

Unite to restore

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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

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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, he added.

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 Rohingyas' rights and ethnicity, he added.

Soe Myint thanked Bangladesh for sheltering the Rohingyas 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

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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.

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The prosecution

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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

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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.

After the hearing, the tribunal led by Justice Md Shofiqul Alam Mahmood set December 14 for its order on whether charges will be framed.

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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

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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.

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