» City sit ninth in the 36-team Champions League standings, two points behind fifth-placed Real. Both teams have one loss, but Real have four wins to City's three and can strengthen their top-eight position with a victory.

» Despite City's momentum, they have lost their last two matches against Real, falling at home and away in last season's play-off round.



Rockey eyes 'goal machine' tag

Penalty-corner specialist **Amirul Islam** deservedly stole the spotlight with a staggering 18 goals as Bangladesh clinched the Challenger Trophy in their maiden FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup campaign. Yet it was **Rakibul Hasan Rockey** who orchestrated the attacking play with his breathtaking stickwork and dribbling, scoring five goals and creating numerous others for his teammates. In an interview with **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman**, the Kishoreganj-born midfielder discussed the team's campaign, the state of hockey in Bangladesh, and his own ambitions. The excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): Despite limited preparation, Bangladesh surprised many by finishing 17th on debut -- the best among the bottom eight. How did the turnaround happen?

Rakibul Hasan Rockey (RHR): We had hoped to reach at least the quarterfinals, but our group was extremely tough with Australia, France and South Korea. Even so, we're proud of what we achieved. It reflects months of hard work... From the very start, we were determined to give everything. The staff backed us, and our confidence grew after beating Switzerland 5-3 in a warm-up match. Once we learnt that a Challenger Trophy would be awarded after the group stage, we made it our mission to bring home Bangladesh's first global hockey trophy.

DS: What changed after coach Seigfried Aikman arrived?

RHR: He rebuilt our defensive organisation and kept the message simple -- make the defence solid, and chances will come. We also benefitted from earlier work under coaches Ashiquzzaman in the qualifiers and Moududur Rahman Shuvo in the Junior Asia Cup.

DS: Any regrets about scoring only five goals, given your previous tallies?

RHR: Not at all. After the Austria match, coach Aikman hugged me and kissed me on my forehead, saying I had done exactly what the team needed. That meant far more than individual numbers. Playing for the team mattered above everything.

DS: You were heavily involved in both attack and defence. How did you manage that workload?

RHR: As a senior player in the U-21 setup and a member of the national team, I took responsibility at both ends. My target was to win penalty corners knowing Amirul was in peak form to finish them. We've played together for years, and none of us played for our names.

DS: Can the senior team rely on you for open play goals? And how do you react to comparisons with Jimmy?

RHR: [Rasel Mahmud] Jimmy bhai is still our best forward and is far ahead of me in terms of experience, fame and performance. He has been playing for 21 years. But I do want to make a name for myself and attract crowds one day. I want people to know me as a goal machine.

DS: What are your long-term goals?

RHR: My hidden dream is to play in the Olympics and help Bangladesh reach the Games.

DS: What do you feel you need to improve?

RHR: I need to work on my physique because I gain weight easily. My stickwork and quick decision-making are strengths, but I need to improve my temperament and finishing.

DS: You'll now return home with no domestic matches ahead. How does that feel?

RHR: When there is no domestic action, we quickly lose fitness, and it really pains us. I expect the federation to restart all domestic competitions -- league, franchise events, school hockey and more -- because this is our bread and butter. And unless I see young players pushing to take my place, there's no real urgency to grow. That's why domestic tournaments are essential.



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CPJ urges Yunus to free journos in jail Says murder charges 'lack credible evidence'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to take "urgent action" to release four journalists imprisoned in Bangladesh, saying the charges against them appear retaliatory and unsupported by credible evidence.

In a letter sent on Monday, the New York-based press freedom group said the journalists – Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mozammel Babu, and Shyamal Dutta – are being held on murder accusations that "lack credible evidence and appear to be in retaliation for their reporting and perceived political affiliations."

Citing accounts from families, CPJ described severe conditions at Kashimpur Central Jail. According to the letter, the journalists are confined to "tiny 36-square-foot cells with metal bars instead of doors, leaving them exposed to cold weather and mosquito infestations". They reportedly sleep on concrete floors "without mattresses", receive insufficient food, and face "severely inadequate" medical care.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



The streets in Babu Bazar bridge area have been dug to install underground electricity lines for Dhaka Power Distribution Company, creating intense traffic jams on the bridge over the past few days. This photo was taken from Kadamtali in Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MOHAMMADPUR DOUBLE MURDER

Cops struggling to trace suspect

DMP advises caution in hiring domestic workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prime suspect in Monday's double murder is still at large with law enforcers struggling to trace her as she left almost no digital footprint.

Laila Afroze, 48, and Nafisa Nawal Binte Aziz, 15, wife and daughter of schoolteacher AZ Azizul Islam, respectively, were murdered inside their home on Shahjahan Road allegedly by a part-time house help who identified herself as Ayesha to the family.

"No information on the woman is available," said Jewel Rana, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division.

She did not give her original name and actual address to her employer, making the investigation challenging.

Her face was not captured clearly by the building's CCTV cameras either as she was always wearing a burqa, Rana said.

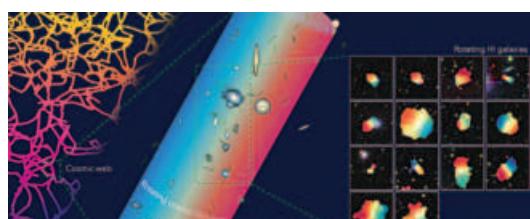
Besides, many of the CCTV cameras in the surrounding areas were not functioning, which has made it difficult to determine the direction she fled, according to Abdulllah Al Mamun, assistant commissioner of Mohammadpur zone.

Different agencies, including Rab and detectives, are hunting for her, Rana said, adding that police have also sought help from the army.

Azizul, who was at work when the murders took place, SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Huge rotating structure in cosmos detected



REUTERS, Washington

Scientists have observed the largest-known rotating structure in the cosmos – a gargantuan thread-like assemblage of hundreds of galaxies, gas and dark matter that makes up a filament in the macrostructure of the universe called the cosmic web.

The filament, located about 140 million light-years from Earth, was observed by scientists primarily using the MeerKAT radio telescope located in South Africa, an array of 64 interlinked satellite dishes.

The rotating filament is astonishingly large, measuring about 50 million light-years long and 117,000 light-years wide. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km). By way of comparison, our Milky Way galaxy, which itself is part of a filament in the cosmic web, measures roughly 100,000 light-years in diameter.

Tobacco use costs society Tk 87,544cr

Finds DU study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tobacco consumption and production cost the country Tk 87,544 crore last year, more than double the tax collected from tobacco companies in fiscal 2023-24, according to a recent study.

In fiscal 2023-24, the country earned approximately Tk 40,000 crore in revenue from tobacco companies.

Health-related costs were about Tk 73,063 crore and environmental costs – such as damages to the marine ecosystem, greenhouse gas emissions, waste clean-up – amounted to Tk 14,525 crore, according to the study by the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University in association with the Economics for Health programme at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Ashraful Kibria, one of the study's authors, presented the findings at a programme organised by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) at its Dhanmondi office yesterday.

The study was carried out to estimate the total economic costs of tobacco use and production, which include the costs of deforestation, waste clean-up, fire hazards and pollution.

Previous studies mostly

estimated losses due to health and productivity losses, Kibria said.

For instance, a 2019 study by the Bangladesh Cancer Society found the economic losses due to tobacco consumption – covering treatment costs and productivity losses – amounted to Tk 30,560

Health-related costs were about Tk 73,063cr and environmental costs – such as damages to the marine ecosystem, greenhouse gas emissions, waste clean-up – amounted to Tk 14,525cr.

crore in fiscal 2017-18. That year, the government earned Tk 22,810 crore from tobacco.

The DU study finds that the losses are much higher when the full economic impact of tobacco, including its environmental impact, is taken into account.

Of the health-related costs from tobacco use, Tk 30,771 crore were direct costs such as treatment, routine check-ups and other medical expenses, while Tk 42,292 crore resulted from productivity losses.

The authorities should take steps to make tobacco products less affordable as tobacco consumption and production incur a substantial net loss for society, with costs far exceeding revenue, Kibria added.

Also at the event, another study was unveiled that showed that each surveyed school had an average of 5.5 tobacco points of sale (POS) including groceries, tea stalls and street vendors within a 100-metre radius, making tobacco products easily accessible to youths.

The study, carried out by PPRC last month on 121 schools across four divisions, also found that 69 percent of POSs advertised tobacco products, while 21 percent actively promoted them to attract youths.

Mohammad Iftesham Hassan, senior research associate of PPRC, revealed the findings of the study, which found 84 percent of POSs were selling flavoured cigarettes and 99 percent were selling single stick.

Flavoured cigarettes and the sale of single sticks are considered

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A vehicle rests on the edge of a collapsed road in Tohoku town in Aomori Prefecture yesterday, following a 7.5-magnitude earthquake that struck northern Japan on Monday night. The quake left at least 30 people injured, damaged roads and cut power to thousands in freezing temperatures.

PHOTO: AFP

Our misfortune is that we couldn't create another Rokeya in 100yrs
Says chief adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called for building a post-uprising Bangladesh anchored in women's leadership, drawing inspiration from Begum Rokeya's lifelong struggle for equality and education.



"Women in today's society are totally different. The journey of the new Bangladesh has started with them. They are a source of inspiration not only to women but to everyone. We need to uphold this," he said, after conferring the Begum Rokeya Padak 2025 at a ceremony at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Describing the Padak as an epoch-making honour, he said the awardees had taken Bangladesh "to a new height in the globe", adding that they were capable not only of leading the nation but "the entire world".

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Tangail Saree wins UNESCO heritage status

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognised Bangladesh's Tangail Saree weaving industry as an intangible cultural heritage.

The decision was unanimously adopted at the 20th Intergovernmental Committee meeting of the UNESCO 2003 Convention in New Delhi, India yesterday.

This is Bangladesh's sixth standalone registration under this Convention and the



second registration in four years following the country's election to the committee for the first time, according to a foreign ministry statement.

"This recognition is a matter of extraordinary glory for Bangladesh. It is the global recognition of the unique artwork of Tangail weavers spanning over two centuries," said Ambassador Khondker M Talha, the leader of the Bangladesh delegation and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UNESCO, in an immediate reaction during the

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Lone genocide museum closed for 17 months

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The country's only genocide museum in Khulna has remained closed for visitors for around 17 months.

Initially, the museum was shut down for renovation. Later, security reasons and financial constraints led to its extended closure, said the trustees of the museum.

On July 20, 2024, the museum was closed for renovation work and due to a curfew imposed by the then government. It did not reopen as the political situation deteriorated in the following days, said officials.

During the July uprising on August 4 last year, protesters vandalised a hospital adjacent to the museum over the allegations that gunshot-wounded students were denied treatment there.

The museum's main gate was also damaged during the incident. A group of agitators then broke some windows and threw brick chunks at the museum.

Visitors' entry has been prohibited since then.

According to the museum authority, there are 192 categories of relics, including documents related to the Liberation War,

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